

The Remnant

(Est. in 1967)

“... At the present time there is a remnant left, selected out of grace.” - Romans 11:5



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From the Editor's Desk...

Do We Still Stand with the Men of Good Will?

By Michael J. Matt

“For, this day, is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.”

Luke, Chapter 2: 11-14 will once again be splashed all over Christmas cards this year but I'll wager that one of the few places the passage will be rendered accurately is right here in The Remnant. Playing fast and loose with biblical passages is nothing new, of course, but this one is the granddaddy of them all. “Peace on earth good will to men”—the mangled, Protestantized version of it positively trips off the tongue, whereas “and on earth peace to men of good will” seems convoluted and wrong to modern lips and minds alike—and in more ways than one.

A quick Google search reveals that only the Douay Rheims still has it right, so conscientious were the modern exegetes in rewriting Scripture to fit their narrative. Every other Bible in the world mangles this passage. Evidently, we have an inalienable right to peace without good will, just as we have an inalienable right to mercy without repentance. It's all part of the grand Masonic benefits package.

I wonder where we come down now, after all these years of Orwellian tampering with the Words of God. Can

~ See Editor's Desk/ Page 2



PUER NATUS EST NOBIS ET FILIUS DATUS EST NOBIS...

Merry Christmas to all the friends and allies of The Remnant. Keep the old Faith.

- The Remnant Staff -

Contemplating Christmas

By Timothy J Cullen

“Everything is mystery in this holy season” (Dom Guéranger)

Christmas in this Year of Our Lord 2015 has become a holiday that has lost far, far too much of its religious significance for far, far too many Catholics to the detriment of all concerned. This year, this fact is much in the mind of this writer, given that a concatenation of worldly circumstances mandates that he spend Christmas alone. At first glance, this would seem to be unfortunate, but contemplating it with the eye of faith presents an opportunity to contemplate the mystery without distraction, a

blessing in disguise, one might say, and say it this writer does.

Family, including two infant (20 months and two months of age) grandsons, is far away, too far for this writer to travel given the logistics of such a journey. One thinks of T.S. Eliot's 1927 poem “The Journey of the Magi”:

‘A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.’

Ah, well, this writer lives in the Southern Hemisphere and on Christmas Day summer has just begun. No, the difficulties of the journey to be with family for the holiday are more “modern” and mundane: too old for an 800-mile drive alone in an old car, or for multiple bus rides, travel by air too costly and too complicated, but then again, the Magi were traveling with the purpose of presence at the birth of the Redeemer of fallen man, not merely to pass a holiday with their descendants, the youngest of whom have not yet reached the age of reason and have literally no idea of what it is that is

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From the Editor's Desk Cont...

it still be said of us, for example, that we walk with the “men of good will” for whom peace is no stranger and God is still God, or have we signed on with those demanding peace while banishing God and dropping bombs everywhere?

Where *do* we stand? There is so much unrest in the world today that it's easy to become bitter and to lose track of who we are and what we still believe. Padre Pio anticipated this way back in 1917 when he wrote: “If you have neither sufficient gold nor incense to offer Our Lord, you will at least have the myrrh of bitterness. And I perceive that He willingly accepts this.” I hope so, as sometimes it seems that the myrrh of bitterness is all we have left—bitterness over what we've lost, over what's been stolen from us, and over what we've swapped for a mess of pottage. I've felt it more keenly over the past two years than ever before--that certain sense of unease and confusion and hurt and even doubt—we'd be lying if we said we are impervious to it. All the forces of hell are working on our unbelief. “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.”

With His vicar on earth now warming himself at the fires of His mortal enemies, even God Himself seems to be growing silent in the face of this ongoing apostasy. What greater chastisement could there be than that He Who is the source of all hope and comfort should grow silent? Is there a more terrifying prospect in all the world than that of Calvary's deadly silence and all that it portends?

What did the “little people” do then?

My father often wrote of the “little people” and the “language of silence.” Why? Because I think he knew it is only the “little people”—those who stood in silent belief first in Bethlehem and then at the foot of the Cross—that will persevere to the end.

Can we still count ourselves in their humble company, or have we become gallingly acceptable to high priests and Romans in high places. Have we begun to blend in with the crowd that persecuted those who mattered most to Jesus Christ?

As my father waged his lonely war for the restoration of the old Latin Mass in the dark days after the Second Vatican Council, he warned his readers of the dangers of becoming puffed up with pride in the name of service rendered to a worthy cause. Almost fifty years later, I sometimes fear that, as there's no one left from the old days to provide those pertinent warnings, we risk falling from the favor of the “little people”—the anonymous shepherds, for example, content to watch their sheep or go with angels to the nursery of a King, whatever God asked of them.

Christmas is all about the “little people”, which is why it seems a fitting time for us to recall their example and to commit to remain in the quiet company of those who “not only confound the wise and put to flight all wickedness when they have a mind to, but whose power is such that Our Lord Himself singles them out for special attention, declaring that even Heaven considered them to be a special adornment.”

Can that be still said of us today? Will we remain faithful and true and devoted to them as to a noble principle and common cause – or will we, like modern-day pagans, succumb to the evil spirit of narrow egoism and loveless petty bickering which has become the hallmark of our times and which threatens to engulf and destroy what was once the Christian West?

Bluntly stated, will the spirit not of Christ but of Anti-Christ succeed in penetrating our ranks, too? Will there be ‘traditionalists’ who, not unlike the modernists, will be persuaded to believe and to act as though it mattered little whether we ourselves be reformed and renewed in Christ Jesus, but rather that it is the Church and society which must in the first place be overhauled and reconstituted in our image and likeness?

Do we honor the memory of the “little people” when we stoop to remind the world that we were “right all along” and that everyone else was wrong? Do we retain the right to be counted among them when we become inordinately puffed up and proud? We have no special mandate, no real or direct commission from Jesus Christ to reform or rebuild His divinely established and divinely upheld Church. Our job is simple-- to remain true to God, true to one another and to the promises of our baptism. To watch and wait. To keep the old Faith. We cannot abandon Holy Mother Church, regardless of the vile men who now hold her captive. Where are we to go? We cannot start our own church. Nothing else short of the Bride



Merry Christmas from the Michael Matt Family

of Jesus Christ will ever do for us. She is ours and we must stay at the foot of her Cross now, holding fast to her bloodied feet, even as Magdalene held fast to His. There is no worldly glory in that, but for the “little people” there is no honor more sublime. And there is no excuse to give in either to despair or arrogance, for there is no place for either in Bethlehem's stable or on Calvary's summit. The “little people” knew this and we must learn what it means.

First off, stop whining! God put us here for a reason. And at Christmas especially, *Sursum corda!* – Lift up your hearts! The Mass, Christ's Mass, is indestructible. Calvary, like Bethlehem, cannot be expunged or erased from the hearts of those who love Him. Christ lives, He reigns, He is and always shall be--and there's nothing Washington or Rome can do to change that!

Next, stop bragging! We're no heroes. Christ's Church, now well over 2,000 years in the making, will go on with or without us. Doing one's duty does not merit the martyr's crown. Learning the language of silence is our challenge.

So let us keep our role in all of this in perspective. And let us resolve to help each other keep the old Faith, keep charity and hope burning in our hearts and souls so that maybe -- just maybe! -- we can help the little people move mountains, outlast pagan empires, and rescue and rally the spiritually depressed and downcast ones all over the world.

What is needed now most urgently is not more texting, tweeting, Facebooking and upvotes, but rather a renewal of the spirit of the “little people” who despite the world, the flesh and the devil remained on fire with zeal to raise their minds and hearts and souls to Christ the King no matter what.

