

# faith

January and February 2013  
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OF FAITH AND REASON

## **“On Earth as it is in Heaven”: The Vision of Christ That We Preach**

Editorial

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Cormac Burke

## **British Evangelisation: Present and Future**

Dr Dudley Plunkett

## **Embodying the Pure Bride of Christ**

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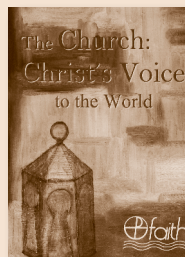
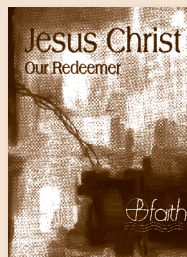
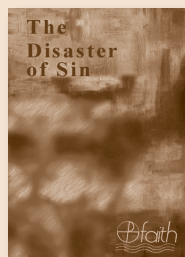
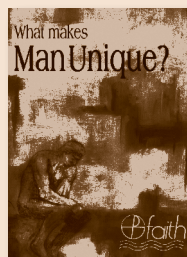
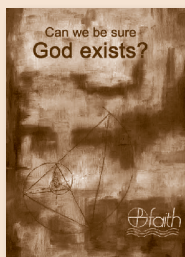
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by Edward Holloway

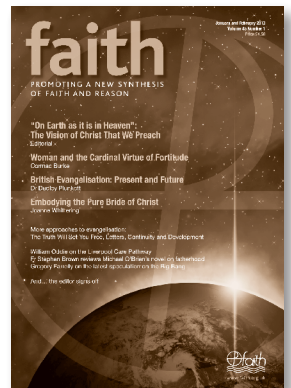
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# faith

January and February 2013  
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With this issue of *Faith* magazine the editor hands over to our fifth editor. It has been an honour to have manned the tiller of this small barque for the last seven years. As it completes its 40th year I give thanks to God for having kept it afloat amid some stormy weather, both ecclesially and in the world of publishing. In particular I thank Him for having inspired a team of generous and talented volunteers, who have significantly compensated for my own shortcomings.

By the grace of God and the Archbishop of Westminster, I have begun doctoral studies in the philosophy of science, and must now focus upon coming through the labour pains of producing a thesis. I am extremely fortunate to have had such a deft and dedicated deputy Fr Kevin Douglas, who now takes over at the helm.

We have proposed that what is needed to keep the Barque of Peter on a more even keel is a new synthesis of modern science and Catholic teaching – one which, as Catholic Tradition requests, remains faithful to Christ's Magisterium from the Gospels and the Council of Jerusalem to *Gaudium et Spes* and Pope Benedict. Such faithfulness demands that our philosophy and theology have the character of a true development.

Our vision sees the source and summit of the meaning of matter in the flesh of Christ, who as the "first-born of Creation" and the "first-born from the dead" is the source and summit of Man. I give particular thanks for having encountered and been sustained by this vision in my own life, and for similar fruit in the lives of others (see for example our **lead letter**). Without it, I would probably have joined the post-1960s legions who have been, and continue to be, drawn relentlessly towards world-views incompatible with Christianity – to the heartbreak of this and many another parish priest.

It seems appropriate that our **editorial** for this issue should be a meditation upon the humanity of Christ. He it is whom we have tried to preach, and it is on him that we have

sought to rely. Through Christ, who remains ever faithful to his promises, we have indeed received a hundredfold – and you, our faithful readers, have been part of that gift from God.

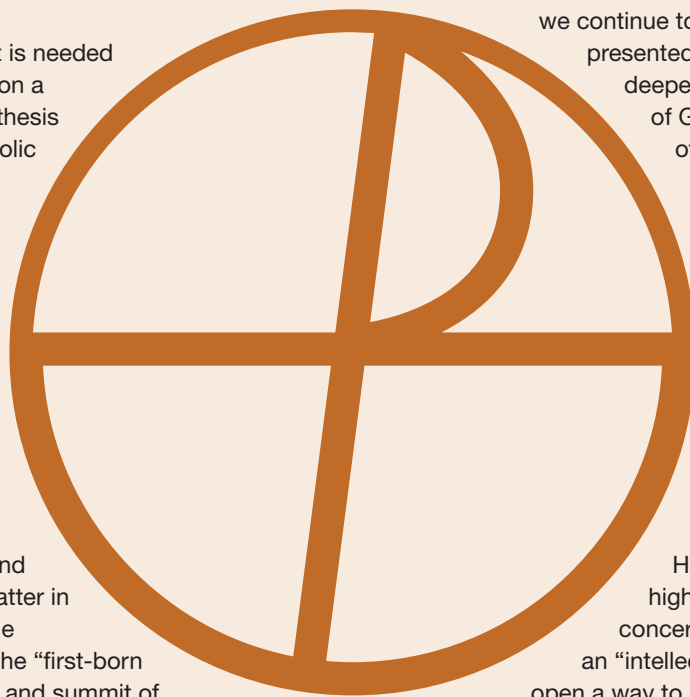
In our articles this month, **Dr Dudley Plunkett** provides a realistic appraisal of the Church's efforts to evangelise. And in our **Truth Will Set You Free** column, in which we have sought over the years to offer a modern pastoral presentation of Catholic doctrine, we invite individual Catholics to contribute to the work of evangelisation.

Our other two main articles consider the crucial question of womanhood and what it means to live out a distinctively feminine vocation. And in our **Cutting Edge** column we continue to consider opportunities presented by the latest science for deepening our awareness of the Plan of God. Both these issues, among others, are discussed in our letters section, which, as ever we hope, adds constructively to the debate surrounding the New Evangelisation.

Extracts from last October's Synod on this subject can be found in our new **Continuity and Development** column; they are taken from the first 20 propositions presented to the Holy Father. We would especially highlight Proposition 17, which, concerning "human nature", calls for an "intellectual development ... [that can] open a way to recognise the existence of a God the Creator and the message of Jesus Christ the Redeemer", and urges theologians to "develop a new apologetics of Christian thought".

We pray that this exhortation may be taken to heart across the Church. For we hold the bold belief, especially from humble experience in the *Faith* movement, that if it were our whole society would experience a new cultural springtime.

*Yours in Christ*  
*Hugh MacKenzie*





# “On Earth as it is in Heaven”: The Vision of Christ That We Preach *Editorial*

“Your grace is enough.” (2Cor. 12:9)

In this Year of Faith we are summoned to re-evangelise the People of God, starting with ourselves, as a prelude to evangelising the world once again. To “evangelise” means to announce good news. Jesus Christ is The Good News of God for mankind whom the angels proclaimed to poor shepherds at the first Christmas. So to evangelise means to announce Jesus Christ to the world.

In our words and in our living witness we must proclaim him as Messiah, the one for whom and in whom all things find their meaning and purpose; as Saviour and Redeemer, whose mission is to unite and reconcile wayward humanity with our heavenly Father; as the Son in whom each one of us is adopted as a child of our heavenly Father and heir with him to the communion of the Blessed Trinity.

Yet he is also a sign of contradiction. He brings peace, but also the sword. His Word is Truth that liberates and heals, but also challenges and divides as it penetrates the very heart of a man, “where the soul is divided from the spirit”, and demands a response. His Way can seem narrow and hard, yet his “yoke”, the burden of commitment to him, is light and easy when accepted and lived with the love he elicits. He commands us to “take up our cross and follow” him unto death, walking by faith and trust, and yet what he gives and what he leads us to is Life that is eternal and full beyond earthly comprehension.

His birth, life, death, resurrection and continuing sacramental ministry among us in the Church are the crowning glory of all of God’s works. To “those on earth who are of good will”, he is the cause of a joy that the world can neither give nor take away.

## **Vatican II and Post-Conciliar Christologies**

This is the Good News. This is the Jesus we must proclaim, but how do we present and explain him to the modern world? The Second Vatican Council teaches us that:

“The tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down.

“This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts, through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For, as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her” (*Dei Verbum* 8).

What development can we offer in our understanding of Christ? In the years following the Second Vatican Council, many teachers and catechists were told that that they had put too much emphasis on the Divinity of Christ in the past, so they should now concentrate on his humanity. Influential theologians constructed Christologies “from below”, with all claims to Divinity “demythologised”.

They presented a Jesus of social challenge and communitarian vision, a moral and political hero whose struggles mirrored our own, whose death, whose resurrection is symbolic. One could admire and seek to imitate the historic example of such a Jesus, but not love him and follow him in any meaningful personal sense in the here and now.

Such a Jesus is all too easily made into our own image, compromised with sin in one way or another. His teachings are edited and interpreted according to our own prejudices and preferences, conscious or unconscious. He cannot be adored as the co-equal of the Father whose words command our consciences. He cannot be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, personally undoing our spiritual failures and countless imperfections in the Mass and in Confession. His does not bring us into the very presence of the Father of Light.

Yet it is right that we should want to relate to the humanity of Our Lord. We need to know that he was tested in every way we are, but that he did not sin (Heb 4:15). We want to identify with him and know that he identifies with us.

But to set up a tension between the humanity and the Divinity of Christ is a classic example of a false contradiction. We can only understand and relate to his humanity properly if we accept his Divinity, for that is Who He Is. Only in grasping this will we understand why he became man and what his humanity means for us.

The humanity of Christ is our gateway to the Godhead. It is in him as the Word made flesh that we have access to the Father, and through him as our risen Lord that we are filled with the Holy Spirit. We can say more: he is the very identity of our humanity in the first place. He is the reason human beings exist as creatures of body and spirit. Without him humanity, and indeed the whole of creation, is meaningless. To understand this thought, we need to revisit our theological account of human nature.

## **Humanity Made for Christ**

When speaking to modern audiences, especially young adults, about what distinguishes us from the animals, it is not always a good idea to start with negative distinctions – pointing out, for example, that animals cannot do such and such, but we can. This may appear to belittle the beauty and

## “On Earth as it is in Heaven”: The Vision of Christ That We Preach continued

dignity of animals. It can also leave us hostages to fortune as new discoveries reveal amazing abilities in higher animals. The capability of the highest brains in nature immediately preceding the advent of Man in nature might even be found to be remarkably close to that of our own, in many respects. This should not surprise us.

What we can safely say as a phenomenological fact, however, is that we human beings do not find our place, our fulfilment and our identity in the organic environment around us, as the animals do. For all the subtlety and complexity of living matter, the scope and contentment of its powers lie within circles of organic life. Manifestly the same cannot be said of us. Even Richard Dawkins has been asking what “religion without God” might look like and what it must become. The laws of physics, chemistry and biology do not provide an answer to the enigma that is Man. They may well define our organic heritage, but they cannot illuminate our spiritual future.

Having agreed the uniqueness of human nature in this way, we can go on to make a rigorous argument for the spiritual soul, directly created by God, yet naturally and metaphysically complementary to the body as the existential form of the material potential, so as to make one integral person. The details of this argument have often been rehearsed in *Faith* publications, so we will not repeat them here. What is important is the theological implication of our place in nature, or rather our lack of it.

“We need to revisit our theological  
account of human nature”

Every organism, in its activity, its potential, its joy-seeking and its limitations, its life and death – indeed every thinkable system or sub-unit of matter, every “thing” – is defined and administered from that vast, dynamic Unity. This cosmic unity is intrinsically constituted to act through mutual laws, valencies, times, seasons, values and purposes of anything and everything within it. The whole material unity is also developmental and directional, producing higher levels of material synthesis, yet always according to the same principle of control and direction. Indeed, we call this principle the Unity Law of Control and Direction.

We can also argue that this points us directly to the Mind of God, but again there is no space to go over that argument here. What matters is that for life below man that Law, which is the constitution of matter, demands and sets coherence – place and purpose, control and direction – for everything within it. It is this very principle which also demands the creation of the soul in Man as matter passes the limits of the environment to hold it in meaningful order. So there is a creature who is beyond nature in its core identity, but the fundamental Law of creation must still hold. What is this

creature’s place and purpose? Where is its control and direction? What is its true environment?

The answer we give is God himself. We make sense only in communion with God. His grace – the impact and inflowing of the Divine being upon our own creaturely personalities – is natural to us, as the environment is to the animals. If we are looking for a new metaphor to describe that beautiful word “grace”, Edward Holloway suggests one that is both poetic and scientific in its inspiration. Grace is the “sunshine to our souls”. It is natural for us to seek God, and grace indeed “builds on nature”. And yet, at the same time, it is truly supernatural to us, lifting us beyond our fragile contingency into a destiny that is both eternal and glorious.

“Our personal spiritual lives too ... relate  
directly to the humanity of Jesus”

We have no claim or right to such a gift. No created nature can make a demand upon the Divine as if it were a debt owed. Even less can it be intrinsic to our being, even as a dimension, aspect or existential “horizon”, to be part of the Eternal and Absolute. The distinction between the created and the Uncreated cannot be confused without ending up, sooner or later, in pantheism. This is a mistake that is made by many modern theologians, including Karl Rahner and Teilhard de Chardin.

Are we left, then, with the unsolvable conundrum of why God made human beings who find no home in nature, yet who cannot claim the communion with Him that alone is their actual destiny, by any right or title of their own nature?

