

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 28 September, 2008

To my brothers and sisters in the Corps:

Life can sometimes be numbing and can certainly obliterate any sense of equilibrium.

But one of the effects of prayer is to restore equilibrium to life.

So if your current experience of life makes you feel disjointed or unconnected to a larger purpose, you might try prayer as a restorative.

Something like this:

O Lord,

in the turbulence and loneliness

of my living from day to day and from night to night,

keep me in touch with my roots,

so I'll remember where I came from and with whom;

keep me in touch with my feelings,

so I'll be aware of who I really am and what it costs;

keep me in touch with my mind,

so I'll know who I am not and what that means;

keep me in touch with my dreams,

so I'll never forget where I want to go and for whom.

Nourish within me the boldness of a prophet

and the courage of a disciple.

Amen!

May God give you His peace!

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

WANNA MAKE A RETREAT?

If so, you could check out the Retreat that UCF (United Catholic Fellowship) is planning for the Weekend of 17-19 October. You can contact CDT Madeline Lewis for info.

DID YOU KNOW?

CATHOLICS AMONG THE MORMONS:

(Note: this is from an article in "St. Anthony Messenger" of October, 1997)

Utah's Catholics live in one of the largest dioceses, square-mile-wise, in the USA. The boundaries of this diocese are the boundaries of the state itself. Officially, Catholics are four percent of the state's population. Among Utah's seasonal and service workers are

many additional Roman Catholics, uncounted in any official census but part of the flock to whom the Church ministers.

The entire state has 43 parishes and 13 missions, 2 Catholic high schools and 9 Catholic elementary schools. There is no Catholic college, university or seminary. Compare that with the Archdiocese of New York, which has 413 parishes, 17 Catholic hospitals, 13 colleges or universities, 25 high schools, 224 elementary schools and 17 homes for the aged.

Initially, the railroad and the mines – coal, silver and copper – drew the original Catholic immigrants to the Utah territory. Today, 80 percent of the state’s Catholics live on the Wasatch front (the western base of the Wasatch Range of the Rockies), close to the industries that drew their forebears to the area.

The Utah territory held many Catholic mountain-men in the early years of its settlement (1776-1847), including the famed Kit Carson. Jesuit missionary Father Pierre Joseph DeSmet is rumored to have met Brigham Young (the Mormon leader) and recommended that Young lead the Mormons to the valley of the Great Salt Lake to settle.

A recent interview with a Mormon elder – Alexander B. Morrison – touched upon some of the differences between Catholic and Mormon belief. Elder Morrison said: “We believe that there is a prophet on the earth today – President Hinkley (head of the Mormon Church). Coupled with that is, of course, the notion of revelation. God does speak to the world through the prophets.”

Latter-Day Saints (LDS) wish to be considered Christian, although their concept of Christianity is unique, and many Christian theologians debate whether they are, in fact, Christian. Joseph Smith’s (the founder) vision of God is at odds with the “trinitarian” view of classical Christianity, but Elder Morrison says that “Christ is our Savior, our Redeemer, the atoning Messiah.”

LDS members “see life on this earth as just a stopping-place on the eternal journey. We believe that we lived before we came to earth and will live after we leave this earth. We are eternal beings,” says Elder Morrison.

Among the early Mormons, polygamy created much controversy and opposition, even though LDS members cited examples from the Old Testament, and under severe pressure from the Federal government, the practice was banned in 1890.

Sacramental practice also differs from that of the Catholic tradition. LDS members have a sacramental meeting each Sunday at the “Ward House”. Communion is seen as a renewal of covenant but is open to unbaptized children in attendance. At the meeting, several speakers deliver prepared remarks on spiritual themes. Baptism, typically received at the age of 8, is seen as a cleansing from sin and may be repeated if the baptized person falls away and returns.

The 50 Temples of the LDS are not places of regular Sunday worship and are closed to non-believers. They are reserved for “temple ordinances” (a type of “sacraments”), including endowment (a covenant of obedience to God’s law), “celestial marriages” (marriages which will continue in eternity) and “proxy baptisms” for deceased ancestors. LDS members believe that these ancestors must accept such actions on their behalf before the general resurrection can take effect.

(to be continued)

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, in this day and age, so many people are having sex early that it seems like the concept of waiting until marriage is almost completely gone. When the Church says that one should wait till married, do you think that was the actual intent, or was it that people would just reserve sex for the people they are/were in love with, so that people would not “sleep around”?

A: It was the actual intent...and here's why.

Within the Catholic tradition, human sexuality is a sacred power.

As “The Catechism of the Catholic Church” says:

Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others.