ISIS? What is *that* compared to Him!

Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said that the mark of the Christian is his willingness to “look for the Divine in the flesh of a babe in a crib, the continuing Christ under the appearance of bread on an altar, and a meditation and a prayer on a string of beads.”

It's all about a willingness, an *eagerness*, to become like children for His sake—children the world despises, Rome rejects, but God calls His Own. There's

no excuse to do anything less. He knows what it means to be lowly and little. He was impoverished, despised by the world, acknowledged only by those who didn't matter. His father and mother were hounded by the State, forced to flee the thugs of the Old World Order. He is love itself and yet He was charged with “hate crimes”. He was home schooled. He knows what it is to be ridiculed and mocked and put to death as a common criminal. Yet He remains the sole Desire of Nations and the hope of the whole world.

So our brave new world is on the brink of war and apostasy and disaster. But this changes nothing for us. Our resolve remains the same—to humbly stand with shepherds so that we might one day earn the right to kneel at the manger of a King.

“We go to Bethlehem,” noted Pius XII in his famous Christmas address of 1942, where “His light can overcome the darkness, the rays of His love can conquer the icy egoism which holds so many back from becoming great and conspicuous in their higher life.” Icy egoism, pride, self-righteousness—the baggage we all must decide to discard in the ditches on the way to the stable.

Pius challenged a world already at war to “declare war on the darkness which comes from deserting God.” He warned that ours is a “fight for the human race, which is gravely ill.” He called Christians to combat the “evil from which society suffers”, to be consoled and inspired anew by the “star that stands over the Grotto of Bethlehem, the first and the perennial star of the Christian Era.”

Even in the middle of world war, in other words, the Church held up a Child as the only hope of the world.

“If armies in camp should stand against me, my heart shall not fear. Where that star shines, there is Christ. With Him for leader we shall not wander; with the Child that is born today we may rejoice forever.” Nothing has changed, except us, perhaps, if we depart from the company of the little ones.

This Christmas let's raise a glass, then, to the Christ Child and to His “little people”, our fathers and mothers in the old Faith, who meant everything to Him and who, please God, will one day welcome us happily into the kingdom of God and the communion of saints if we can accomplish that one holy objective: Keep the old Faith and never lose hope.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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God Help Us, What Is Pope Francis Doing?

Editor, *The Remnant*: Speaking on the plane back from Africa, and within the context of his exemplary gestures of friendship there towards Islam, Pope Francis' reference to traditional Catholics as 'fundamentalists' is disappointing and highly insulting.

Our Pope finds equivalence between traditional Catholics and persons who relish chopping off the heads of perfectly innocent human beings, destroying buildings full of thousands of workers, randomly shooting young people out for a night's entertainment, having a cup of coffee with friends, and so on. Traditional Catholics with their 'false certainties' are also identified by the Pope as an idolatrous infestation in the body of the Church, such as one finds in all religions.

Surely such insults from the Pontiff, himself, must now move traditional Catholics into taking some action to extricate themselves from such a situation, one that is consistent with our beliefs in the nature of the Church. A serious exchange of opinion in the Catholic media on this matter – undoubtedly forthcoming! – will be most welcome at this time.

Francis Reilly
Orpington, Kent, England

Pope Francis is Now Effectively at War with the Church

Editor, *The Remnant*: Thank you for your commentary on Pope Francis. As you wrote on your website, traditional priests are silent to a degree in the face of this crisis. In my opinion, traditional priests are insecure about their own authority. Being on the fringe of the conciliar church, they may worry that they will destroy their own sacramental unity or become protestants if they attack Pope Francis. Laypeople don't have this problem.

The circumstances show how brilliant a tactician the Devil is; he can paralyze his enemies by putting them in a trap built by their own traditions, really nasty. In the end, he is a terrible strategist and God used him to put together the pieces of the death of Christ to win our salvation. I'll keep my sacramentals close and my St. Michael prayers going. We are in the sort of situation that only Christ the King can resolve. It would be great if we could hear His footsteps coming soon. If God allows the situation to endure I believe that this is the hour of monasticism, the church in the wilderness. The woman who fled into the wilderness; the Carthusians in Vermont and elsewhere in solitude, purity and sanctity. This is the unsustainable fortress of the church that may have been created just for this present crisis.

Kind regards,
Bill Choquette

Future Convert?

Editor, *The Remnant*: I just subscribed, looking forward to my first issue! I've

enjoyed watching The Remnant on YouTube and am considering converting to Catholicism. I hope you'll keep up the good work: The Latin Mass is what called me and I support Traditionalism. I saw that SPLC classified you as a hate group and it was my impetus to subscribe... immediately. Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas,

Jeff Canton

Pope's Fans Inadvertently Indict Him

Editor, *The Remnant*: Speaking as a Catholic, the church has been in decline for the last 25 years because of actions like The Remnant's Open Letter to Pope Francis. If the church is to grow, it needs to open up its windows to the masses instead of acting as a judgmental group that sits from their high perch of self-righteousness.

Your letter to Pope Francis is sickening and despicable. Instead of Francis resigning, you should do the faith a favor and end your publication immediately. Prayerfully consider that perhaps it was the Holy Spirit that wanted Benedict to resign to bring about the needed change of Francis.

Mark Schneider

Editor, *The Remnant*: It is very disappointing to hear that people who profess to be Christians can be so far from following Christ's teachings. Pope Francis is the first Pope in recent history to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ even if they go against the manmade rules of the Roman Catholic Church. The idea that you would defend man's rules against Christ's is disheartening to say the least. You may claim to be Christians but if you espouse anger or hatred at your beloved Pontiff than you are not living under Christ's teachings and values.

For the first time in decades, I see the Roman Catholic Church starting to embrace Christ rather than man and you are railing against it! If you would spend less time trying to live under rules that do not reflect God's love, mercy and grace and more time trying to be disciples of Christ, you would embrace Pope Francis and pray for his continued leadership and strength. I hope that you

will find through prayer and discernment how very special this man is and that his leadership is helping the Roman Catholic Church be more Christian than it has been in a very long time. May God bless and keep you all.

Yours in Christ,
Phil Scherzer

The Remnant May Be Getting to Me

Editor, *The Remnant*: I began receiving your publication in October of this year. I do not know how I got on your mailing list. I was skeptical at first, but I have found your articles to be interesting and thought provoking. I have 2 questions concerning your "appeal" to Pope Francis: 1. Are you really sending this letter to the Pope or was this simply an innovative way to express your viewpoint? 2. Have you contacted your local Bishop with these concerns? His response, if any, would be interesting to hear.

RC Ayres
Lexington, KY

Editor's Response: For the most part this is a provocation to get the media's attention, but we will send the Open Letter to Pope Francis, as well. As for our local Bishop: at the moment we don't really have one. But we've sort of moved away from doing much of anything with the local chancery office. For one thing, these days they seem to be too busy finding ways to finance their defense against a raft of

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sex abuse lawsuits where our clergy are concerned. It's a real mess, and they have no intention of addressing the core problems in this archdiocese anytime soon. Humanly speaking, they seem to be beyond hope. Thanks very much for your note, and a merry Christmas to you and yours. **MJM**

The Mosque of Notre Dame

Editor, *The Remnant*: I just wanted to let you know that I received and subsequently read the above novel. It was a chilling and, unfortunately, too-close-to-home read. Elena Chudinova has the unique ability to grasp what most Westerners do not want to admit, that we are in dire straits, and it may be too late to turn the ship around. The NO Church has not only led the flock astray but abandoned the flock to the wolves. *The Mosque of Notre Dame* is a must read for all Catholic Christians. Thank you, Remnant Press, for making this book available. God bless you and keep you.