### The Cosmos Made for Christ

Because matter cannot have by itself and does not need direct communion with God, of itself, the whole world appears to come to be futile when viewed from an intramundane point of view. When we understand human nature as the pinnacle and goal of material development it all appears to come to nothing, or at least to frustration, without an end in God – and that quandary cannot be answered from within the categories and potential of created being.

And yet there is an answer because God is Wisdom and Charity, and always perfectly Self-consistent. The answer lies in the Incarnation. Through the hypostatic union of God the Word with the human nature, men are given the highest possible destiny – beatific transformation as co-sharers of the infinite Godhead. In God the Son made flesh, we are adopted as true children of God.

What this does mean, however, is that we exist only in the order of charity and gift. We have no other destiny or identity, no “natural end” apart from in him. Everything created exists only because of the charity of God, of course; but human nature, uniquely, only has meaning and purpose at all



## “God does not deal in abstractions”

because of the Divine Self-giving to the creature in the fullest way that is possible.

In plain English this means that we only exist because of Christ. We are made with his Incarnation in view. Indeed it is the founding decree of creation itself (cf Col 1:15-16).

The whole of creation is aligned on him from the very beginning. And we do mean that the real laws of matter are aligned on him. This thought is no abstraction. God does not deal in abstractions. God knows and loves only concrete realities, both spiritual and material, in their existent actuality and unto their final purpose in the one plan of creation centred upon Christ. So the laws of matter, while they can of course and should be studied and unravelled from the point of view of material science, will only find their full perspective and interpretation in the highest synthesis of all – the Incarnation and the gathering of things under Christ as Head.

And this applies not just to the laws of matter, but to the whole of the human world – to the ebb and flow of history and of progress in science, culture and religion. All good gifts, both physical and spiritual, descend from the Father of mercies, through the Eternal Word who becomes flesh in Jesus Christ. But this is not a mathematical law of progress, of course. It is a providence and an economy of grace, marked by freedom and now also marred by sin. As God reveals and prompts, builds and leads towards the full knowledge of himself and the consummation of all things, this is the work of the eternal Word who is coming in the flesh.

And when he comes, he is revealed as The Son of Man. He is the template of humanity. We are made to his image, not the other way around. Again, this is no abstraction. Each of us finds his or her true identity in relationship with Jesus. This is why he and he alone could atone for our sins in his own body. And that atonement was no abstraction at all! Through all his very real torments, each of us, in all our spiritual failures and betrayals, were known intimately to him, as we are each related to him more intimately than children to their parents. The obedience of his human will through suffering and death on the cross restores our adoption as children of the Father.

### Christ in *Our* Spiritual Lives

Our relationship with him is fully human because his humanity is the root of our own humanity, and his human friendship with us as our Risen Saviour is the means of our healing and growth. If we are alive at all to God then it is Jesus Christ who lives in us. This too is no mere metaphor. Physically we know that humanity is a shared nature because we are genetically and socially intertwined. But spiritually, humanity is also a shared nature in Christ. All growth in holiness, all increase in depth of spirit, wisdom, charity, courage, reverence and glorification of the Father in individual souls is directly and personally the work of Jesus the Word through his own sacred humanity. He lives our lives in us and with us. Our

spiritual triumphs and virtues are his, our good works are his works to the glory of the Father, and all prayer is Christ praying in us.

The matrix of this human relationship with the risen Jesus, which is thereby full of Divinity, is the sacramental life. The sacraments flow directly from Christ living and acting through his Church, and they necessarily involve the bodily and social order as he confers divinity upon us through all that is human. The sacraments are not optional extras or “Catholic” additions to basic Christianity. They – and especially the Eucharist – are the very means by which we live and grow in Christ. To know Jesus fully in a personal relationship in the power of his cross and resurrection is to find him above all in the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Holy Eucharist.

“It is through union with his risen  
Body and Blood in the Eucharist that  
the bodies of the saints will rise to  
glory at the end of all things”

The Mass is the unending prayer of Jesus, his ceaseless self-offering to the Father in heaven as Son of Man and Son of God. It is a human offering in both time and eternity. It is himself and all those who belong to him, those he ransoms, heals, restores and perfects, brought before the Father in intercession and triumph. The liturgy we celebrate is not just a ceremony of eloquent signs and symbols, it is our direct participation in this heavenly liturgy.

The Catechism quotes St Augustine, who said:

“It would not be inconsistent with the truth to understand the words ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven’ to mean ‘in the Church as in our Lord Jesus Christ himself’; or ‘in the Bride who has been betrothed, just as in the Bridegroom who has accomplished the will of the Father’” (CCC 2827) *De serm. Dom.* 2,6,24:PL 34,1279.

“On earth as it is in heaven”... In these words we can find the whole motive and mystery of the Incarnation; indeed the whole motive and mystery of Creation, the vocation of the humanity of Jesus, and the meaning of the Eucharist, which is the summit and consummation of everything He is to us as both God and Man.

Our personal spiritual lives too, which are not separate from the ecclesial, sacramental and liturgical life, derive from and relate directly to the humanity of Jesus. Blessed Columba Marmion, who was known for his great emphasis on our divine adoption in Jesus, wrote:

“Christ is God’s great Revelation to the world. God tells us: ‘This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him.’ *Ipsium audite*. It is as if He said to us: If you wish to please Me, look at My

## “On Earth as it is in Heaven”: The Vision of Christ That We Preach continued

Son; look at My Son, imitate Him; I ask nothing besides this, for in this is your predestination that you be conformed to My Son (Rom 8:29) ... (When Jesus says) ‘Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me’ (Jn 17:24) ... (and) ... ‘No man cometh to the Father, but by Me’ (Jn 14:6) it is as if He said: You will never attain to the Divinity save in passing through My Humanity.”

And St Teresa of Avila said:

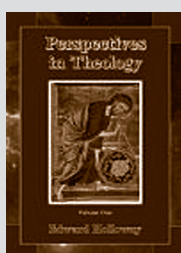
“Were you at the summit of contemplation take no other road than that of regarding the holy Humanity of Jesus. One walks with assurance along that road. Our Lord is for us the source of every good; He Himself will teach us. Look at His life; He is the best Model.”

In his human soul united to his Divine Personality, Jesus is the personal Spiritual Director of every human life. He is the guardian and overseer, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. He is the custodian of our bodies too. It is through union with his risen Body and Blood in the Eucharist that the bodies of the saints will rise to glory at the end of all things. The body of our Blessed Lady, so intimately and necessarily bound to his Incarnation, and being free from all fault, was the first to follow him in bodily glory. The rest of the saints await the general resurrection, the risen and glorified Christ being the guarantor.

So much more could be said in this deepening of that most Catholic theme of the Mystical Body of Christ. It is “mystical” not because it is nebulous and unrelated to the mundane realities of our human lives. Quite the opposite. But it is a great Mystery. We become more human the more deeply we are committed to Jesus in the Church, the sacraments and in prayer. It is from his Sacred Head that all Wisdom shines out, and from his Sacred Heart that all tenderness, compassion, justice, peace and true charity flow – and all mercy too.

We must indeed emphasise and meditate on the humanity of Christ, not in competition with his Divinity, but as the very means of our relationship with him as our God and Saviour. Neither does emphasising his Divinity in any way diminish his humanity or make him remote from us. Understood properly it makes him supremely close to every one of us. “For me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). Only he can make us completely our true selves.

*Thanks be to thee, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits which thou hast given us,  
for all the pains and insults which thou hast borne for us.  
Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,  
may I know thee more clearly,  
love thee more dearly,  
and follow thee more nearly,  
Amen.*



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# Woman and the Cardinal Virtue of Fortitude *Cormac Burke*

Mgr Burke offers a meditation upon the exercise of fortitude in the context of the vocation to womanhood. This was part of a lecture given at Strathmore University, Nairobi, last year. We hope to publish the complementary reflections upon the other cardinal virtues.

## Introduction

Virtue is not a very popular word today. It is hard to say why, but perhaps the reason is that while everyone can have and in fact needs virtues, they cannot be acquired without an effort: an effort to rise above self-centeredness. And rising above self is not seen as an attractive proposition nowadays. Yet to rise above self is the only way to true personal fulfilment. Let us briefly consider why.

A virtue is a stable and acquired quality that makes for the *fullness* of a person's humanity. For we are all developing beings. What we are today is not exactly the same as what we will be tomorrow. We will have changed, probably just a little; in terms of the worth of our humanity, we will be a bit better or a bit worse; perhaps a bit better in this and a bit worse in that. In any case we will not be the same. And after a year or five years we may have become quite different: more or less sincere, more or less reliable, more or less selfish, more or less positive in attitude towards others. In a word, more or less fulfilled as human persons. More fulfilled if the habitual ways of thinking and acting in our lives are positive, are virtues; less fulfilled if they are negative, are vices.

The “cardinal virtues” are given that title because they are regarded as the most fundamental human virtues, being the support or hinges (*cardo* = hinge) for all the others. These cardinal virtues are fortitude, justice, prudence and temperance.

I am going to maintain that while all the human virtues should ideally be acquired by everyone, certain virtues are more appropriate to men, and other virtues are more appropriate to women. When I say “more appropriate”, I often (though not always) mean more necessary. More necessary, that is, in order to develop a more integrated and developed sexual identity. Because it is a presupposition of our argument that the achievement of sexual identity is integral to full personal fulfilment.<sup>1</sup>

If this is so, then one can expect the same virtue to be expressed in a somewhat different way according to whether one is a man or woman. This difference should not be exaggerated; but it should not be minimised either. It is simply not possible to acquire a true sexual identity, and to be proud of that identity, without developing certain virtues in a masculine mode if one is a man, or in a feminine mode if one is a woman. Tenderness, for instance, is a virtue that most people would expect to find in a woman, and would consider her less of a woman if she lacked it. Yet a man too is poorly developed as a man if he has no tenderness in him. Cowardliness would be considered a main defect in a man. Yet a woman too needs to be brave and strong. Which brings us to our first cardinal virtue.

## Fortitude

Fortitude means strength, strength in the face of difficulties. It is not properly applied to animals or machines since it is a human quality, a moral virtue, that a person may have or lack, may have in a high or low degree, may develop or may lose.

If fortitude is possessed, it has been *acquired*. A baby may be naturally tough, never bawling when it falls, just picking itself up and carrying on. But we wouldn't say it has fortitude. That, if it comes, is for later on, when the growing boy or girl is faced with the inevitable struggle to mature, to overcome moral defects – a struggle that works out well in the measure in which one manages to acquire moral strength, or works out badly to the degree that one fails to acquire it.

So, when we speak about fortitude we are not talking about physical strength. Otherwise we would have to conclude that for the most part men have more fortitude than women. And that is certainly not going to be our starting point or our conclusion. Women can have as much fortitude as men, or more or less. But our main argument is that generally they won't have it or lack it in precisely the same way.

Yet there is something basic here that women can learn from men – or, perhaps better, that girls can learn from boys. Think of how often boys are (or used to be) challenged to grow in their sexual identity, with a few simple words that most sisters will have some time heard their dad or mum say to their brother: “Come on, be a man.” It may be when the boy starts to cry or is acting like a coward, or is afraid to own up to something wrong he has done. Naturally he must understand the challenge before he can even face it. Most boys have, or at least used to have, a fairly clear idea of what defects they need to fight against if they want to be more manly: not to whimper too easily before pain, not to be a sneak, not to fold up in the face of difficulties.

Now (and this is important, and will be even more important when we come to talk about girls), most boys used to have some model they could refer to in cases like these: their dad, an older brother, or perhaps a footballer who could rally his team to turn apparent defeat into victory. In other words, they could more or less understand what was being asked of them in the challenge “C'mon, be a man”.

What strikes me is that I have never heard anything equivalent said to a girl: “Come on; be a woman!” And yet I think it needs to be said a lot today, because girls are less sure of what it means to be – or to become – a woman, less sure of their sexual identity and, it might seem, less eager to develop it. Are girls today becoming women? Physically, and with the passage of a few years, yes. But are they developing a truly



## **“I have come to realise that I was educated to be a successful man, and now must learn by myself how to be a successful woman” (letter from a young mother, a few years out of college)**

feminine nature, truly feminine qualities? Do they see this as a challenge? A challenge that, unless it is met, means they will never be themselves, never become a truly feminine woman?

I say a truly feminine woman, because today we are in danger of getting more and more masculinised women, just as we are in the danger of getting more and more feminised men. It takes prudence to see that. But it takes fortitude to avoid it. Modern education offers little help in grasping this, as is brought out in a letter from a young mother, a few years out of an American college: “I have come to realise that I was educated to be a successful man, and now must learn by myself how to be a successful woman.”<sup>2</sup>

Am I suggesting that women should not aim at being top in the professions, at becoming the CEO of some large company, or going high in political life? No; on the contrary, I would like to see more women in those fields, and to see them succeeding by bringing the best of their feminine qualities with them. Certainly I would not want to see them succeeding because they have imitated the worst in men, those masculine defects that can lead to political or business success – but, at what a cost! We have enough of hard and ruthless people in business life, of domineering professionals, of robber barons in politics.

Not everyone is like that, but too many are. And if a woman goes into those fields with a tough, macho spirit, she may be as “successful” as many men, but she will be a failure as a woman. Think of it. Not even the men who are successful that way are happy inside (unless they are extremely vain and superficial). They know, if they are sincere with themselves, that their courage is largely intimidation; their honour, deceitfulness; their word, false.