#2332

Our tradition has always considered that God had an intent in creating human beings as “sexual” creatures...and that intent is expressed by two words: procreative and unitive.

Basically, they mean that we believe that the purpose of the sexual power is

- a) to create life; and
- b) to join a man and a woman in a union not only of bodies but also of hearts.

If the sexual power is exercised in any other way, the Catholic tradition thinks of that as “disordered” because it frustrates the design of God. As the “Catechism” says:

Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes.

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So for Catholic morality, practices such as masturbation or fornication or rape or prostitution violate the dignity of the sexual power and the dignity of the individual. The power of the “sex act” is designed to bring together a married couple and to reinforce their mutual “giving of self”...because, as the “Catechism” says again:

Sexuality...is not something simply biological but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.

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So in spite of the fact that for many people, sex has become a “pastime” rather than a statement of true and lasting love, the Catholic tradition holds very strongly to her ideals about what God's purpose is. It's a serious conclusion, and it represents the Catholic perception of what God intended in creating the sexual power in the first place.

The practice of “sleeping around” or using sex simply as a source of personal pleasure frustrates the designs of God and reduces one's “partner” to the role of simply an object of personal pleasure...and sex thus becomes a selfish, rather than a self-giving, act.

Hope this will give you a basic understanding of the seriousness with which the Catholic Church looks at sex and the deeply-powerful potential that it has in the lives of human beings

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

CATHOLIC:

This is a word which can be used in different ways.

It can be a simple adjective - “catholic” – with no religious meaning. And in such a case, it means “universal” or “on the whole” (from the Greek phrase “kath’holou”, meaning “on the whole”).

Or it can be used in a very specific sense – “Catholic” – to which most people automatically attach the word “Roman”. In this sense, it refers to our religious tradition.

We believe that our tradition of the teachings and intent of Jesus of Nazareth is the most authentic. It was handed down through the centuries by the Christian community at Rome (after Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70), and the leader of the Christian community at Rome (whom we can “pop” meaning “father”) came to be seen as the guardian and interpreter of these teachings.

In the religious sense, the word “catholic” (without “Roman”) is first found in the writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch (AD 112 or so), who wrote the following ideas to the Christians at Smyrna (a city in modern-day Turkey):

Wherever the bishop appears, there let
the people be, just as wherever Jesus Christ is,
there is the Catholic Church.

His use of the word describes the Church as being universal and widespread.

As different interpretations of Christianity began to arise, a new meaning was attached to “catholic”. It began to mean “correct”...as in “correct belief”. This is how it appears in the writings of St. Augustine, who spent most of his adult life trying to preserve the “correct” interpretation of Christianity in the face of some pretty odd variations.

In the 300s, 400s and 500s, the word “Catholic” began to appear in the different creeds of the Church. For example, in one Sunday creed (the “Nicene Creed”), we profess our belief in the “one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church”. In plain English, we are saying that we believe that the Christianity that has come down to us through the Church at Rome is what we consider to be the authentic interpretation of the teachings of Jesus.

When Protestants recite those same words, however, they mean “catholic” in the “universal” sense...or in other words, that the Church of God is irreversibly present in human history and is destined to spread throughout the world. They definitely don’t mean “Roman” Catholic.

They might also mean “Catholic” in the sense that the word preserves the faith of the early Christians...minus the corruptions they believe were introduced by the Church at Rome over the centuries (remember that the Protestant Reformation came about because of a conviction that the Roman Church had corrupted the simple faith of the early Christians).

And the Protestant picture is itself complicated by the fact of the different Protestant traditions – Baptist, Methodist, etc. – and by the Episcopal tradition, which doesn’t consider itself “Protestant” in the strict sense.

And it gets even more complicated...because in 1054, the Western “Catholics” split from the Eastern “Catholics”. From that point on, the Western Catholics became known as “Roman” Catholics, while the Eastern Catholics became known as the “Holy Orthodox Church”. Both believe that they preserve the authentic teachings of Jesus.

And when you add the bad feelings and suspicions that have emerged from all these bodies of belief throughout the centuries, you end up with a very difficult and complex picture, one which can be solved only with God's power and through a lot of patient searching on the part of well-meaning men and women of every age.

Anyway, such is the history of this simple word "Catholic" and the complications that have emerged from its use.

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature –
even a caterpillar –
I would never have to prepare a sermon...
so full of God is every creature."

Meister Eckhart
13th-century mystic

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

and YOU ARE THERE!

Best wishes for a good weekend;
think about God once in a while,
and let's remember one another in our prayers.
Woodie