Victoria Simmons

Open Letter to U.S. Bishops

Editor, *The Remnant*: This letter went out to the Bishop Ordinaries of America as the monthly offering of the truth as I've done for the past nineteen years. I offer it to your readers in the hope that a few of them, a half dozen please God, will "take up pen" and write the truth to the Bishops each month.

At 86, I have a somewhat limited future and it would be a relief to know that a few intelligent Catholics from around the country will be keeping the truth flowing into the dioceses of America.

The letter starts: "Just as it is licit to resist against a physical attack by a superior, so is it licit to defend oneself from the spiritual attacks of a superior... even a Pope." (St. Robert Bellarmine). When Paul VI established the Synod as a "permanent novelty" in the post-conciliar Church, it didn't make the headlines. It should have, for by putting in place the permanent synodal system, the Pope gave life to the creature that was Vatican II. And now, 50 years later, the synods that formerly seemed harmless enough have shown their teeth at the "Synod on the Family" (214-215).

In the Friday (October 30) issue of *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, at the top of the lead article, it says (in fine print), "At the end of the Synod, Pope Francis recalls that the Church must not condemn, but proclaim mercy". Where he recalls that from, he doesn't say; but I recall and I'm sure most of you do also – that the Church always condemned that which was harmful to souls. Our Lord **condemned** the Scribes and Pharisees for their **lack** of mercy. The apostles, saints and Fathers all condemned that which was sinful. Bl. Pius IX had 80 condemnations in his *Syllabus of Modern Errors*. This was the syllabus that Fr. Ratzinger referred to when he remarked that the Council was "a sort of counter-syllabus". The Church always condemned what is sinful, and then admonished, "Go and sin no more". Francis knows all this; why does he pretend otherwise? So he can pretend that the promise of mercy can be found only now by his teaching, that there

was no mercy in the Church before the coming of Francis? He is skating on thin ice when he keeps alluding to this preposterous error. What do we really get from this set up Synod: "Go and sin...some more".

If any of the bishops feel I am being far too critical of the Holy Father, please recall that all that has been said here is based on the words and actions of Francis. For those bishops who are too young to remember what the Church was **really** like before the Council, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to grasp the reality of just how far the hijackers of the Council, and that's what they were, have gone in their efforts to destroy the Catholicity of Christ's Church. It would appear that Francis is moving in for the kill, but that is pure sophistry. "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world". One day man will realize what it means, and at what a price, to tempt God. Let us of good faith pray that our God who has always shown mercy to the truly repentant, will soon send us a Pope who will obey Him and make the consecration of Russia as it has been requested, and not as man would have it, before it is too late to prevent God's great chastisement wherein the "living will envy the dead".

Alan E. Fricke
Medford, NY

Donald Trump: Game Changer!

Editor, *The Remnant*: Breaking News: Panic has struck the regular "Political Establishment" and its toadying public media. An "unqualified" intruder pushes-in?

It is very apparent that New York multi-millionaire Donald Trump's invasion of the long drawn-out political "cattle-show"—the line-up for the 2016 Presidential Election preliminaries—has the "regular" Two-Party "Me-Too" bipartisan Political Establishment in unexpected full panic mode. Mobilize the "Homeland Guard" and station bully monitors at all polling places. See who gets "the mostist, the furstist"!

Having been anointed by local and national party directorates to participate in this political showdown, this regular collection of egocentric machine politicians, looking for a free ride to fame and fortune, naturally do not honor this uninvited intruder, Trump, seen as the skunk at the party picnic. Denounced by all "regular" candidates, Trump is seen as an uninvited intruder, privately opposed by RNC Chairman, Reince Priebus, who is plotting last-ditch ways to eliminate Trump at the Cleveland GOP convention. But such condemnations only drive Trump's poll numbers up, indicating the surprising rise of popular disgust with the globalist program pushed by both political party "establishments".

So, Donald Trump—an egocentric brash personality with tremendous energy and ample funds—has managed to elbow his way into this race for Commander-in-Chief-of-Public-Propaganda, with "Homeland" Transformation in the balance. This was simply accomplished by the dead-weight of Trump's massive monetary and property holdings. To

the great misfortune of his "regular" party opponents, Trump's "trump-card" is not simply a great pile of Manhattan wealth, but also due to his uncanny political intelligence, allowing him to "cash-in" on a long-building public disgust, concerning governing bipartisan New Order cabals—which has burdened the borderless "homeland" with massive debt, unending wars, foreign occupations, and massive immigration of foreign cultures which defy assimilation. Trump fits in with the home-grown "Tea Party", which was planted to counter "regular" political programs of utopian socialism on the installment plan—the eventual global synthesis of the "New Order"—all of this happening overnight, as it were, while the "homeland" peasantry took a long nap.

For years on end these problems were trivialized by "regular" politicians; and all trouble-filled cans were "regularly" kicked aside (awaiting eventual bankruptcy). No one, not even professional politicians, wants bad news; and so onward to denial of the day that the printing press in the Treasury basement runs out of green ink, and the Federal Reserve "central bank" runs out of fine parchment paper. And so the day finally arrives where a score of machine-regular Republicans—cheered on by RINO/RIPON Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate moderate Mitch McConnell—go on stage for TV "debates" (prepared soft-ball questions meekly answered). And surprise—Trump ignores unfriendly and insulting questions, and proceeds to upset the show and its programmed monitor.

So despite being labeled a demagogue and bigot by his open defiance of appointed "political correctness", Donald Trump, free of "donors" and political handlers, and supported by such notables as Pat Buchanan, boldly notes that the "politically correct" would-be-emperors have NO clothes. And thus he runs to the top of media polls. Yes, and beside the power of his own money, it's because, without formalities, he has passed the test of "Political Science-101," telling the people what they want so desperately to hear, instead of the usual political gobbledygook, an over-supply of mush dished-out by machine politicians, unintelligible jargon that even the most naive of the peasantry know is outright phony-baloney.

Of course, being only human with all of the stain of Original Sin (and inevitable actual sin), regretfully Trump has not yet been selected for sainthood by Francisco-the-Great, which august primal-prelate still holds Islam in honor, as instructed by Novus Ordo "pastoral" Second Vatican Council—the conciliar disaster which somehow managed to avoid the infallibility of the Holy Ghost. No, Trump would not "qualify" for miracle-worker in the spiritual sense, and may be prone to hasty solutions to complex material problems. No one is perfect.

But the disgusted peasantry of the "homeland" probably does not expect all problems to be fixed within a single term in office, just a real leader capable of throwing the political bums out, and closing the borders to un-assimilatable migrants posing as refugees, potentially sheltering Muslim terrorists. Oh, did I

mention, the peasantry prefers that Saudi princes quit financing mosques in Peoria and Sioux City.

The old question returns: Is USA a nation, or only a borderless "homeland"? Trump is favored since there is little trust in machine-chosen candidates in this field, seemingly mere fiefs of greedy money-donors, "Moguls" expecting great favors to be delivered, ASAP. Also of importance, all candidates of all parties have rushed to the supposed religious obligation to praise and favor the Zionist Movement—ignoring the fact that its 1883 founder was a non-observant atheistic Jew, Theodore Hertz, organizing Zionism as a humanist tribal movement, with even Orthodox Judaism rejecting this Zionist Movement as illegitimate, being untimely, the Messiah must come first.