Their cronies may play up to them, but in their hearts, if they ever go there, they know they are debased and corrupt. Perhaps that is why they never really open their heart to their wife (if she is an honest person) and least of all to their children: they would be ashamed for their children to know that their dad is a small or big crook, and certainly not a role model, not someone they can look up to, not a real man at all.

It is much worse if this happens to a woman. Whatever the reason, practically all societies have expected more of their women than of their men. One can take this as a cultural bias, or take it as a tribute.<sup>3</sup> In any case the fact is that the woman who fails to measure up in some way to the higher standards expected of her is more likely to excite the contempt of those around her, to forfeit the respect of her children, and (what is most important to our theme) to be dogged by a deep inner sense of personal failure.

A woman can certainly ignore the “higher standards” that others may expect of her, and be content with the goals she sets herself. But, consciously or unconsciously, and especially in her early years, she will be moved by some “role model” whom she thinks has achieved those goals. What types of role

model prevail in a woman’s world today? They vary of course; but all in some way seem to involve being a celebrity. If one’s only role model is that of being a “celebrity”, what if one fails? Many girls dream of being a celebrity. How many become one? How many are fulfilled by becoming one?

In a word, it is not in the same way that a man or a woman fails to achieve a clear sexual identity or a legitimate self-esteem. Many men are failing to be men today. Perhaps even more women are failing to be women. Maybe they have even fewer good role models than boys have, or used to have.

Now, we may ask, what has all this to do with the virtue of fortitude? A lot. Because it brings us back to the challenge that needs to be put to girls and women today, and to be heard by them – that challenge of “Come on; be a woman!”. For to understand that challenge and to respond to it takes courage and strength: moral strength, strength of character; feminine strength and feminine character. In a word, feminine fortitude.

### **Modern Education and Feminine Fulfilment**

An education that inspires one to go out and assert *one’s* self is not real education. It is antisocial and just develops selfishness. Education is positive and can lead to fulfilment when it inspires a person to go out and make their own unique contribution to society. In many cases, the uniqueness of a contribution will consist, at least in part, in being more distinctively masculine or more distinctively feminine. But it is more and more evident that our modern society is being shaped almost exclusively in a masculine mode. The feminine contribution is being lost. Moreover, I would venture to say, if it is being taken away from women, they themselves are letting it be taken away from them. In some cases, I would go further and say that it is they themselves who are throwing it away.

Here we are not talking first about the family role of women; we will turn to that in a moment. We are saying that modern public life is over-masculinised, and is suffering from the lack of a genuine feminine contribution. Pushing that a bit further, we are suggesting that the worst of masculine defects seem to be shaping modern life, without any counter-balance from the best of feminine virtues.<sup>4</sup>

There is no suggestion here that men have only defects, and women only virtues. Far from it. Yet it so often happens in life, at all levels, that the best of man is drawn out by the best in woman, just as the worst of man can be drawn out by the worst in woman.

That of course is a bit of a generalisation. It is interesting to look at some more sweeping generalisations often made by psychologists: that men are more oriented towards rights and justice, women more towards responsibility and caring (and, yes, self-giving); or, to put it another way, male identity is forged in relation to the world, and female identity awakened in a relationship of intimacy with other persons; or, further, that “development”, in the male mode, implies establishing the

## Woman and the Cardinal Virtue of Fortitude continued

independence of “self” from others, while in the female mode self is developed by relating to others. In consequence, man is oriented more to action, self-assertion, conquest, while woman is more concerned about relationships and care (“separation” or “autonomy” in contrast to “connection” or “caring”).<sup>5</sup>

There is certainly some truth in all of this. And equally a lot of truth in the assertion that modern society is suffering from too much self-assertion and separation, and from too little connection and mutual understanding. This is happening to women almost as much as to men. And yet I think – I trust – that women have a greater capacity to realise how destructive for society, and how self-destructive, this trend is. For a woman especially, it is hard to avoid the inner conviction that “self-assertion” is really selfishness and not self-giving; and that she cannot fulfil herself or be happy that way.

So, the strong challenge facing women is one of fulfilling and humanising themselves according to their sexual identity, and of rehumanising society with their feminine presence and influence.

Paradoxically, women have a particular need for fortitude in order not only to be proud of (and if necessary “recover”) their feminine character, but to assert it in a society conditioned to look down on traditional femininity. “Perhaps ironically, given the long association of femininity with sweetness and compromise, it is feminine women who currently need the most independence and strength to stand up for themselves against women who are hostile to their nature and men who are ignorant of it.”<sup>6</sup>

### Involved in the World

So, far from “retiring” from the world, women need to be involved in it – in order to bring it back on a human path. This will demand clear ideas, and a lot of fortitude. A few aspects of that virtue, which women will need to apply in facing up to their particular challenges, are:

- the fortitude of not going with the crowd;<sup>7</sup>
- the fortitude of knowing that caring for the world is a nobler task than that of mastering it;
- the fortitude of knowing that a successful woman is not the same as a successful man;
- the fortitude of realising that money is less important than character; that you are worth more than your salary is worth;
- the fortitude of preparing yourself for a worthwhile commitment and sticking by it (self-worth is empty without self-commitment);
- the fortitude of being proud to aim at being a woman of character, and to resist the pathetic envy we are all capable of towards a man or woman with more power but with a weak character. Napoleon was a man of immense power, but of little fortitude. When his power collapsed, his character too went to pieces.

But since we have mentioned power, let’s stop there for a moment.

### Power

Does being a CEO mean that you have fortitude, or at least strength? No; it simply means you have power, managerial power, which very often brings out the weaknesses of a person’s character: their self-assertiveness, their inability to learn from failure, their dictatorial bent, their intolerance of others. What you have there is power – badly used. And therefore a lack of self-dominion, of the virtue of fortitude.

For most people, power probably suggests power over others, the ability to command, to control others, and maybe to have the satisfaction of seeing them obey. Far fewer people seem to reflect that power also implies the power to control oneself. And yet if we can’t control ourselves, we will do harm both to ourselves and to others.

We are talking about feminine fortitude; and a main area where it needs to be exercised today is in matters of sexuality. There is a natural attraction between man and woman, and where there is attraction, where there is desire, there is power. It is a power that lies particularly with women, for they control the situation. The controlling person is always the one who can say the decisive yes or no; and that is the woman. There is indeed a definitive moment when she can and should say Yes, and that is the moment of matrimonial consent. But before that, if she is decisive in her “Nos”, when No should be said, she is showing fortitude and also meriting admiration.

Do women realise their controlling position, and their corresponding responsibility? Do women realise that in matters sexual man is weaker than woman? His weakness is sensuality or lust. Of course woman also has her weakness in relation to man; but it more often takes the form of vanity rather than compelling lust. Today woman’s vanity is often directed at exploiting men’s lust. And that is a weakness, a very degrading weakness. And it has to be combatted with fortitude.

Precisely there is where many women seem to lack fortitude, to lack strength and independence. They are not strong enough to be independent when it comes to matters of how they dress, of how they behave, of where they go, of with whom they are and when. And in all of that they are inviting men to treat them as objects, not as persons. Objects can be used. Persons are not to be used but to be respected.

Women used to have a natural modesty<sup>8</sup> which in itself already made them attractive to men. Few women today seem to retain that natural modesty. I wonder if they did not have to *force* themselves to overcome it. Forcing oneself or letting oneself be forced that way shows anything but strength and fortitude. It rather shows weakness and a lack of independence. A return to that modesty is one of the first tasks of feminine fortitude.

Is it possible that so many young girls today entering adolescence do not realise the difference between wanting to be attractive to boys, and letting themselves be provocative?



## “Women used to have a natural modesty, which in itself already made them attractive to men... A return to that modesty is one of the first tasks of feminine fortitude”

The difference is immense; and if not understood and lived, it affects the whole of a girl's subsequent life. Fifty years ago girls understood this (indeed it seems unnatural not to understand it), and dressed and acted accordingly. Then there was only one female pursuit which was characteristically provocative, and the vast majority of women would have been deeply ashamed to give the impression they had the least affinity with that occupation. In a large public meeting in the early 1970s, I heard St Josemaría Escrivá commenting on the trend that was then quickly developing: “Today it is becoming hard to distinguish a Christian woman from a prostitute.” He wasn't afraid to speak clearly. Think it over. The heart of the matter is that a prostitute turns herself into a desirable object and a pitiful person.

Women have the power to remake society, to pull it back together again. Benedict XVI, speaking to a group of French intellectuals, insisted on the fortitude that this will require: “We must have the courage to remind our contemporaries what the person is and what humanity is.”<sup>9</sup> How are we going to remind the world of the respect due to each person, boy and girl, man and woman; the respect due in courtship, the respect due in marriage...? There will be different ways; but each way will demand courage, the virtue of fortitude. And, I repeat, it is women's fortitude that is decisive.

### The Family

Strong, independent, generous, decisive women are needed today as never before. Now let us take our theme right into the family, because today the health and strength of the family are being undermined from all sides, and on that health and strength depends the future of humanity. No one has expressed it so dramatically as Pope John Paul II: “The family is placed at the centre of the great struggle between good and evil, between life and death, between love and all that is opposed to love. To the family is entrusted the task of striving, first and foremost, to *unleash the forces of good*, the source of which is found in Christ the Redeemer of man. Every family unit needs to make these forces their own so that... ‘the family be strong with the strength of God’” (*Letter to Families*, 1994, no 23).

Each family can unleash the force of good, can be strong with God's strength, if it is inserted fully into the plan of God. Lots of families today lack the strength they should have because the parents, the husband and wife, did not insert themselves fully into God's plan for marriage. They were too calculating in their approach and kept God, and children, in the margin of those calculations. “Two to get married” – and maybe a couple of children later on just to round off a comfortable number. That is not God's plan. His plan is that marriage should be a *family project*: a man and woman loving each other, and persevering in that love because they learn to be dedicated to the children that are the natural fruit of their love and union.

Parents, if they are to keep maturing in life, need the dedication involved in loving their children. And children, if they are to mature and become as God wants them, need the dedicated

love of their parents. This, indeed, demands fortitude and generosity! And especially of the mother; of course! It is hard to build a family in all its humanising force without the presence of the father. But it is impossible without the presence of the mother. No true feminism can be developed which does not give a central position to motherhood. Woman's nature is much more essentially geared to motherhood (conceiving, bearing, nurturing) than man's. This is true biologically; and therefore, given the harmony of human nature, also psychologically. That explains the unique bond which arises between the child and the dedicated mother. It also explains the special gratitude that an adolescent boy feels towards his mother; and the veneration that men feel towards motherhood. Always provided that women are not afraid to merit that gratitude and veneration.

The longing for motherhood goes deeper in a woman, and is more essential to her fulfilment and happiness, than any desire for a business or professional career. Can the two be combined? Yes, that is possible, provided one keeps one's priorities right. If enough strong women emerge to give priority to family and motherhood, they will help their colleagues and friends to re-examine their own priorities, and perhaps to see that they have been choosing a soft, apparently easier, but more frustrating way of life than that of the woman who has had the fortitude, the strength of mind and will, to follow a much more natural way and one more blessed by God.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>A point developed at length in the author's *Man and Values*, Scepter Press, chapter 9.

<sup>2</sup>cf. White, Lynn, *Educating our Daughters*, 1950, p. 18. More than sixty years ago, some (not too many) were aware of the danger of radical feminism. In another book of that same period we read: “The rage for equality has so blinded the last hundred years that every effort has been made to obliterate the divergence in role, in conduct, and in dress. It has been assumed, clearly out of this same impiety, that because the mission of woman is biological in a broader way, it is less to be admired. Therefore the attempt has been to masculinise women. (Has anyone heard arguments that the male should strive to imitate the female in anything?) A social subversion of the most spectacular kind has resulted. Today, in addition to lost generations, we have a self-pitying, lost sex... The anomalous phase of the situation is that the women themselves have not been more concerned to retrieve the mistake” Richard M. Weaver: *Ideas have Consequences*, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1948, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup>Also because man feels morally weaker and wants the inspiration woman can give him. George Eliot, in a 19th-century setting, presents us with a man explaining his regret to the woman he loves when he finds her doing something “bad” (in this case, gambling). She objects: “But why should you regret it more because I am a woman?”, and he replies, “Perhaps because we need that you should be better than we are...” *Daniel Deronda*, Ch. 29.

<sup>4</sup>Speaking of how wrongly oriented feminism tends to have a masculinising effect on women, a psychologist writes: “When women, entering professional life in a masculinised world, adopt masculine ‘defects’, they become *hard and violent* (instead of strong), *independent and uprooted* (instead of sociable and linked to personal values), technical (instead of practical and concerned with what is concrete)” B. Castilla, *La Complementariedad Varón-Mujer*, Madrid, 1993, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup>“The active or “dominating” approach to things we customarily call “manly”, refers to many more situations than the sexual one, and though it would not be tenable to state that a woman could not display great courage and activity, the role of leading and mastering the world is nevertheless not as congenial to her as to the man. In contrast with the masculine, the innate feminine approach to the world is more in the direction of caring for, devoting herself to, thus more person-directed”: van den Aardweg, Gerard J.M.: *On the Origins and Treatment of Homosexuality*, Praeger, New York, 1986, p. 259.

<sup>6</sup>Davidson, N.: *The Failure of Feminism*, N.Y. 1988, p. 271.

<sup>7</sup>Charles Dickens' Mr. Pickwick (caught in an electioneering meeting in a strange town) expresses his political correctness: “It's always best on these occasion to do what the mob do.” “But suppose there are two mobs?” suggested Mr. Snodgrass. “Shout with the largest,” replied Mr. Pickwick” *Pickwick Papers*, Ch. 13.

<sup>8</sup>Mode, in the sense of fashion, and modesty derive from the same root, *modus*, which denotes a right measure between extremes. Modesty is the best fashion, because it marks the measure by which a woman becomes more attractive, as the feminine person she is, without letting herself be turned into an object.

<sup>9</sup>[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2007/february/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spc\\_20070210\\_academy-paris\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spc_20070210_academy-paris_en.html).

# British Evangelisation: Present and Future

By Dr Dudley Plunkett

As we await the Papal Exhortation following the recent Synod on “The New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith” Dr Dudley Plunkett encourages a humble realism concerning the state of British “outreach”. He is senior academic tutor at the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham.

A troubling question is why, when there has been so much airing of views about the new evangelisation leading up to Pope Benedict’s *Porta Fidei* and the Synod, we have seen so little actual fruit. There are plentiful speculative articles, the Catholic media continually feature the subject, and there are informative events and discussions being planned by dioceses, parishes and other groups as part of the Year of Faith. But how many Catholics are reaching out to those who have fallen away or who have never seriously thought about who Jesus is? Pope Paul asserted that “the Church exists to evangelise”, not to analyse and discuss evangelisation! This is an extremely pressing question because the argument that Catholics need to prepare for evangelisation is only valid if those who undertake such preparation go on to proclaim, support and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice.

It must of course be acknowledged that one can find many instances of active evangelising in the Church, where organisations, communities and parishes reach out to non-believers using a wide variety of methods. There are Catholic media that effectively announce the Gospel. There are priests and lay people who speak, write and minister in ways that call people to attend to God’s Word. The problem is that these instances are far too infrequent, particularly in the European heartland of the Church, and certainly in England.

Those who doubt this judgement can look at the localities in which they live and say whether the Catholic Church is as active in its local missionary activity as evangelical Christians, or indeed pressure groups outside the Christian fold. Those who claim that it is not necessary to call people into the Church can stop to consider what the Church has to offer, which they themselves have received but are not proposing to others, that is to say the promise of a kingdom that is already being built in this world but which will eventuate in eternal salvation.

When the teachings of the Church are attacked and their advocates described publicly as bigots, who is there to come forward to restate and defend the universal principles that underlie Catholic doctrine on abortion, homosexual and extramarital sex, euthanasia and so forth? Those who say that they do not have the time to spare for these activities can ask themselves who then should be engaging in it and, if they do not, then who is going to ensure the survival of the Church when it is being pilloried, if not indeed persecuted on all sides. The neglect of Jesus’s instruction to his disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations is a great scandal in the Church.

These remarks are not intended to be accusatory so much as to help uncover the roots and dynamics of the issue. How can

we explain the inactivity, even the lethargy, which appears to have become so characteristic of the Catholic community in our European societies? Some answers can no doubt be given to these questions. Catholics in a country like Britain have been a minority since the Reformation, and a persecuted minority at that. This has meant that they have learnt to hide their identity through fear of exposure, attack or ridicule. Further, there is the undoubted fact that few Catholics are sufficiently informed, catechised or confident to be the ones that will step forward to proclaim, teach or defend the faith. It is also true that there is little in the way of a support system for Catholics who do wish to evangelise beyond informal contacts with family, friends and work colleagues, and even here there is an unfulfilled need for preparatory formation. And, not least, there is evidence of a lack of unity, of spiritual energy, indeed of faith, without which any evangelising efforts must surely fail.

This is precisely what Pope Benedict in *Porta Fidei* is alluding to when he asks for efforts to strengthen faith and the work of proclaiming the Gospel. He insists upon the dual need for formation in and sharing of faith: “Today too, there is a need for stronger ecclesial commitment to new evangelisation in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith” (PF, 7).

He affirms that this is a role for all believers: “Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us” (PF, 6). Why are we falling so far short, and what could change this? Again, these are the questions that the Synod raised for itself, and many of the bishops’ interventions during synodal sessions referred to the efforts being made in their dioceses to support evangelisation. But these were the bishops with the greatest interest in the topic, which was why they were in Rome.

More generally, there is a need for Church leaders to wake up to the serious failure of the Catholic Church to carry out its God-given mission to non-believers. How many bishops are urging their flock to spread the Gospel as Jesus did? How many are offering encouragement, approval and support so that this actually happens? The Synod is proposing structures to support the new evangelisation, and yet the hierarchy of England and Wales recently dismantled its Catholic Agency for the Support of Evangelisation (Case). It is at this level that the primary responsibility lies. The Synod also asked for officially sponsored programmes of spiritual and catechetical formation, and these are indeed urgently needed so that priests, seminarians and lay people can build up the knowledge, confidence, faith and skills to become Catholic apologists and evangelisers presenting Catholic doctrine with clear reasons and without compromise.

## **“We must not be content to allow inward-looking discussion and programmatic statements to take the place of bringing the Gospel to the world”**

Local church groups and parishes similarly need to identify new resources of people, materials and opportunities for evangelisation. For example, apart from parish bidding prayers, what serious attempts are made to galvanise prayer for the outreach work of the Church? Do parishes follow the Pope’s monthly prayer intentions that regularly include a missionary dimension? When do people have the opportunity to hear the testimonies of those who have come into the Church through the ministry of others, through spiritual journeys or actual programmes of teaching that they encountered? Are parishioners urged to invite others to services, pilgrimages, groups and talks as part of their everyday Christian lives so as not to miss what may be heaven-sent opportunities?

Any Catholic who stops to think for a moment can see that outside the Church there is no Saviour, no Eucharist, no guarantee of truth, no promise of the restoration of justice, and indeed, no reliable basis for joy, hope or meaning to life. A positive message has been missing in evangelising, and that has meant that fear and embarrassment paralyse believers when they should rather be charged with enthusiasm in the service of the Gospel and with confidence to “preach the Word in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2).

The first step forward must be to learn from those who are already successfully engaging in evangelising. There are good models of different kinds. One example is the Alpha course developed within the Church of England, but which has been widely adopted in the Catholic Church, especially in France. Other models can be found in the approaches used by chaplains in hospitals, universities and prisons, where contact with unbelievers is part of the normal day’s work, and where a real response can be made based on knowledge of the state of people’s religious views and needs.

The courageous work of pro-life groups in vigils at abortion clinics, of street pastors working with clubbers at night-time in city centres, of those offering prayer ministry for healing in shopping centres, of street evangelisers such as the St Patrick’s group in Soho – all these examples need to be better known, and imitated.<sup>1</sup> Then there’s the output of media groups working through radio, TV, internet sites, blogs and video teaching programmes, such as Catholic Evangelisation Services; these too, while offering an independent type of Christian teaching, provide an important stimulus to on-the-ground evangelising.

There is a further dimension to this work which has been evoked at the Synod, and that is the wider cultural engagement demanded of the Church in countries with a strongly secular environment. Christian faith discerns the moral collapse that occurs in a world without God, and thus without supernatural hope and love. Nevertheless, stirrings or “preambles” of faith, to which the Synod Propositions refer (see page 21), can provide a basis for the dialogue that the Synod advocates with secular humanists, scientists, and

people of other religions. The example is cited of the Courtyard of the Gentiles project of the Pontifical Council for Culture, in which searching encounters are organised between believers and non-believers. Evangelisation must not be reduced to a head-count. Evangelising on the wider scale is a vital part of the Church’s missionary effort using all the resources of Catholic theology, apologetics, art, ethical campaigns and creative communications to help build the new “civilisation of love” called for by Pope John Paul II.

What is most needed for an effective new evangelisation is a great deepening of faith and courage. This will require prayer, leadership and commitment throughout the Church, testing the resolve of the Synod Fathers and the particular churches, especially in Europe. We must no longer be content to allow inward-looking discussion and programmatic statements to take the place of bringing the Gospel to the world. St Paul tells us, reassuringly, that “all who call upon the Lord will be saved”. But he goes on to ask how people can call on the Lord without belief; how they can have belief without having heard of the Lord; and how they can hear of him if no one preaches about him, or if a preacher is not sent (cf Rom 10:14-15). Indeed, this is the whole problem and its solution in a nutshell, and it should be enough to prick our consciences.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Emmanuel Community has been conducting street evangelisation in France for 30 years and has a wealth of experience to pass on. See Jean-Luc Moens, *Oser Évangéliser aujourd’hui* Paris: Ed de l’Emmanuel, 2012).



# Embodying the Pure Bride of Christ

By Joanne Whittering

Joanne Whittering, a consecrated virgin and Oxford theology graduate, shows how such consecrated living is seen by the modern magisterium as a powerful embodiment of a key meaning of femininity.

The *Catechism* says of the vocation of consecrated virginity:

From Apostolic times Christian Virgins, called by the Lord to cling only to Him with greater freedom of heart, body and spirit, have decided with the Church's approval to live in a state of virginity "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven". (Mt 19:12) Virgins who, committed to the holy plan of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop, according to the approved liturgical rite, are betrothed mystically to Christ the Son of God, and are dedicated to the service of the Church (CCC 922-4).

In today's culture the language of spousal love is unlikely to be the most obvious way in which a young woman will understand or express her love for Christ, much less His relationship to her. It seems either a bit alien, or in fact a bit presumptuous! What came naturally to St Catherine of Siena and Elizabeth of the Trinity does not come naturally to us any longer. But perhaps that is because it hides a confusion. What is being spoken of here is not the state of "mystical marriage" of which so many of the great contemplative saints were writing.

When the candidate is asked by the bishop in the Rite of Consecration, "are you resolved to accept solemn consecration as a bride of Jesus Christ the Son of God?", what he is asking is whether the candidate is called to *embody the vocation of the Church herself* as the Bride of Christ the Bridegroom. The language is not that of ecstatic mystical marriage, it is that of St Paul and the Apocalypse, and of the Church Fathers. But it still needs some unpacking for all that.

St Paul writes to the church at Corinth: "I have espoused you to Christ as a bride to her only husband" (2 Cor 11:2). And he works that imagery through more completely in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 5, when he speaks of the mystery of the marriage between Christ and the Church providing the pattern for human marriage. There is background for this imagery in the Old Testament in the relationship between God and the people of Israel. It is an ambiguous image in that sometimes, as in Jer 14:17 and 31:4, it is the "virgin daughter Zion" or "Israel" who is betrothed to God in covenant fidelity, while at other times, as in the prophets Hosea and Ezekiel, Israel is the prostitute or adulterous wife.

The latter, however, is an image of infidelity on the part of the people, of breaking the covenant with God through sin. An image concerning sexual morality is not just about the moral value of chastity in itself. It connotes something beyond the morality of the particular act, namely fidelity or rejection of relationship with God.

So when St Paul picks up this language he also is using sexual purity, virginity, as an expression of ultimate fidelity to God: "I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband." And so he writes to the Ephesians:

"Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her having washed her with the cleansing of water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:22-30).

As Pope John-Paul wrote in *Mulieris Dignitatem* 25, the whole Church and all its members are the Bride. The Fathers understood this clearly, and one can find such beautifully expressive passages as this from Bl Issac of Stella:

"The Son, pleading for his bride, says to the Father, 'I desire that as you and I are one, so too they may be one with us.' The bridegroom [Christ] then is one with the Father, and one with his bride. All that he found alien in her he took away by nailing it to the Cross. He took upon himself what was her own proper nature and clothed himself in it; what was his own as God he gave to her. He took away what was of the devil: what was human he took upon himself; what was divine he conferred on her, so that all that belongs to the bride should become the bridegroom's" (*Sermon 11*).

That is a profound reflection for all the baptised in their relation to Christ, but what makes it applicable to the consecrated virgin in particular is that her virginity embodies the purity and fidelity of the Church to Christ. It is in that sense that it has a value beyond simply its own moral good. The prayer of consecration itself picks up this language when it speaks of this vocation in relation to marriage. It is careful to affirm that "the honour of marriage is in no way lessened", but it continues in a thoroughly Pauline language: "Yet your loving wisdom chooses those who make the sacrifice of marriage for the sake of the Mystery of which it is the sign. They renounce the joys of marriage but cherish all that it foreshadows".

It is obvious from this embodiment that there must be, as Archbishop Burke has said, actual virginity to offer to Christ and his Church.<sup>1</sup> One cannot embody, or consecrate, something one does not possess. And once consecrated the virgin cannot be dispensed from her consecration. In all these senses it is a different charism from a religious vow of chastity, even if its practical prospective effect is similar. Of this distinctive vocation, Mgr Paul Marie Guillaum, wrote the following in 2006, reflecting on the teaching primarily of Pope

## “The whole Church and all its members are the Bride”

John Paul II but also of Pope Benedict, drawing out much of the biblical and patristic imagery discussed above:

“From a certain perspective, the [consecrated] vocation is a call to ‘an interior encounter with the love of Christ, which is a redemptive love’. Christ calls you ‘with an immense interior love’; it is a ‘love of election’, which invites you to belong no longer to yourself, but to belong exclusively to Him” (*Redemptionis Donum* n 3,7).