Being a New Yorker, Mr. Trump made plans to butter-up Bibi Netanyahu in Tel Aviv. Bibi thought it was safe to lecture Trump on touchy Islamic affairs, which lecture Mr. Trump did not digest well, cancelling his proposed visit, showing Bibi that Donald was not to be "used" and then brushed aside.

Who knows where all of this plays out in the run-up to November 2016 U.S. elections. With Voter-Motor frauds, vote early, vote often—Hillary wins, even if indicted for e-mail fraud. Can it be imagined, Madame Hillary Rodham Clinton being sworn-in in a prison-orange jump-suit? Or perhaps to save from "homeland" scandal, she could grant herself a Presidential Pardon. Stay tuned for further episodes of the Arkansas hillbilly. Six-pack Joe may take a nap in between planned events, but The Donald will be there to awaken him just in time to vote. Again to remind you, as noted in "Political Science-101", the winning scheme is VOTE EARLY & VOTE OFTEN—pure democracy! But it's not good to be cynical.

Winston Churchill, an Englishman with some American blood, favored democracy as being somewhat superior to other options. He is also quoted as noting defects: "The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter".

Meanwhile, all are advised to fervently say their daily CHRISTIAN prayers, inasmuch as it is obliged and everything else has seemed to fail.

Robert K. Dahl

Remnant Tours' Youth Fund

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As has been the case for the past 25 years, young pilgrims will walk the pilgrimage to Chartres in the name of their sponsors. The cost of the entire pilgrimage is \$3200. The names of sponsors and their special intentions will be carried to Chartres and read aloud each day on the Pilgrimage. Your donations to this effort are tax deductible. **MJM**

Waiting for Sponsors:

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Contemplating Christmas

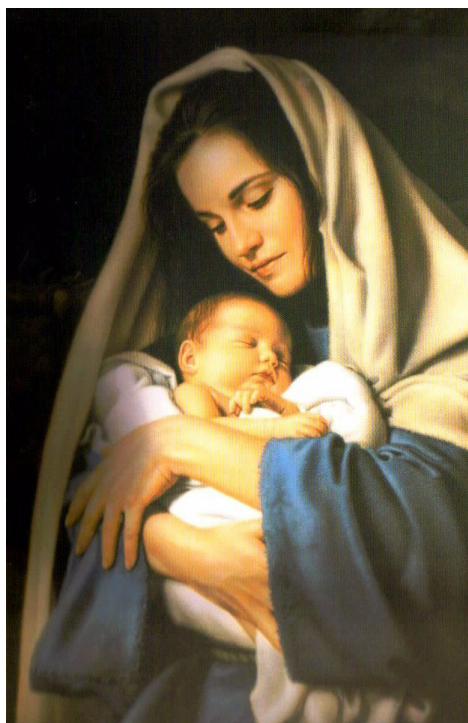
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being celebrated around them. The celebration of the birth of the Savior requires no travel all these years after His birth: the journey now is more an interior journey undertaken by each believer and the celebration is—more importantly, if truth be told—a personal as well as a family matter.

Christ was born to save the soul of each and all, but said salvation begins with *each*, the salvation of the soul of the believer, a salvation which when all is said and done is an *individual* matter, a “non-transferable” salvation, a salvation that has been made possible through the Second Person of God for each and every one of us but that is entirely dependent upon *each* one, one *alone*, one who accepts and abides by the teachings of the Faith and the grace of the Sacraments as administered by His Church and her priests, a Mercy graced to us by God and meant to be granted through the intermediation of His Church. Christ’s “Mercy” is not the filling of the Christmas “stocking” or the placement of worldly goods beneath a tree; Christ’s Mercy is directly transmitted to the individual believer’s mind, heart and soul through Grace and the Sacraments. His birth among us is a mystery that merits deep contemplation rather than a superficial celebration with some carol singing, a festive meal and the exchange of “gifts” that will not accompany the individual soul into eternity.

The theme of “mercy” seems to be a favorite of the present pope, although he seems to think of it more in mundane terms than eternal, a position that for this writer is somewhat difficult to understand, given the station of the pope. Be that as it may, this humble writer prefers to pass his holiday contemplating the transcendent Mystery rather than the mundane.

The contemplative Catholic might do well to listen to the Gregorian chant of the first sung Psalm (88) that constitutes the Matins of Christmas per the Vulgate in English translation: “The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever/I will shew forth thy truth with my mouth generation and generation/For thou hast said: Mercy shall be built up for ever in the heavens. Thy truth shall be prepared in them” (Ps 88: 2-3). This writer will listen to it¹ as he does every



Christmas. The chant is sung in Latin as it should be. The psalm speaks to Mercy in all the words that need be spoken. HH Francis I has said nothing nor will he say anything that needs be added with respect to “mercy”; all that needs be said is sun in this psalm that begins the celebration of the birth of the Bringer of Mercy to fallen humankind, the Mercy that transcends our fallen state in this vale of tears that became our lot when our first parents chose to defy God.

We celebrate Christmas—the date of the birth of our Savior and Redeemer—because God chose to gift us with the Grace of His only begotten Son, a gift beyond measure that each and every one of us was and is free to accept with thanks or decline at our eternal peril; no more, no less.

Alone, one listens attentively and with no distraction to the primordial carol of Christmas, contemplating the Mystery: God in His eternal Majesty chose to give His fallen creatures a second chance! A Miracle! No more, no less. Mercy in its most exalted sense!

“Mercy and truth shall go before thy face: “Blessed is the people that knoweth jubilation. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance: And in thy name they shall rejoice all the day, and in thy justice they shall be exalted” (Ps: 5-16).

Thus is the Mercy of God.

Mercy: “a broad term that refers to benevolence, forgiveness and kindness in a variety of ethical, religious, social and legal contexts”.² Thanks, Wikipedia! Pope Francis agrees! Nevertheless, with all due respect, Holy Father, this writer prefers the definition proffered by the Church, to wit, both corporal and *spiritual* works of mercy as defined as follows:

Corporal:

- To feed the hungry;
- To give drink to the thirsty;
- To clothe the naked;
- To harbour the harbourless [sic];

- To visit the sick;
- To ransom the captive;
- To bury the dead.

Spiritual:

- To instruct the ignorant;
- To counsel the doubtful;
- To admonish sinners;
- To bear wrongs patiently;
- To forgive offences willingly;
- To comfort the afflicted;
- To pray for the living and the dead.³

This writer chooses to pray that the Holy Father will address himself to the Spiritual Works of Mercy on this year’s celebration of the birth of our Savior and dung the Jubilee Year of Mercy that has already begun, given that he has hopefully exhausted his exhortations with respect to the Corporal Works. My Christmas concern, however, has more to do with the contemplation of the Mystery of the Incarnation.

My allotted three-score-and-ten years will be complete in the coming year and while I hope for a longer life, what remains will be a life increasingly less concerned with worldly affairs and more closely concentrated on contemplative activity in relative retirement from the doings of the outside world with the trials and tribulations it faces. I hope to take an active part in the raising of my grandchildren if circumstances permit, but beyond that, most of what I do will be done in solitude. My conversations are and will be largely limited to the daybreak discussion with the gentleman who helps me with the maintenance of the orchard, the greenhouse, the vegetable plots and the never-ending odd jobs that pop up with respect to maintenance of equipment, tools, my old car and the repair of things that go wrong in the house plus our perennial chats on the state of the world in brief.

The next conversation is with the young mother who helps me about the house for some six hours a week, conversations which while pleasant enough are of short duration and tend toward village gossip topics about which she believes I should be informed: whose wake I need to attend, various marital outrages, who’s going out of business and how expensive everything is becoming, this latter what is now sadly a weekly update. When my son and his family are in residence, I emerge from my retreat for the pleasure of their company. My betrothed lives in another country and while we chat for some six hours per week (she is still much in the world maintaining an active child psychology practice while raising a daughter just now finishing secondary school), I spend a great deal of time in solitude and silence, a station in life befitting one inclined to contemplation.

This year the family’s beloved *Belén*⁴ will not be unpacked; only a small hand-carved-and-painted crèche will sit atop the mantle. No tree, no lights, no

festive meal, no carols or *villancicos* (Spanish-language Christmas carols), no mistletoe, no eight p.m. hootenanny-style “Midnight” Mass, no viewing of favorite Christmas movies and *Amal and the Night Visitors*. This year this aged Catholic will sit in a candlelit room listening to plainsong, the Gregorian chant that dates from the early days of the Church, a time when the celebration of Christmas meant above all the contemplation of the Mystery of God’s gift of His Son for the redemption of us all. Chant will resonate in that dimly lit room, reaching deep within the listener closely following the old and once-familiar-to-all words now so seldom heard: “*Cristus natus est nobis: Venite adoremus*” and those that follow. And when the chant ends and silence descends, the stillness expands space and time to encompass a landscape in which a bright star not seen before in the heavens shines down upon a stable within which a miracle is taking place in a manger. *Cristus natus est nobis: Venite adoremus!*

Why did God choose that particular place and time to give us this Gift? It matters not: the Gift transcends such considerations. Part of the mystery is that the miracle is omnipresent and eternal, the Gift given in perpetuity to each soul that gratefully receives it. No explanations are necessary: the mystery is complete unto itself. It is to *beheld*, not analyzed, just as the blessed will behold the Beatific Vision of the Triune God for eternity when their pilgrimage through the mundane vale of tears and their individual purgation comes to a close at the End of Time. “Behold, I tell you a mystery” proclaimed the Apostle (1 Cor. 15:51). “We see now through a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face. Now I see in part: but then I shall know even as I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12).

In the words of the great Dom Guéranger, O.S.B. (1805-1875), author of the monumental (15 volumes) *The Liturgical Year* on the mystery of Christmas: “The splendor of this mystery dazzles the understanding, but it inundates the heart with joy. It is the consummation of the designs of God in time. It is the endless subject of admiration and wonder to the Angels and Saints. Nay, it is the source and cause of their beatitude.”⁵

The joy with which the Christmas mystery that “inundates the heart” is of a far greater order than the good feelings evoked by the words “Merry Christmas”. It is a joy that is silent and solitary, a contemplative communion with an eternal event that the limited individual mind can barely comprehend but that the heart and soul know well.

Cristus natus est nobis: Venite adoremus!

What more needs be said? ■

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, *A Gregorian Christmas*, <http://www.chanted.com/ads/12-6-07.htm>

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercy>

³ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10198d.htm>

⁴ <http://www.spanishnativity.com/>

⁵ Guéranger, Dom Prosper, O.S.B., *The Liturgical Year*, Loreto Publications, 2000, vol. II, p. 6.

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A Narnian Ex-pat's Christmas in Norcia

by Hilary White

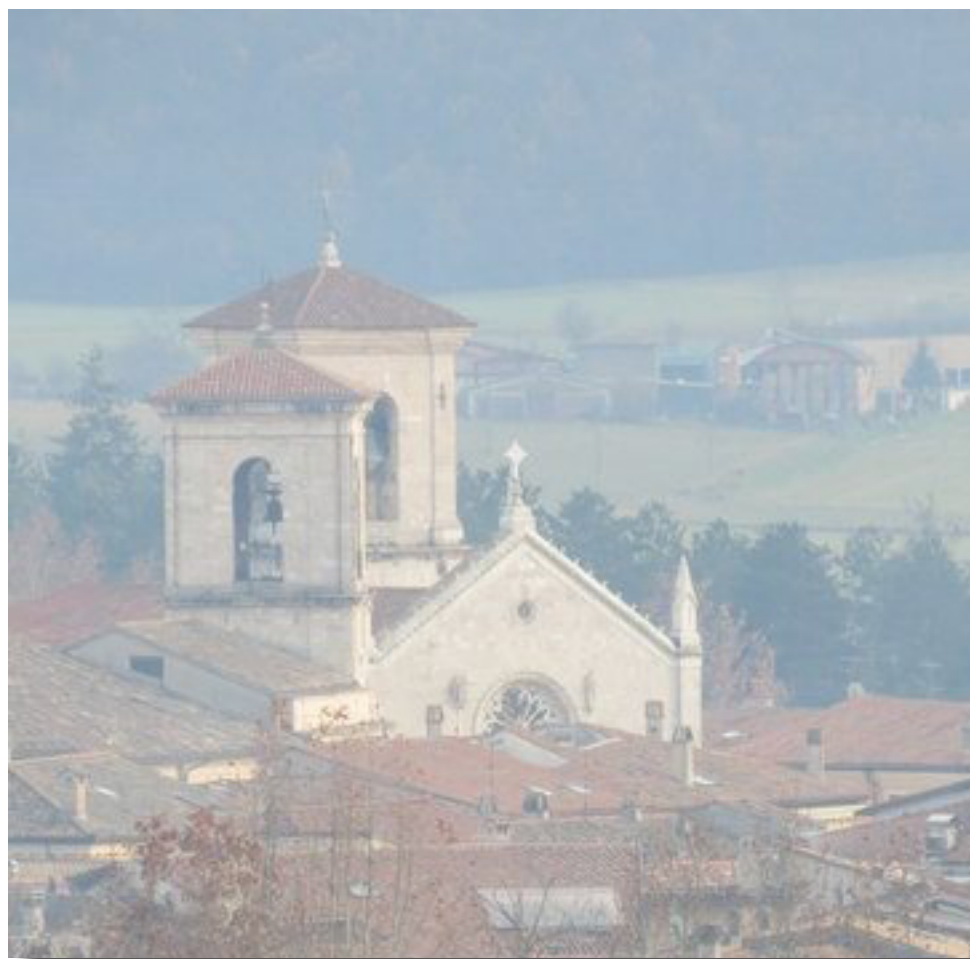
I am writing this in my living room at nine in the morning, and we have already got the fire going, because it is a cold, grey day, with the morning fog filling the valley like a gigantic bowl of vaporous milk. The only thing visible of the town about half a mile down the hill is the floating spire of St. Anthony's monastery rising up above the walls, where the bells have just rung for the nuns' mid-morning Offices. Friends are up from Rome and we are spending the day in anticipation of Advent's first big Marian festa. The mist slowly rises as the sun lights the valley with a silvery winter radiance. Crows and roosters call to each other, and the farmer starts up his tractor to finish ploughing the field across the street for the winter barley crop.

I live in Umbria, and have come to the point where I simply try to forget that the world outside is still there. I am safely surrounded by a ring of mountains, in this green valley, sometimes called the "Shangri La" of Italy, a safe place where the ancient Faith remains, preserved by monks and the long, long memory of the local people.

The rest of Italy is a land of bustle, of fast cars and polished marble art galleries, ten-dollar cocktails on a piazza humming with tourists and beggars and billionaires, where harsh-voiced, artificially coiffed women take pills to stay toothpick thin, their huge insectile sunglasses covering most of their faces and all of their sad thoughts. Italy, the apostate modern state, is an entity that comes at you, its hands stretched towards you, either wanting something from you or wanting to give you something but either way, demanding your full attention. Italy will not leave you alone with your thoughts. It is a place where Fantasy rules; a postmodern Disneyworld, where we are obliged to do nothing but enjoy the view, have another over priced drink and ask few questions about the Real. Even the gypsy pickpockets are part of the show.