*Vita Consecrata* affirms that consecrated virgins “constitute an eschatological image of the Heavenly Espousal and of the future life, in which they find the final plenitude of life in Christ their Spouse.”<sup>2</sup>

There is a very personal relationship here between the individual and Christ. Her embodiment of the Church’s vocation is not simply functional or representative. It denotes the relationship which she is called to have with Christ, without presuming on any special mystical state, which is a separate matter. It is probably true to say that this is a relationship which only begins to make real sense, rather than just theoretical sense, after the consecration itself.

Something of its character may be grasped, however, in reflecting that the other dimension to the spousal relationship is that the Church is primarily embodied in a personal way by the Blessed Virgin Mary, and it is by immersing oneself in the Marian vocation – what has come to be called in the theology of von Balthasar and Pope Benedict “the Marian Profile”<sup>3</sup> – of the Church that the consecrated virgin will grasp the true spirit of her personal vocation to love and fidelity to Christ.

### Marian Vocation

The Church has consistently referred all consecrated women to the Blessed Virgin as their model. And this teaching has recurred particularly in the teaching of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Blessed John Paul said to consecrated women:

“Love Mary of Nazareth, model of Christian Virginity ... She had the fullness, in her body and in her spirit, of that which you desire with all your might to be: virgin in her heart and in her body, espoused with a total and exclusive adhesion to Christ; Mother by the gift of the Spirit. My dear sisters, Mary is your sister, your Mother, the Mistress of your life” (*Discourse*, 2 June 1995).

“The example of Mary contains all the beauty of virginity and encourages all those who are called to the consecrated life to follow her example. The hour has come to re-evaluate virginity in the light of Mary. The hour has come to propose anew to young men and women [virginity as] a serious way of life. Mary is our aide to engagement, as in her appears the nobility of a total gift of the heart to God, and her fidelity strengthens our perseverance, always in moments of difficulty or danger” (29 March 1995, on *The Virgin Mary and the Consecrated Life*).

It is clear from the papal teaching that these two aspects, the Marian and the ecclesial, are inextricably linked. It is an inseparable link, which is clearly made in relation to the feminine in general in *Redemptoris Mater* 46:

“The Marian dimension of the Church’s life takes on special importance in relation to women and their status. In fact femininity has a *unique relationship* with the Mother of the Redeemer ... the figure of Mary of Nazareth sheds light on the vocation of womanhood as *such* by the very fact that God, in the sublime event of the Incarnation of his Son, entrusted himself to the ministry, the free and active ministry, of a woman. It can be said that women, by looking at Mary, find the secret of living their femininity with dignity.”

“The Church has consistently referred all consecrated women to the Blessed Virgin as their model”

At an essential level Our Lady’s response is the perfect response of the created order to God the Father, in Our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. That perfect response is one which she, free from original sin, is able to make perfectly, but which we can only make by the redeeming grace of God, through our incorporation into the Body of Christ in its sacramental life. The life of redeemed humanity in the Church is one of full, humble, faithful, obedient response, one which Our Lady in her assent at the Annunciation, her faithful service of Christ in His ministry and in the life of the Apostolic Church, and her Assumption prefigures and exemplifies. It is that Christocentric Marian understanding which *par excellence* describes the vocation of consecrated virginity in particular.

“To give your undivided attention to the Lord.”

St Paul’s exploration of the vocation to Virginity in 1 Cor 7 provides the final aspect of the theological underpinning of this vocation. Fr Lucien Legrand explores this in depth in his *The Biblical Doctrine of Virginity*.<sup>4</sup> The Pauline view is that to be completely concentrated on the reality of salvation, that is to be completely concentrated on Christ, requires a certain extrication from worldliness which is more easily achieved in virginity than in marriage:

“The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord, but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs ... and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman, or a virgin, is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs ... I say this ... to secure your undivided attention to the Lord.” (1 Cor 7:32-35).

The perspective here is that which the *Catechism* uses in

## Embodying the Pure Bride of Christ continued

referring to the words of Christ in the Gospel, that it is “celibacy for the sake of the kingdom” (Mt 12:19). *Mulieris Dignitatem* defines this as

“voluntary celibacy chosen for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, in view of man’s eschatological vocation to union with God. ... it represents an ‘innovation’ with respect to the tradition of the Old Testament ... celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, or rather virginity, is undeniably an innovation connected with the Incarnation of God. From the moment of Christ’s coming, the expectation of the people of God has to be directed to the eschatological kingdom which is coming and to which he must lead the New Israel.”<sup>5</sup>

It is in such a context that 1 Cor 7 needs to be understood as a complete affirmation of the vocation to be wholly concentrated on Christ, in anticipation of that time when

Christ will be “all in all” in the Kingdom of God. As with the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, virginity is a radical orientation towards Christ, living the Gospel in the here and now, which is thereby an efficacious sign in the present of that final salvation which will be fully realised in the eschatological Kingdom at the end of time.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Burke, R.L. Archbishop Lex Orandi, *Lex Credendi: the Rite of Consecration and the vocation of Consecrated Virginity lived in the world* paper given at Rome 2008 International Congress of Consecrated Virgins (16 May 2008) para 15.

<sup>2</sup>Guillaume Mgr Paul Marie “D’un Pape à l’autre” 1 January 2006 *Christi Sponsa: Ordre des Virgines Consacrées* from which I have made a rough translation.

<sup>3</sup>Von Balthasar and Ratzinger, *Mary: the Church at the Source* Ignatius Press 2005.

<sup>4</sup>Lagrang Fr Lucien MEP *The Biblical Doctrine of Virginity* Chapman 1963 pp 92-3.

<sup>5</sup>*Mulieris Dignitatem* 20.

## The Truth Will Set You Free

### Catholic Doctrine in the Pastoral Context

### INVITING PARISHIONERS TO EVANGELISE

Not all of us are called to preach publicly, but all of us are called on to play our part in spreading the Gospel – the “Good News” that Jesus Christ is God with us, that he died to reconcile us to the Father, and that he is risen from the dead and has poured out the Holy Spirit on his chosen ones.

There are many ways we can do this and many different words and examples we can use to get this message across to the world around us. First of all, as fellow believers we remind each other of the good news by talking about our faith together, by encouraging each other to grow in knowledge of our faith and by praying together.

Sometimes we may need to explain some point of the Church’s teaching to a fellow Catholic or clear up a misunderstanding. This can happen in casual conversation through ordinary friendships or in a formal setting like a school governors group, and so on. To “counsel the doubtful” is one of the spiritual works of mercy.

We may be called on to catechise others in the Church, such as children and young people or adults seeking full

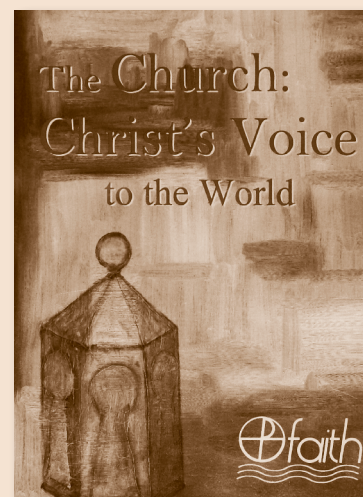
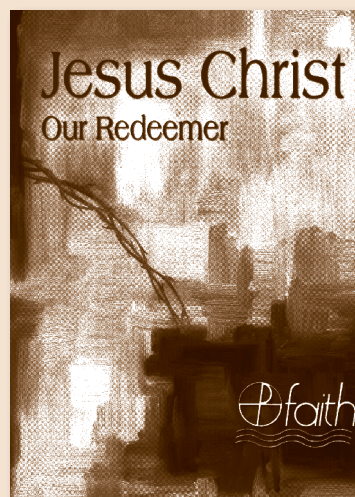
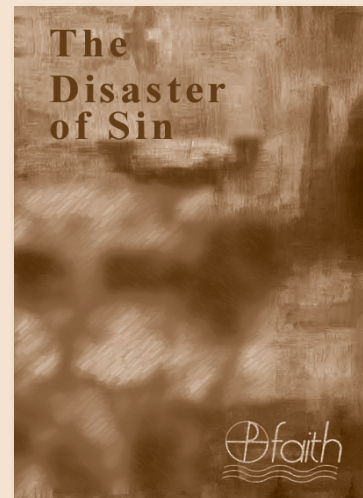
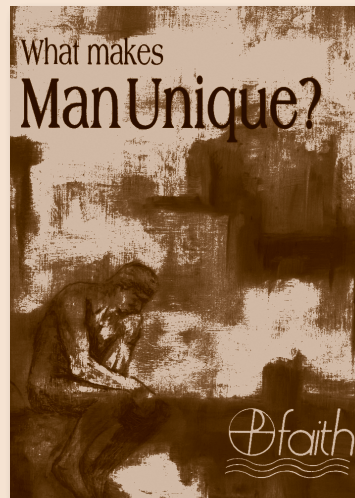
communion with Christ. This is both an honour and a duty. We are co-workers of the apostles (bishops and priests) in this work, but as lay Catholics we are all equipped and commissioned to speak for Jesus Christ because of our baptism and confirmation.

We should always be alert to situations where a Christian influence can be brought to bear on the world around us. Of course it is best not to do this in a sanctimonious or “churchy” way. But if we have built genuine relationships of trust and respect, and offered honest friendship to those around us, then with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will find the right words to say when the opportunity arises. It may be a matter of dropping a thought provoking comment into a conversation which helps people to see beyond the secular view. Or it may be that we quietly invite someone to a spiritual event or gathering, introducing them to the Catholic community – and ultimately introducing them to Jesus Christ.

There may also be times when we are called on to speak up in public or private situations where misunderstandings or misconceptions about the Catholic faith are being repeated. We may have to bear witness to human moral principles which are being undermined in politics, writing to the press or lobbying parliament. We have to use our skills and influence in the world to protect the common good and promote an authentic Christian society.



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YEAR OF FAITH 2012  
2013

# Continuity and Development

## Extracts from the First Twenty Propositions Presented to the Holy Father by Last October's Synod on the New Evangelisation

### 1 ) THE NATURE OF THE NEW EVANGELISATION

#### **Proposition 4: The Holy Trinity, Source of the New Evangelisation**

The Church and her evangelising mission have their origin and source in the Most Holy Trinity ... The New Evangelisation recognises the primacy of God's grace.

#### **Proposition 5: The New Evangelisation and Inculturation**

The New Evangelisation is a time of awakening, of new encouragement and new witness that Jesus Christ is the centre of our faith and daily life. It calls every member of the Church

- to renew their faith;
- to make an actual effort to share it;
- to recognise, certainly, a growing awareness of people to the changing circumstances of life today;
- to value what is positive in every culture, while at the same time purifying it from elements that are contrary to the full realisation of the person according to the design of God revealed in Christ.

#### **Proposition 6: Proclamation of the Gospel**

... the Church ... must be missionary (cf *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14; CCC, 851) ... [involving] the proclamation of his life and of the paschal mystery of his passion, death, resurrection and glorification [to those who] have become vain in their reasonings and ... [those] living and dying in this world without God, [who] are exposed to final despair.

#### **Proposition 7: New Evangelisation as a Permanent Missionary Dimension of the Church**

It is proposed that the Church proclaim the permanent worldwide missionary dimension of her mission ... to

- evangelise those who do not know Jesus Christ;
- [to support] the continuing growth in faith that is the ordinary life of the Church;
- to [reach out to] those who have become distant from the Church.

#### **Proposition 8: Witnessing in a Secularised World**

As Christians we cannot remain indifferent to the process of secularisation. ... our present age, manifests aspects [that are] more difficult than in the past ...

#### **Proposition 9: New Evangelisation and Initial Proclamation**

We consider it necessary that there be a Pastoral Plan of Initial Proclamation, teaching a living encounter with Jesus Christ. This pastoral document would provide the first elements for the catechetical process, enabling its insertion into the lives of the parish communities.

#### **Proposition 10: Right to Proclaim and to Hear the Gospel**

... it is an inalienable right for each person, whatever one's religion or lack of religion, to be able to know Jesus Christ and the Gospel. This proclamation, given with integrity, must be offered with a total respect for each person, without any form of proselytising.

#### **Proposition 11: New Evangelisation and the Prayerful Reading of Sacred Scripture**

... the divine word [should] "be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity" (*Verbum Domini*, 1).

#### **Proposition 12: Documents of Vatican II**

The Synod Fathers recognise the teaching of Vatican II as a vital instrument for transmitting the faith in the context of the New Evangelisation. ... Pope Benedict XVI, who has indicated the hermeneutical principle of reform within continuity ... "wherever this interpretation guided the implementation of the Council, new life developed and new fruit ripened" (Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia, 22 December 2005). In this way it will be possible to respond to the need for renewal required by the modern world and, at the same time, faithfully preserve the identity of the Church's nature and mission.

**“The notions of ‘Natural Law’ and ‘human nature’ are capable of rational demonstrations, both at the academic and at the popular levels”**

## **2) THE CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH’S MINISTRY TODAY**

### **Proposition 13: Challenges of our Time**

Popular religiosity is important but not sufficient.

### **Proposition 14: The New Evangelisation and Reconciliation**

The Church must exercise her ministry of reconciliation in a calm and resolute way....

### **Proposition 15: New Evangelisation and Human Rights**

Every opportunity must be taken in various local situations and associations to articulate, uphold and guard, both in theory and in practice, those rights flowing from an adequate understanding of the human person as set forth in the natural law.

### **Proposition 16: Religious Liberty**

The Synod Fathers propose a renewed commitment to and wider diffusion of the teachings of *Dignitatis Humanae*.

### **Proposition 17: Preambles of Faith and Theology of Credibility**

[Today there are] new paradigms of thought and life. It is of paramount importance, for a New Evangelisation, to underline the role of the Preambles of Faith. ... The notions of “Natural Law” and “human nature” are capable of rational demonstrations, both at the academic and at the popular levels. Such an intellectual development ... [can] open a way to recognise the existence of a God the Creator and the message of Jesus Christ the Redeemer. The Synodal Fathers ask theologians to develop a new apologetics of Christian thought ...

### **Proposition 18: New Evangelisation and the Means of Social Communication**

It is necessary that convinced Christians be formed, prepared and made capable ... to use well the languages and the instruments of today ... [especially to] share testimonies of life.

### **Proposition 19: New Evangelisation and Human Development**

Today it is not possible to think of the New Evangelisation without the proclamation of full freedom from everything that oppresses the human person, ie sin and its consequences. Without a serious commitment for life and justice and the change of the situations that generate poverty and exclusion (cf *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 36) there can be no progress.

### **Proposition 20: The New Evangelisation and the Way of Beauty**

In the New Evangelisation, there should be particular attention paid to the way of beauty: Christ, the “Good Shepherd” (cf Jn 10:11) is the Truth in person, the beautiful revelation in sign ... Beauty attracts us to love, through which God reveals to us his face in which we believe. In this light artists feel themselves both spoken to and privileged communicators of the New Evangelisation. In the formation of seminarians, education in beauty should not be neglected, nor education in the sacred arts, as we are reminded in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (cf *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 129).





# Letters to the Editor

The Editor, The Parish House, Moorhouse Road,  
Bayswater, London W2 5DJ, [editor@faith.org.uk](mailto:editor@faith.org.uk)

## IMPLEMENTING GAUDIUM ET SPES

Dear Father Editor,

Thank you for your November editorial. I was interested to read your thoughts on how the Church in general has failed to fulfil the call of *Gaudium et Spes*, which task the *Faith* movement has tried to do in its presentation of the relationship between science and the teaching of the Church. I feel have received much wisdom from attending *Faith* conferences and reading *Faith* magazine over the years.

Your editorial has made me realise that I have been very fortunate to have had this chance to engage so constructively with themes so clearly presented by the Church's most recent Ecumenical Council. I am very grateful to the priests and lay leaders of the movement who have given of their time to help young people properly understand, appreciate and live the beautiful truths and life of our faith.

Yours faithfully,  
Melanie Bullivant  
Patch Lane  
Redditch

## RETRIEVING RONALD KNOX

Dear Father Editor,

I am so glad that you have published an extract from Ronald Knox's book *God and the Atom* ("Apologetics in the Atomic Age", *Faith* November 2012). I look forward to the lifting of the *damnatio memoriae* on this brilliant scholar and convert, whose writings have been unavailable for half a century. It is amazing that he has been consigned to the dustbin of history, along with Belloc and to a lesser extent Chesterton. It almost seems

as if nothing before Vatican II is worth noticing any more.

In 1950 when I was received into the Catholic Church I bought a Catholic bible – the Knox New Testament, which had recently been published to great acclaim. I carried his small volume around the world with me until it literally fell to pieces. I had extreme difficulty in getting a replacement. It was not republished in the UK, only in the US. I never managed to get hold of the Knox Old Testament.

At some point derogatory criticism began about the Knox translation because it is based on the Latin Vulgate. Never mind that for centuries it was the official scriptures of the Latin Church, and St Jerome was neither a fool nor an ignorant charlatan. Ronald Knox had both the Latin and the Greek beside him as he worked on the New Testament, referring to the Hebrew where relevant. His is the only translation that I know which comments on the difference between the Latin and Greek manuscripts, with most useful footnotes.

At last, after 50 years, thanks to Aid to the Church in Need, I have the whole Knox Bible. They also offer his excellent book *The Belief of Catholics*. I hope more volumes will soon be available. We need Ronald Knox.

Yours faithfully,  
Hilary Shaw  
Port Navas  
Cornwall

## "THE WOMAN"

Dear Father Editor,

The term "Woman" used by Our Lord when addressing Our Lady at the marriage feast of Cana and mentioned by Joanna Bogle in her article in the Nov/Dec issue needs to be carefully understood. Like so much in John's Gospel it is highly significant. Calvin thought it was a rebuke but that could not have been further from the truth. The term "woman" refers to

that "woman", announced by God in Genesis 3:15 (the verse known as the Protoevangelium), when condemning the devil: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; it will bruise your head and you will strike its heel." A better translation of "bruise" is "crush", as we shall see.

The Church Fathers say that this woman is the new Eve, Mary, and that her seed is Christ, who has indeed crushed the devil by his victory on the Cross. And victory it was, as the first depictions of Christ on the Cross showed him fully clothed and triumphant. It is only later that the suffering side took precedence. That is why they covered the Cross during Passiontide, because it did not focus on the suffering but on the triumph. It is, of course, an anachronism that our suffering crucifixes are now covered during Passiontide!

And it is appropriate that we stay at the Crucifixion for it is then that the word "woman" is used again: "Seeing His Mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to His Mother, 'Woman, this is your son'. Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother'" (John 19:26, 27). Clearly Our Lord would not address His mother other than with the greatest respect at that crucial time.

So when Our Lord used this term it was to remind her of her part in the grand plan of God to help in repairing the fracturing of humanity caused by Adam's sin. It was loaded with meaning for both of them. That is why Mary, having understood the term and its full implications, was able to turn to the stewards at the wedding feast in Cana and tell them to do whatever her Son would tell them.

So, what Our Lord is saying when he uses that one word "Woman" is: "You who were destined to be essential to the plan to save mankind,... you who were kept free from sin so you could freely consent,... you who did say 'Yes',... you who will watch over My

**"I am grateful to the priests and lay leaders of the movement who have given of their time to help young people properly understand, appreciate and live the beautiful truths and life of our faith"**

Mystical Body,... you who I will bring into my heavenly kingdom as soon as your role on earth is complete,... you who have enabled me to help the Father solve the problem of man's sinfulness"!

That is why we have a devotion to Mary and that is why she has elevated all women to a very high level. When things went wrong God turned to a woman, not to a man!

Ark of the Covenant, Mystical Rose,  
Cause of our joy! Pray for us!

*Yours faithfully,  
Christopher Bull  
Reed Ave  
Canterbury*

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## THE ADVENT OF MAN

*Dear Father Editor,*  
Many thanks for your considered reply to my letter (Nov/Dec 2012) and the suggestion for further reading. I have perused Fr Roger Nesbitt's pamphlet on original sin and there are many helpful and clear comments within. It was particularly helpful to read his description of monophyletism (several people from the same stock) in connection with the debate about monogenism or polygenism. This scenario is exactly that envisaged by C S Lewis in his work *The Problem of Pain*, which I mentioned in my letter. One clan in one area was specially chosen and elevated to spiritual, soul-bearing humanity and they fell.

However, Fr Nesbitt does not close the case against polygenism, and neither has the Vatican. He admits that it would be difficult to reconcile this with traditional doctrine, but not impossible. The question is left open and even Pius XII did not absolutely rule it out. He stated only that it was difficult to see how original sin could be explained other than through monogenism.

He stopped short of declaring that polygenism was against Church

teaching. That was a humble, honest and interesting hesitation. It would be good to see speculative theologies (what I have called theological play) to look at how a polygenistic explanation might hold to true doctrine. It is also true, as Fr Nesbitt recounts, that our evidence as scientists and archaeologists is scant and that vast time periods separate us from the days that we are considering. We dance the dance of a thousand mysteries and speculations.

I do feel, however, that the "party line" held in *Faith* Movement about everything before humanity being purely instinctive and materially driven is questionable. It reminds me of Descartes and his view of the animal kingdom as automata, a term that has often been misconstrued.

He never denied that animals felt pain, for example, and did not deprive such creatures of sensation, only of rational thought and self-reflection. Call this intellect and will from another angle, but the ability to think for oneself and to create speech without external stimuli are essential differences between humanity and the material creation. However, the tendency is to speak of animals as though they are sophisticated machines.

Fr Nesbitt asks what spiritual life an amoeba might have, mockingly, and whether rabbits could ever fly to the moon. There are two considerations here:

- a) Living things have the gift of life. Is this not a spiritual quality to a greater or a lesser extent?
- b) There are grades of awareness, response and personality among the animal kingdom. An amoeba would have next to nothing of this, but still has the spark of life. A dog or a cat is hugely more advanced and shows flashes of personality, as do the greater apes or dolphins. Animals can respond to a spiritual presence, too, whether showing fright in the presence of evil, or becoming docile

and peaceful in the presence of holiness. This gradation, this emerging sophistication, should be noted and celebrated. However, rabbits were not called to "come up higher" and commune with their Creator as rational beings.

My final point is that I do not feel that you have grasped the value of using both "from above" and "from below language" together. Your reply was "from above" and spoke great truth. Yet, the sense of emergence within living beings, the very presence of God within the world, is also at hand. We can approach things from both angles and capture a more whole view of a great mystery, rather like light behaving as waves and particles. Wherever an emergence happens, there is something new that cannot simply be accounted for by what went before.

That there is an amazing difference in human beings cannot be discounted. What we call "soul" is very different from the gift of life and perception possessed by other creatures, but is there no level of connection?

Something new happened with the rise of the homo species, but this was within a grand and aeons-old scheme of the rise of life, in which the Creator has always been immanent as well as transcendent. But we dance the dance of a thousand speculations and mysteries.

*Yours faithfully,  
Fr Kevin O'Donnell  
Horsham Ave  
Peacehaven*



# Comment on the Comments

by William Oddie

## Dignified Dying: Formula or Friendship

Recent discussions about the so-called Liverpool Care Pathway have raised questions for Catholics, not about whether or not the LCP is being used by some practitioners as a sort of euthanasia by the back door (since it looks to me as though in some cases it clearly has been), but about how exactly we are to confront it. A plausible case can be made for it. Some of its defenders are undoubtedly decent and compassionate people. The LCP is intended, so they say, to ease the last hours of dying patients to save them the suffering caused by invasive treatment. One defender, on the *Today* programme, claimed, with every appearance of sincerity, that they are simply doing what the hospice movement does: this is the introduction of real palliative care into the geriatric mainstream.

Its critics say that it is a way of hastening patients' deaths: and the evidence really does seem to be that this is often the case. Typically, it involves patients being sedated and then denied nutrition and fluids by tube. There are around 450,000 deaths in Britain each year of people who are in hospital or under NHS care. About 29 per cent – 130,000 – are of patients who are on the Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP).

According to Professor Patrick Pulicino, far too often elderly patients who could live longer are placed on the LCP which has now become, he says, an “assisted death pathway” rather than a “care pathway”. He cited pressure on beds and difficulty in nursing confused or difficult-to-manage elderly patients as factors. He has also recounted how he has personally intervened to take patients off the LCP who later went on to be successfully treated.

Now, another ingredient has been introduced into the mix: a financial incentive for hospitals to get as many elderly patients as possible on to the LCP. In some cases, it is claimed,

hospitals have been set targets that between a third and two-thirds of all deaths should be on the pathway. It is also alleged that at least £30m of taxpayers' money has been given to hospitals over the last three years to achieve this objective. Professor Pulicino comments: “Given the fact that the diagnosis of impending death is such a subjective one, putting a financial incentive into the mix is really not a good idea and it could sway the decision-making process.”

There can be little doubt that some patients have not in fact been dying at all when they were put on the LCP and that they have then been starved and dehydrated to death as a result. We know, because of those who somehow escape, usually as a result of their relatives' horrified intervention (that is also how we know how often old people are put on the death list without consultation). Consider the story of 82-year-old Patricia Greenwood, who was put on the Liverpool Care Pathway by doctors in Blackpool, who removed all her feeding tubes and drips. Then her family, who had not been consulted, gave her water, which effected the beginning of a remarkable recovery. Now she is planning to go on a world cruise.

The excellent Melanie Phillips recently wrote a piece [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2225009/The-medical-professions-lethal-arrogance-Liverpool-Care-Pathway.html>] questioning the LCP. She had received many letters, containing alarming accounts of what had happened to elderly relatives. “One woman, for example, wrote that her father suffered a severe stroke caused by a blood clot in his brain. ‘All fluids were removed from him and we were told he was in the final phase of his life,’ she wrote.

“‘All we were told was that there was no hope for him; it was a matter of time before he died. Eight days later,

he opened his eyes and proved everyone wrong by pulling round. Two years on from this he is back at home, although in a wheelchair and with some loss of speech.’