But Umbria is different. The unofficial start of the Christmas festa season in Norcia is the night of December 9, a day after the solemn high Mass of the Immaculate Conception. The locals celebrate the vigil of the Feast of Our Lady of Loreto when the immemorial legend has it that the angels carried the little Holy House to its safe resting place. The ancient city of Norcia (Nursia) is the main town in the Valnerina, the valley of the Black river, a mountainous area that since the fall of the Empire has been sparsely populated and determinedly rural, old fashioned and countrified. Even in the Old Days of emperors, the valley was a place of mystery and strange legends, the haunt of the magical Sybil and her court of fairy ladies, of wizards and unknown, otherworldly things. For hundreds of years of the Christian era, it was the home of mystics and saints, levitating and working miracles. Sts. Benedict and Scholastica did not bloom in barren soil.

Even now it remains unabashedly Catholic and madly in love with its ancient traditions. The people here,



Norcia--a place of which time lost track

as they always have, rely upon a local agricultural economy, raising sheep and goats and pigs, making pecorino cheese and wild boar sausages and hunting in the oak forests on the hills for the region's black gold, the Italian black truffle.

In the week leading up to December ninth, the different neighbourhoods of Norcia – a town of no more than 4000 souls – organise bonfires to be lit on this dark, cold night. Men of each of the town's eight divisions build a house-size stack of flammable brush arranged around a centre pole with a tuft of greenery at the top. The first is in a field still stubbly from the October corn harvest at the end of our road just outside the town gate. The rest are inside the walls in the piazzas before our ancient churches. At each station, large grills and barbeques are set up with folding tables.

The story of the Valnerina's bonfire night, called Rifauna, is that it is to aid the angels in their night flight across the mountains. The Monte Sibillini are sparsely populated, a long dark, empty strip of the land where the stars are still undiluted by artificial light. At the end of the 13th century, on the night of December 9th, the angels lifted up the little house of Mary and carried it across Italy to the town of Loreto, near Ancona where it rests today as one of the most sacred Catholic shrines. The local people of the towns and villages of the Black Valley light huge bonfires across their dark region as beacons to help guide the angels on their way. The people come out to see the fires lit, let off firecrackers and remember their devotion, to remember who they are and to whom they belong.

At about eight pm, you bundle up in your warmest woolies and walk down the hill toward the Porta Romana, the gate first built in the old Roman walls

by the Emperor Augustus, where your neighbours have gathered and have spent the evening grilling wild boar sausages and strips of gorgeously fatty pork belly. You are handed a steaming bowl of lentils and a sausage or a bit of grilled pig on a slab of local pane, doused liberally with a local farmer's home-pressed olive oil. You wash it down with hot mulled wine, and often a shot out of the big unlabelled jug of home-made brain-busting moonshine which one of the older farmers carries through the crowd, dispensing to all who are still chilly.

At nine, the neighbourhood kids are handed long poles wrapped in white cotton cloths. The men bring out a bucket of gasoline, the cloth-wrapped ends are carefully dunked and lit and the kids squeal with delight as they touch their torches to the long strip of gas-soaked cloth that rings the base of the huge pile. Then they are snatched away by the men standing by as the blaze crackles up. In seconds the pile is engulfed and gouts of smoke and flame burst upwards while the crowd cheers and claps. The first beacon is lit and we have another round of mulled wine while the little bits of still-glowing ash rain cheerfully down on our hats and shoulders.

After half an hour of watching the fire, chatting and more sausages, we are off to the next site, accompanied by the snaps and bangs of firecrackers and the smell of wood smoke wafting along with us. Throughout the evening the crowd grows and more mulled wine is dispensed and the piles of brushwood are piled higher at each site. The fires roar up, towering over the little piazzas to more cheers.

In the tiny ancient space in front of the fifth century San Lorenzo parish, where it is believed Sts. Benedict and Scholastic were baptized, the cars are

all parked far away and potted plants outside the apartment building are protected from the intense heat by screens. After the fire bursts upwards, a few stalwarts (us) and teenagers challenge each other to run through the narrow passage between the wall and the blaze a few feet away, through a rosy rain of sparks, covering our faces with hats and mittens to roars of laughter. A large slab of cardboard, set up to shield someone's front door, starts burning and the men dash in, drag it out and douse it with a bucket of water as the crowd cheers. A little later, when the smoke has cleared a bit, the doors of the tiny church are opened and we venerate the little statue of the Madonna there.

While some of the locals drive to the nearby village of San Pellegrino to attend the next fire, for us the evening winds down with a quick hot chocolate at the enoteca and then home. As we are making up guest beds and feeding the kitties, the town's bells peal out at midnight, signalling again for the 720th year that the angels have safely landed Our Lady's little home in its haven.

And the local people do remember. Last year, the first for my friends and I, we brought one of those little wicked books, the kind written by modern Jesuits to lure children and parents away from the truths of the Holy Faith. We tucked it into the third pyre of the evening, in the piazza of our war memorial and theatre. A police officer came over to ask what we were doing. We showed it to him and explained briefly that it was "a bad book, against Our Lady and the Catholic Faith." That was enough for him, and he nodded leaving us to it. He must have explained our little joke to friends in the crowd because there was an audible cheer when it caught and flared up in the general conflagration.

In our endless discussions about "what to do" about Francis, about the modern Church, about the unsustainable economy, about the never-ending, hydra-headed crises of modernity, I have one repeating thought; we are not supposed to be here. At least, the world we are in is not supposed to be like this. Somehow we went off track, and have created the Spock-with-a-beard Mirrorverse where evil is called good and good evil.

Whatever the cause, we are where we are now, and it's wrong. It feels wrong, it smells wrong, it screams "WRONG" at all our senses, both physical and spiritual. To me, it feels, quite simply, that I am living in the wrong world. I have had this feeling since childhood, and one of the reasons I took so strongly to the Narnia stories was that the children in them, after their time in Aslan's land, went back to Wrong Britain, and felt exactly the same. It meant that someone else understood. We had gone wrong, and Narnia became, and remains, symbolic of everything the Christian world was supposed to be.

All through my childhood, like many raised on stories of chivalry, valour and magic kingdoms, I found the modern world to be very disappointing. Being somewhat literal-minded, I spent a lot

Continued Next Page

Continued...

of time looking for a way out of it and into a better one. I knew the Door to Narnia had to be around somewhere, and if I were diligent – and worthy – enough I would find it and be allowed through. In my teens, I lost hope and fell into despair, thinking that everything I wanted in life had been destroyed, that the way to the Real was forever barred and forgotten. I felt trapped in a world that hated everything I loved, rejected everything I wanted and scorned everything I thought beautiful and sacred.

But all through those times I carried the secret close in a safe tabernacle between my ribs where no one could take it: I don't belong to this horrible world. This desolation, this baleful wasteland is not my country of origin. I'm a Narnian, who has somehow blundered accidentally into this other horrible place. I know who Aslan is, and I know that I want to be in His country more than anything else in the world. "I'm on Aslan's side, even if there isn't any Aslan... and I'm going to live like a Narnian, even if there isn't any Narnia!"

C.S. Lewis wrote once, "Since it is so likely that (children) will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage. Otherwise you are making their destiny not brighter but darker." It is the stories like the angels carrying the Holy House that seem to me like those ancient tales of myth that inspire us ragged and impoverished moderns to keep going. Keep looking.