“Another woman's 85-year-old mother was admitted to hospital with an infected gall bladder. The following day doctors told her, to her shock, that her mother was gravely ill and had no chance of survival. The doctors, who included three consultants, told her that if she did not agree to the Pathway she would be adding to her mother's distress and misery. She signed the form – only to be horrified subsequently to find her mother highly disorientated, agitated and distressed from lack of fluids and treatment.

“‘I compelled the nursing staff to restore hydration and medications, or take full responsibility for the outcome if they failed to. I also took matters into my own hands by feeding her natural yogurt, soft foods and spooning water into her – something which was to continue until she was released three days later, having been restored to full health, cracking jokes and saying goodbye to those who were unfortunately left probably to suffer the same fate.’

Is Melanie Phillips simply being sensationalist? She has been accused, she says, by more than one doctor of “deliberately sensationalising the issue in order to sell newspapers”. To that “cynical end” she had “set out to terrify dying patients and their relatives”. There are also genuine palliative care specialists who think that some press coverage has been sensationalist, so here, in the interest of fairness and balance is Heather Richardson, of the organisation Help the Hospices.

Ms Richardson says [<http://www.helpthehospices.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/hospice-care-and-the-liverpool-care-pathway/>] that “recent



# **“There is no scientific evidence to support a diagnosis that a patient is in ‘the last hours or days of life’... The lack of an evidence-base for initiating the Liverpool Care Pathway makes it an ‘assisted death’ pathway rather than a ‘care’ pathway”**

media coverage around a small number of distressing stories has been sensationalist and at times inaccurate”, and that “it risks causing unnecessary distress to people at one of the most vulnerable times in their lives and may even prevent people from receiving the care that they need”.

Maybe she is thinking of apparently sensationalist headlines like “Three thousand doctors putting patients on death lists that single them out to be allowed to die”. Read the article itself [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2219351/Three-THOUSAND-doctors-putting-patients-death-lists-single-allowed-die.html>] and see what you think. It all looks believable enough to me.

It also has to be said that though Heather Richardson is herself clearly bending over backwards to be fair to the LCP, what she says at greater length doesn’t look as though she is wholly convinced that the medical practitioners who operate the LCP are entirely competent or even that they are not quite often just blundering around. The give-away passages are in my italics:

“Help the Hospice believes that the LCP has played an important role in improving the experience of people who are dying and we support the use of this tool *where staff have been trained appropriately in its application*.

“We believe everyone should have access to the best possible care at the end of life, whoever they are, whatever their illness and wherever they are dying. The LCP has gone a long way to help achieve this.

“But *there is still a long way to go* to ensure high-quality care is available to all. We urgently need to build on the palliative care training which is currently available to health professionals and in particular to those who are unfamiliar with the LCP.

“It is also important that professionals in palliative care work together and

with families and carers to build the evidence base for the LCP and its impact.”

There is now (or so we are told) to be a Health Department inquiry into the LCP, and the Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, said in November that he plans to make it a legal right for patients and their families to be informed of end-of-life care decisions, as part of changes to the NHS Constitution. Well, that is something, I suppose. But is it enough? The medical profession has an advanced capacity to carry on doing exactly what it was doing. Will it really pay any attention to this here-today-and-gone-tomorrow politician?

It is important to understand, it seems to me, that the LCP should be considered unacceptable under all circumstances, not simply for Catholics but universally, since it is based on an ideological notion about the end of life, a pressing of all supposedly dying patients into a predetermined pattern of treatment involving the withdrawal of food and hydration (itself an unacceptable procedure under all circumstances) and not on an evidence-based assessment of the needs of individual patients. Once on the LCP, the patient will die: that decision has been taken.

An article by Professor Pullicino in *The Catholic Medical Quarterly* (November 2012) eloquently explains exactly why the LCP isn’t wrong simply because in some cases there is no consultation: it is necessarily wrong, in the nature of things and under all circumstances. Here is his concluding paragraph, but the whole article [<http://www.cmq.org.uk/CMQ/2012/Nov/LCP-Pullicino.html>] ought to be read, marked, learned and inwardly digested:

“There is no scientific evidence to support a diagnosis that a patient is in ‘the last hours or days of life’. The LCP does not in fact rely on scientific evidence to determine initiation of the pathway. The lack of an evidence-base for initiating the LCP makes it an Assisted Death pathway rather than a

‘care’ pathway. Since there are no objective criteria for initiating the LCP, the criteria used are likely subjective biases of the team that make the decision to put the patient on this pathway. As ... research shows, physician biases often underestimate the chance of a good outcome. The physician relays a poor outlook to relatives, making a determination of a poor outcome into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

“If we accept to use the LCP we accept that euthanasia is part of the standard way of dying in the NHS. The LCP is now associated with nearly a third of NHS deaths. Very likely many elderly patients who could live substantially longer are being killed by the LCP including patients with ‘terminal’ cancer ....

“Starting a patient on the LCP, is an abandonment of evidence-based medicine in a critically ill section of the hospital population. This goes entirely against the gold standard of modern clinical care and is likely to have very serious ramifications, not only for the patients put on the LCP but for the practice of medicine in NHS hospitals.

“The LCP is already altering the natural history of disease and in this way negatively affects mortality statistics. Nursing of elderly patients who are on the LCP, in proximity to those in whom evidence-based medicine is determining care, is confusing to junior medical staff and nurses alike. Junior staff and nurses are also vulnerable in terms of their careers and may find it more difficult to voice ethical concerns they feel.

“Use of the LCP is likely to have negative effects on elderly patients, in particular, who are not on the LCP and to undermine the doctor-patient relationship. The LCP needs to be abandoned in favour of evidence-based medicine *in all patient groups including those with terminal cancer*.” [My italics]

What more needs to be said?

# Notes From Across the Atlantic

by David Mills, executive editor of *First Things*



## HUMAN NATURE?

"Transhumanism is a philosophical doctrine that aims to continuously improve humanity," says new Italian MP Giuseppe Vatinno, interviewed in *New Scientist*. "Ultimately, it aims to free humanity from its biological limitations, overcoming natural evolution to make us more than human."

Which means developing technologies "that boost health and fight ageing and disease." The interviewer asks if this wouldn't make us less than human, which was the question we would have asked, and Vatinno answers: "Becoming less human is not necessarily a negative thing, because it could mean we are less subject to the whims of nature, such as illness or climate extremes."

Vatinno's is a truncated idea of what it means to be human. A humanity freed from biological limitations is, we would think, just as human as it always was: the will remains the same, the heart, the passions, the loves and hates, the fears and hopes. All you have is a man who doesn't get sick as often and lives a few decades longer. Not necessarily a bad thing, and also not necessarily a good thing, but in either case, hardly a change in humanity's humanity.

Transhumanism doesn't conflict with religion, Vatinno insists, though he admits that it "does tend to avoid recourse to an external deity and, in fact, most adherents are materialists." But some are Hindu and Buddhist and even Mormon.

The religion it accepts is "a religion of

science and technology." It is religious "in the sense that it could provide ethical principles. The scientific method implies an absolute honesty in producing data and searching for the truth. It could be a model of correctness. A philosopher might argue that a flower is blue rather than red, but science tells you unambiguously what color it is."

We're not sure how useful would be a religion based on accurate data, but interestingly, given his claim for the scientific method's "absolute honesty", the same issue of *New Scientist* – indeed *the same two-page spread* that includes the interview – includes a long article on the inaccuracy of scientific data. "More than half of biomedical findings cannot be reproduced," proclaims the subhead.

The pharmaceutical company Amgen admitted that "over the past decade its oncology and haematology researchers could not replicate 47 of 53 highly promising results they examined," and this is apparently typical. The companies frequently fail to report their failures to replicate experiments.

The natural world is difficult to study, the article points out, and researchers feel "the pressure to cut corners, to see what one wants and believes to be true, to extract a positive outcome from months or years of hard work." And their bosses want results they can use and make money with. In other words, scientists are just as fallen as anyone else. The problem with appeals like Vatinno's to an ideal science is that science only exists as it is performed by scientists. Who are, you know, human.

## SUFFERING

We can understand the appeal of transhumanism's promise to reduce suffering. But, as discomfiting as the answer may be, suffering can change us for the good. Or so explains Charles Chaput, the archbishop of Philadelphia.

The best answer comes from Leon Bloy, a writer who himself chose to become a Catholic. "Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist," wrote Bloy, "and into them enters suffering, that they might have existence." In a sense, all Christian belief is cocooned in those words. Christians have no desire to suffer. But we do understand and appreciate the power of suffering.

The archbishop calls suffering "the truest democratic experience" because everyone suffers. "But Bloy understood, just as Viktor Frankl discovered in the death camps, that we can always choose what we do with the suffering that comes our way. We have that freedom. This is why suffering breaks some people, while it *breaks open* others into something more than their old selves, stretching the soul to greatness."

## HUMAN MANAGEMENT

Some of you may read this while watching television or otherwise multitasking your way through the competing interests of the day. Stop it, my friend David Ousley would tell you.

"The whole idea of multitasking as something good is based on the assumption that life is about getting things done," he writes. But "human

## **“The whole idea of multitasking as something good is based on the assumption that life is about getting things done. But human life, and Christian life, is more about love than about accomplishments”**

life, and Christian life, is more about love than about accomplishments. How would lovers think of multitasking? Would the young woman being courted be pleased to have her lover texting while they are on a date? Would she not justly expect that he would pay attention to her and her alone when they were together?”

Ousley is the pastor of St Michael the Archangel in Philadelphia, a parish of the Ordinariate of the Chair of St Peter, the special body created for American Anglicans who want to enter the Catholic Church.

Writing in his *Rector's Chronicle*, he points out that if we cultivate distractedness by multitasking, we'll be distracted when we pray. He suggests that “we strive to attend to the one thing before us, and cultivate the discipline of single-tasking, so far as possible.”

Multitasking, in other words, is a habit rather than a skill, or maybe it's a skill that becomes habitual. Sometimes it's necessary, as he notes, but otherwise, just turn off the television and ignore the text messages when you read.

The London *Daily Telegraph* reports that “A late-night reveller caught urinating in the street was told by the judge: ‘This isn't France, you know.’”

### **RELIGIOUS ALLEGIANCE OF INTELLECT AND WILL**

Here's something we didn't know about and are glad we do now. Writing about *Humanae Vitae* just a month after Pope Paul VI issued it, at which point lots of Catholics, including a goodly number of Jesuits, had popped a cork, the then-superior general asked his fellow Jesuits to assume an attitude of “obedience which is at once loving, firm, open, and truly creative” and “to do everything possible to penetrate, and to help others penetrate, into the thought which may not have been his own previously” – precisely because they were Jesuits, and this is what Jesuits do.

Fr Pedro Arrupe offers a good description of the way Catholics think, or ought to think, with the Church and “the specific data of Christian revelation”. As the obedient Jesuit “goes beyond the evidence available to him personally, he finds or will find a solid foundation for it,” wrote Arrupe.

“To obey, therefore, is not to stop thinking, to parrot the encyclical word for word in a servile manner. On the contrary, it is to commit oneself to study it as profoundly as possible so as to discover for oneself and to show others the meaning of an intervention judged necessary by the Holy Father.”

### **WESTERN ATTITUDES TO ISLAM**

Judging from our correspondence, there really is, out there, such a thing as Islamophobia. Muslims, several letter-writers have said, worship a demon, and others insist that Islam is not a religion at all but a political philosophy, and a very dangerous one at that. This was not the belief of our founder, writing eight years ago.

Fr Neuhaus insisted, in response to critical letters he had received even then, that “Christians, Jews, and Muslims agree that the God we are disagreeing about is the God of Abraham who spoke to our fathers by the prophets.” That said, he continued, “Christians hold that Jews and Muslims are not worshiping God rightly – as the Father who revealed Himself in the Son and is understood by the guidance of the Spirit in Christ's body the Church.” But God is the same God across this particular board.

Last month we criticised the mistaken but understandable proposal of some Anglican bishops for a UN declaration outlawing the insulting of other people's religions. They live and work in Muslim areas, after all.

My friend Mark Barrett writes: “But they deny the moral agency of the Muslims. They think that unless someone controls others' speech, of course Muslims will fly into a rage and chop

people's heads off because they are not fully human and responsible. In the Western mind, they are still savages. The colonialist mindset doesn't really change. Its application changes, but the mind remains.”

Mark notes the difference in the English response to the IRA and to Muslim terrorists. “I'm always grimly amused when the Islamists set off bombs in London and the overarching response of the British establishment is to blame Blair and British policy, wring their hands, ask how can we help the Muslim ‘communities’, attack Israel, say it's our fault, etc. Apparently this new-found sensitivity developed after, oh let's say, 1997.”

### **OUR LORD ON HOMOSEXUALITY**

In response to an item last month about the very bad argument that homosexuality must be OK because Jesus didn't say anything about it, our friend Gerry McDermott notes that Jesus did give his teaching on the matter, “albeit implicitly, when he condemned *porneia* (sexual sin) in Mark 7 as evil. All Jews knew that *porneia* was defined in Leviticus 18 and 20, where the only sexual sin that merits the description *to'eva* (abomination) is male homosexual practice”.