Some years ago, I realised that in childhood I had been on the right track. There is a Door to Narnia, but it is not physical. The path into the other, more Real world is found in the Faith and in living it. I was reminded by C. S. Lewis' own description of what happened to Susan, who had become enamoured of "lipstick and nylons and invitations" and had abandoned her devotion to the True and the Real.

He wrote in 1957, "The books don't tell



Hilary White and the Christmas fires of Norcia

us what happened to Susan. She is left alive in this world at the end, having by then turned into a rather silly, conceited young woman. But there's plenty of time for her to mend and perhaps she will get to Aslan's country in the end... in her own way."

I felt all my life that I have somehow blundered out of Aslan's true country and become lost in this other place. But when I came, about a year ago to Norcia I realised I had found a place where that feeling of wrongness was greatly reduced. If the Door could be found anywhere, it was here. The longer I stayed, and the more local people I got to know, the more I knew that this is a very special place indeed, where the great cultural amnesia has not yet completely taken over. It is true that the Great Forgetting has happened here too, and many have lost their own faith, or never learned it to begin with after decades of deliberate novusordoist mis-education, the love of the ancient realities still lives, even among those who never darken a church's door.

It might be something as simple that there are people here who remember how to hook up a team of oxen to a plough. The ancient world still remains in living memory here – the farming techniques were not modernized until 1950, and the shepherds still roam the commons with their flocks. There are few Nursini who are more than one generation away from their agricultural roots. Everyone's got a smartphone, but they also all have a nonna who lives in town and makes them dinner.

The monks I know, who came here in 2000 to take up the ancient way of monastic life in Benedict's home town, tell me that the people of Norcia begged them to come. A petition was circulated through the valley asking the Vatican to send them monks; it was signed by 4000 of the 5000 residents. One day after Mass, I asked Fr. Cassian, the prior of the monastery, how we can help people here recover their faith. He pointed up to the highest peak, covered in a deep, smooth layer of snow, gleaming brilliantly over our heads.

"We're like the snow on the mountains. We're always there and building it up layer by layer, which stays and makes the little streams that come down the mountain sides and water the valley at the bottom. It takes time and patience but they're starting to see."

This will be my second Christmas in Norcia. The town's huge Christmas tree is set up in the big piazza; the lights are all strung along the corso; the Christmas markets are setting up in the loggias and the parking lot outside the walls. This week I've got friends here for a little holiday and we're going to make wreaths.

The blasphemies and moral disorders of the world outside seem less relevant. Every morning at four am, Br. Evagrius opens the doors of the Basilica of St. Benedict and Scholastica, and the monks start the day singing their Matins while we all sleep. The doors stay open for anyone who wants to come for the Offices throughout the day, every day. Slowly, slowly the horrors of the world outside are receding from my mind and the Real is taking up residence in my daily thoughts. Every morning the bells ring and the ancient Sacrifice is offered for the reparation of sins and all is well.

"Quam dilecta tabernacula tua Domine exercituum desiderat et defecit anima mea in atria Domini cor meum et caro mea laudabunt Deum viventem

siquidem avis invenit domum et passer nidum

sibi ubi ponat pullos suos altaria tua Domine

exercituum rex meus et Deus meus

beati qui habitant in domo tua adhuc

laudabunt te semper

...

in atriis tuis super milia elegi abiectus esse in domo Dei mei magis quam habitare in tabernaculis impietatis

How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!

my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts

of the Lord.

My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.

For the sparrow hath found herself a house,

and the turtle a nest for herself

where she may lay her young ones:

Even thy altars, O Lord of hosts,

my king and my God.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord:

they shall praise thee for ever and ever.

...

I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my

God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners. ■

Holy House of Loreto

Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

The holy house where Our Lady lived in Nazareth was transported miraculously to the Italian city of Loreto in the province of Ancona on December 19, 1294 - more than 700 years ago.

The house did not go straight to Loreto, but in the year 1291 it was miraculously transported from Nazareth to the town of Tersatto in Dalmatia (Croatia). The local population, filled with astonishment, did not know how to explain its sudden appearance. Their Bishop, who was gravely ill, now appeared in their midst cured. He had prayed to the Virgin Mary that he might be strong enough to see the prodigy for himself, and the Mother of God appeared to him, surrounded by Angels, saying:

"My son, you have called for me, and here I am. I came to give you succor and to reveal to you the mystery [of the translation of the Holy House] you desire to know. The holy dwelling is the very house where I was born and raised. It was there that I received the good news brought by the Archangel Gabriel and I conceived the Divine Infant by the operation of the Holy Ghost. It was there that the Word was made flesh.

"After my death, the Apostles consecrated this dwelling, illustrious for its great mysteries, and sought the honor of celebrating the August Sacrifice there. The altar is the very one that the Apostle Peter erected; the crucifix was placed there by the Apostles. The small cedar statue is an image of me made by the Evangelist Luke, who, moved by his attachment and affection for me, expressed through his art my features as perfectly as possible for a mortal.

"This beloved house, so dear to Heaven, highly honored for many centuries in Galilee but today deprived of due homage caused by the general decay of the Faith, has been transported from Nazareth to these lands. The author of this great event is God, for whom nothing is impossible.

"For you to bear witness to all that I



am telling you now, you will suddenly be cured and return to full health after the long illness you have borne, so that through you all will believe in this miracle."

After the Moslem takeover of Albania in 1294 and the possibility of profaning the Holy House of Nazareth, it disappeared from Tersatto. According to reports of shepherds, that house miraculously appeared in a wooded area four miles from Recanati, Italy, on December 10, 1294. The news spread fast, and soon it was visited by many pilgrims. From there, for reasons only known to Divine Providence, the house moved twice in the same region and finally came to rest where the town of Loreto is today.

The people of Loreto sent a group of 16 men to Tersatto and Nazareth to determine for certain the origin of the Holy House. They related that the foundations of the house were still in Nazareth and that they matched the house in Loreto, which has stood in a marvelous way for hundreds of years with no foundation. Over the centuries, many Pontiffs have testified to the authenticity of the Holy House and the miracles that have been attributed to it and have granted numerous indulgences to those who visit it. ■

A Very Different Francis on a Christmas Long Ago

A Brief Meditation on the Messages of the Crèche and Modernity

by John Rao, Ph.D.

Catharists were one important branch of the rather large philosophical and theological “family” known as Gnostics. Their most famous twelfth and thirteenth century representatives were the people from southern France whom we call Albigensians, a name taken from the city of Albi, northeast of Toulouse. But Catharists of the High Middle Ages were very, very powerful in Italy as well, including the northern reaches of the provinces of Lazio and Umbria, lands central to the life and labors of the namesake of the current pontiff: St. Francis of Assisi (c.1182—1226).

Like Gnostics of all varieties, the Catharists loathed the physical Creation, which they considered to be intrinsically evil. They considered human bodies to be the most disgusting of nature’s many reprehensible elements, reviling and spitting at the pregnant women that they passed on the street for serving as the vile conduits of such corruption. No wonder, then, that the Catharists figure prominently in the history of the development of birth control methods. And it is even less of a surprise that they could not stomach Christmas.

Still, Catharists were heirs to a long Gnostic tradition of slithering slowly into their victims’ psyche. This meant that they did not like to attack the writings and beliefs of a target people directly, preferring to “deconstruct” the existing order of things and gradually seduce men and women into their detestation of nature. Hence, Catharists tried to promote an understanding of Jesus Christ that encouraged thinking of His body as something that was somehow more apparent than real; something intangibly “spiritual”, “mystical”, and distinctly non-physical. His real birth as a real child with a totally real body would validate not just human flesh but the material Creation that He needed to use in order to live in general.