# Book Reviews

## The Father's Tale

*By Michael O'Brien. Ignatius Press, 2011, 1076pp hardback. Available from Amazon at £17.05.*

At the risk of contributing to contemporary overuse of the word, I would make the observation that fatherhood is in "crisis." Secular culture has emasculated men, having sucked out of life the real drama, the conscious battle between good and evil. Society's obsession with making everything safe and risk-free has left Western man with nowhere to channel his natural love of adventure, danger and challenge. Perhaps only sport fulfils this now, but it is a shallow substitute for the full spectrum of reality, which we appreciate by reason of our Catholic Faith. Reality is full of the drama of salvation and damnation, love and hate, angels and demons, calls and opportunities for self-sacrifice – even to the laying down of one's life. There is a perennial call to arms to fight for what is good, to fight for goodness and truth, for God and the salvation of souls.

This continual spiritual backdrop to our "ordinary" lives is something the Canadian writer and novelist Michael D O'Brien grasps well. He is married with a large family and is also an iconographer and commentator on the deeper spiritual significance of world affairs and political developments. I have read all nine of his novels and several articles on contemporary affairs, and found them exceptionally insightful and deeply Catholic.

His latest novel, published last year, is a hefty thousand pages or more – but

it's well worth its weight. The storyline revolves around the principle character – Alex, a Canadian widower in his late forties who runs a secondhand book shop and has two teenage sons of college age. He misses his wife greatly, but has settled into a quiet, dignified, fairly routine existence permeated by occasional contact with his sons and the clients who visit his shop. He is a religious man, practising his faith, but not given to great religious feeling or exceptional spiritual experiences.

One night he utters a prayer before the tabernacle in his local church which changes everything. His solitude is weighing on him and he feels a certain unease of soul. "I think," he whispers to the Presence in the tabernacle, "my life is over. Do whatever you want with me." Perhaps there is no more profound prayer a human being can offer; in this case God accepts the invitation and sets Alex on a path that will transform him. Alex has vague notions of his inadequacies as a man and as a father to his sons, but God knows what the root causes of these failings are and seeks to form him in love – divine love, a Father's love which will do anything for the sake of the well-being of his children.

**"Key truths of Christian discipleship are woven into the plot of this novel"**

The events which enable Alex to love with this kind of love come upon him in swift succession. He can only learn to love as he should by responding to the opportunities for love that are sent to him by God's providence. He saves the lives of some children but nearly dies in the process and has to lie up convalescing.

But that is only the beginning. He receives news that the younger of his two sons, Andrew, who was studying at Oxford, has gone missing. It transpires that he has become involved with a kind of cult and has disappeared with the members, who prohibit contact with family. This is the

catalyst for the consequent roller coaster of events as Alex tries to track down his son and free him. He flies to England and picks up his son's trail in Oxford, encountering a slightly stereotypical English academic who helps him. The trail moves to Helsinki, then into Russia. O'Brien is very much a Russophile, and a large section of the novel is set here.

Alex suffers greatly, but also receives great spiritual enlightenment. Key truths of Christian discipleship are woven into the plot of this novel: suffering as a condition of following Christ and the hallmark of true charity; the helps that are available to us and the assurance that God never leaves us without help; the truth that God has placed us where we are for a particular purpose, and that He is able to draw good from evil; the truth that no one is doomed to mediocrity, because there is always the possibility of going deeper in one's relationship with God.

Alex even has a brief sojourn in China, encountering some underground Christians; I suspect O'Brien has hidden sources for his portrayal of Christianity in China, which was fascinating. Through it all God, the source of all Fatherhood, teaches Alex what it means to be a father in His image. I won't give the ending away. Suffice it to say that the book would make a great movie.

**Fr. Stephen Brown**  
Bradford University

## Eros and Agape: The two sides of love

*By Raniero Cantalamessa. St Paul's Publishing, 2012. 94pp, £7.95*

In this readable paperback, we get insights drawn from the two great encyclicals of Pope Benedict on love, *Deus Caritas Est* and *Caritas in Veritate*. The book had its origins in the meditations preached by Fr Cantalamessa (what a name! With a surname like that, you'd virtually have

## “Alex suffers greatly, but also receives great spiritual enlightenment. Key truths of Christian discipleship are woven into the plot of this novel”

to become a priest!) to the papal household in Lent 2011.

Love: everyone needs it, everyone seeks it, lots talk about it, some sing about it, and people look for it in the wrong as well as in the right places. Here, Fr Cantalamessa explores the subject with wisdom, common sense, and a message of hope, and he is very much in tune with Pope Benedict.

The message of God’s love for us, and the essence of that love in the Trinity – “God is love in himself, before time” – is presented with clarity and with insights from St Augustine, from St Catherine of Sienna, and from the philosopher Husserl. We get a glimpse of the hugeness, of the passion with which God loves us.

In looking at *Caritas in Veritate*, Fr Cantalamessa takes us on a brief tour of various trends of thought on social problems, looking at Marx and Nietzsche and at liberation theology. In exploring the message of love, he looks at the whole idea of *service*, quoting Christ’s words (Matt 10:43-44) “Anyone

who wants to become great among you must be your servant...”. He notes that “service is a universal principle: it applies to every aspect of life – the State should be at the service of the citizens, politics at the service of the State, the doctor at the service of the sick, the teacher at the service of students”, and he emphasises that service flows out from various virtues, especially humility and charity.

Of course, the role of Peter in the Church is essentially one of service, and Cantalamessa quotes Bl John Paul on this: “Peter, you are the floor on which others may walk to arrive there wherein you guide their steps – as a rock endures the noisy hoofing of a herd.” Poignantly, he also quotes Pope Paul VI on the need for love in the Church: “The Church needs to feel flowing again through all its human faculties the wave of love, that love which is called charity, and which is precisely poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which has been given us.”

I found this book stimulating, heartening, and in a very important

sense refreshing. Fr Cantalamessa’s style is a forthright and simple one: he writes and speaks with clarity. No clichés, no pomposity, and an absence of any apparent desire to appear more excitingly obscure than the next man. But he offers profound insights, looks at things from unexpected angles, and is infused with a joyful and infectious sense of enthusiasm for the Faith in all its richness.

There is quotable stuff here for priests to use in sermons, there is material to ponder for Lenten reading, there are insights for teachers, and there is inspiration for everyone. We do need to think more about love, to ponder the beauty and immediacy of God’s love for us, to understand that love is literally at the core – the heart – of the Christian life, because God loved us first. Christ washed the feet of his disciples and taught them: “I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you” (John 13:13-15).

**Joanna Bogle**  
New Malden,  
Surrey

## Cutting Edge Science and Religion News

### **The Big Bounce – Doing Physics and Doing Theology**

*By Dr Gregory Farrelly*

Pope Benedict, speaking to a conference of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on 8 November, said:

“The universe is not chaos or the result of chaos. Rather, it appears ever more clearly as an ordered complexity”.

We should stop here and remind ourselves that this grasp of ordered complexity is not some intellectual

framework imposed as a result of faith but a result of the application of scientific deduction and induction. Readers of this magazine will know that it is our contention that the very existence of scientific laws, and the human “genius” in discovering, applying and refining them, are themselves an indication of the relationship between God, the Creator and Envoyer of the universe, and the material world in its all its correlative dependencies.

In the *Faith* synthesis, the “Unity-Law of control and direction” is the key

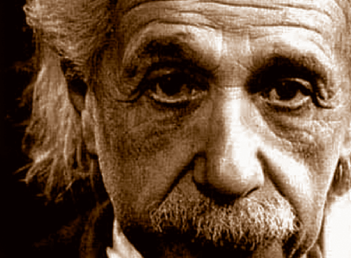
philosophical framework in which to develop an orthodox, dynamic theology that can have an invigorating and enriching relationship with the natural and medical sciences. The need for such a synthesis is essential not only in developing a modern theology that can enter into dialogue with secular, scientific thought, but also in creating the intellectual framework by which to nurture a new evangelisation, especially among the young.

*Continued overleaf*



# Cutting Edge

## Science and Religion News



Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, the academy's chancellor, believes that it is critical for the new evangelisation to take into account current scientific opinions and positions. This is also clearly in accord with the wishes of the Pope, who stressed the "...urgent need for continued dialogue and cooperation between the worlds of science and of faith in building a culture of respect for man, for human dignity and freedom, for the future of our human family and for the long-term sustainable development of our planet."

Nor is this aspect merely of interest to theologians. Pierre Lena, a French Catholic astrophysicist, stated at the conference:

"We make scientists today who are excellent specialists and remarkable technicians, but they have little culture in terms of the history of science, philosophy and ethics."

### Science Touching the Edge of Things

Those who are not familiar with how scientific research actually works often have a rather simplified view of men and women in white lab coats doing experiments, plotting graphs and using computers, and if they're lucky "finding" something worthy of a Nobel prize. In fact, there is a dynamic interplay between experimental and observational data and theoretical work, the latter involving mathematical modelling using advanced algebraic and computational techniques.

In the more difficult areas of physics, such as theoretical nuclear physics or the quantum physics involved in cosmology, the procedure may be deemed a success if there is some convergence between the results obtained from the model and the existing data. The model is then used to make predictions, which may or may not be easily testable by experiment.

Recently, an attempt has been made to tackle quantum gravity in the first moments after the Big Bang [cf *New Scientist* (online): "Galaxies could give

glimpse of the instant time began", 31 October 2012 by Stephen Battersby].

The simplified model of the Big Bang has the universe beginning with a "singularity", a sort of dot that contained the seeds of everything: electrons, atoms, galaxies, etc. In the theory of special relativity, time is part of the fabric of the universe, which is four-dimensional space-time.

As an aside, this means that scientists are quite correct to counter the question which some Christians pose, "What existed before the Big Bang?", with the statement that nothing could have existed because time itself began with the Big Bang, so the idea of a "before" has no meaning. Catholics should have no problem in agreeing with this since St Augustine (in his *Confessions*) also held that time started with the universe itself, God being outside time.

Einstein's theory of general relativity is a sort of geometrical model of the universe, describing gravitational effects, but it is a model that cannot deal with the interrelatedness of matter-energy at the most microscopic level – especially at times shortly after the Big Bang, when quantum fluctuations are crucially important in the future development of the universe. The problem with general relativity on its own is that as one extrapolates back to time zero, the density of the universe becomes infinite, which is impossible.

This problem can be avoided by using "loop quantum gravity". In this theory, space-time contains a network of space-time loops in which no distance can be smaller than  $10^{-35}$  metres (the Planck length). The theory uses a "Big Bounce", rather than a "Big Bang", involving the collapse of a previous universe; think of a balloon expanding, then collapsing to an infinitesimal point, then expanding again, but with time itself as part of the balloon's fabric.

Now Abhay Ashtekar, Ivan Agullo and William Nelson of Penn State University

[<http://arxiv.org/abs/1209.1609v1>] have used loop quantum gravity, with parameters taken from data on the cosmic microwave background (relic radiation from the Big Bang or Bounce) obtained over seven years, to examine what structures would have emerged in this Bounce.

Conventional cosmology says that galaxies and galaxy clusters originated during "inflation", an expansion that began about  $10^{-36}$  seconds after time zero. Quantum variations in the energy field driving inflation led to regions of high-density matter, which later became galaxies and larger structures.

However, the team at Penn State University believes that the energy field should have existed in a weak form *before* inflation, at the very start of time, from about  $10^{-44}$  seconds, and that the quantum fluctuations arising in that first quantum instant would have survived inflation. The sizes of the galaxies and galaxy clusters predicted as a result should then match observational data.

The value of the original energy field is unknown, but if the field had just the right strength, and the corresponding distortion in the cosmic microwave background appears, it would suggest that the Big Bounce and space-time quantum loops are real. "It would tell us the conditions of the quantum universe at its birth," says Ashtekar.

The sense here of science entering upon some of the few undiscovered lands of our universe is palpable. Such is the nature of much modern fundamental physics, reinforcing the need for those who reflect upon the ultimate patterns of matter-energy, most obviously in the branch of metaphysics called ontology, to engage with modern scientific thought.



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# faith

## From the Aims and Ideals of Faith Movement

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Faith Movement offers a perspective upon the unity of the cosmos by which we can show clearly the transcendent existence of God and the essential distinction between matter and spirit. We offer a vision of God as the true Environment of men in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28), and of his unfolding purpose in the relationship of word and grace through the prophets which is brought to its true head in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, Lord of Creation, centre of history and fulfilment of our humanity. Our redemption through the death and resurrection of the Lord, following the tragedy of original sin, is also thereby seen in its crucial and central focus. Our life in his Holy Spirit through the Church and the Sacraments and the necessity of an infallible Magisterium likewise flow naturally from this presentation of Christ and his work through the ages.

Our understanding of the role of Mary, the Virgin Mother through whom the Divine Word comes into his own things in the flesh (cf. John 1:10-14), is greatly deepened and enhanced through this perspective. So too the dignity of Man, made male and female as the sacrament of Christ and his Church (cf. Ephesians 5:32), is strikingly reaffirmed, and from this many of the Church’s moral and social teachings can be beautifully explained and underlined.

[www.faith.org.uk](http://www.faith.org.uk)