St. Francis of Assisi knew what they were up to. We possess a number of accounts of his sallies against these heretical haters of mankind, who realized all too well that the *Poverello* was their mortal and all too effective enemy. (See Malcom Lambert, *The Cathars*, Blackwell, 1998, pp. 171-174). One of Francis’ initiatives, so successful that I do not know of any open attempt of the Catharists to respond to it, was the restoration in 1223 at Greccio, in northern Lazio, of a long forgotten Christmas symbol: the crèche. The following description of the event, excerpted from chapter fifteen of Frank M. Rega’s *St. Francis and the Conversion of the Muslims* (Tan, 2008), and relying heavily on contemporary sources, is highly useful to the unfortunate comparison that I will then have to make with the present:

“Less than a month after the papal approval of the *Regula Bullata* [the



Rule for the Order of Friars Minor], Francis arrived at the brothers’ hermitage in the little town of Greccio – a community in the vicinity of Rieti, located about halfway between Assisi and Rome. It was now December, and Francis had long been nurturing a heartfelt desire to celebrate Christmas in a wonderful new manner. He wanted others to share his own inner joy and exaltation at what for him was the most important feast of the year, since our salvation was heralded by the birth of Christ. He conceived of a simple way to awaken everyone’s love and admiration of the Christ Child, especially those who were weak in the Faith.

His plan was to have Christmas Midnight Mass celebrated in the presence of a realistic representation of the humble grotto of Bethlehem, complete with live animals. ‘For I wish to do something that will recall to memory the little Child who was born in Bethlehem and set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of his infant needs . . .’ According to St. Bonaventure, he even obtained the approval of Pope Honorius, so that he would not be accused of willfully introducing novelty into the sacred ceremonies.

Francis had arranged beforehand to have his friend, the nobleman Giovanni Velita, make the necessary preparations and help spread word of the event. A little manger or crib was set up in the woods near the hermitage, filled with the common, coarse hay that beasts of burden feed upon. An ox and an ass were then led to the place. Some later embellishments of the story maintain that figures of Mary and Joseph were also positioned about the manger. Francis was delighted to see everything ordered as he had wished. To the *Poverello*, ‘The sight of the crèche [manger scene] in its glorious simplicity was a symbol of the advent of lowliness, the exaltation of poverty, the praise of humility.’

A host of brothers from near and afar descended upon Greccio, arriving from numerous friaries and villages. They joined with the crowds of local residents, field workers, and shepherds; all were drawn towards the manger where Francis knelt. The candles and torches of the onlookers

brightened up the crisp night, reflecting their glow upon a light snow that had begun to fall. The sound of hymns echoed in the hollows and woodlands. Men and beasts and even nature itself radiated great joy on that special Christmas Eve – it was truly the feast of hearts. ‘The woods rang with the voices of the crowd and the rocks made answer to their jubilation.’

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated at midnight with great solemnity, using an altar that had been erected over the manger. Francis, vested in his Deacon’s robes, sang the Gospel in a voice characterized by Celano as sweet, clear, strong and sonorous.

He preached a touching sermon, describing the first Christmas and the humble surroundings of Mary and Joseph at the nativity of Son of God, whom he lovingly referred to as the Child of Bethlehem. During the ceremony, Giovanni Vileta experienced a vision in which he saw a babe lying in the crib, rapt in a slumber so deep that he appeared lifeless. Then he saw St. Francis approach and take the child in his arms, rousing him from his sleep. For his biographer Celano, this vision aptly symbolized the mission of the saint: ‘. . . for the Child Jesus had been forgotten in the hearts of many; but, by the working of his grace, he was brought to life again though his servant St. Francis and stamped upon their fervent memory.’

The after-glow from that evening of devotion was manifested throughout the area in the days that followed. Many miraculous healings occurred among the sick, who were prayed over and touched with some of the hay that had lain in the sacred manger. Even infirm animals that were given the stalks of that hallowed grass for their food were restored to health.” (www.thepoverello.com/StFrancisChristmas.htm)

All of this was effectively anti-Catharist because of its Christ-centered focus. Francis emphasized the reality not only of the Savior’s body, but His body in its most helpless, childlike state. He called attention to the Nativity in conjunction with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, indicating priestly ability to transform bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ to provide the food that men

and women need to gain eternal life with God, and in their own resurrected bodies. The *Poverello* presents this teaching in a natural setting so touched by God that the hay of the manger itself became a conduit for divine assistance, and “even infirm animals that were given the stalks of that hallowed grass for their food were restored to health”. No self-respecting Catharist could have anything to do with this crèche and its consequences whatsoever. That was one of the major grounds—if not, perhaps, the chief ground, given the influence of the haters of mankind in the region—why St. Francis restored its use. The population got the message, and the Gnostic game was up—at least for the moment.

Let us remember that the chief *pastoral* reason why St. Francis was anti-Catharist was because their heretical insistence upon the *complete and intrinsic evil* of Creation diverted believers away from the help they desperately needed from the Incarnate Word and the sacraments that the entry of the supernatural into daily life provided. This help was required to deal with the *grave flaws and insufficiencies of a nature* fallen from its original state due to sin. Nature’s glories had to be celebrated so as to enable men to become conscious both of nature’s loss, as well as the unfathomable possibility, through resort to supernatural truths and grace presented with the aid of nature, to enter into union with the Eternal God. Behind all of Francis’ work is the recognition that nature could only possess—and surpass—the glory the Creator had initially intended for it by submitting itself to an indispensable correction and transformation in a Christ *divine* as well as human. With the baby who is also the Word of God as his guide, St. Francis’ pilgrimage to Eternity was one wherein nature as a whole accompanied him upwards with “the music of the spheres”.

“Thud” is the only musical tone that accompanies the pastoral approach offered Catholics and the world at large in Christmastide, 2015 under the reign of a pope who took his name from Francis. That “thud” is the sound that emerges from men’s minds and hearts plunging downwards from St. Francis’ effort to understand and celebrate nature by looking at it through the *Word* made flesh. “Thud” is the sound of the slamming of our minds and hearts into the flesh of a Creation that wants to know nothing of its sinful rejection of God’s original plan for it, or what it is that it can know and do to lift itself out of the pathetic, parochial, debasing, and blinding consequences of the Fall. “Thud, and again I say unto you, thud” is the ultimate pastoral message of a pontificate that wants to go with the flow of the *Zeitgeist* rather than stand above it. “Restore all things in fallen nature” could readily serve as the official

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motto of the Roman Catholic Church today. And the “mercy” offered by the ecclesiastical authorities under these circumstances comes at the expense of dumping a thick, wet blanket over all of nature’s healthy characteristics and tendencies---whose cultivation is treated as though it were an arrogant reproach to the poor suffering vices they would uncharitably help to repress.

The consequences of Christmas, 2015’s truly anti-*Poverello*, pastoral “thud” are legion, but there is only one umbrella-like result that I wish to underline in this brief meditation here and now: its encouragement of the entire mesh of seemingly contradictory---and stark raving mad---errors that have all been in bed with one another in their production of that caricature of a civilization that we call “modernity”. For the earthwards fall of those seeking to “restore all things in fallen nature” has a centuries-long history whose fundamental theme has remained unchangeable under a variety of only superficially different stimuli.

Every one of the stimuli constituting modernity involves some form or another of rejection of nature’s need to learn and work together with the Revelation and Grace brought to us by the baby in the crèche. Some of these stimuli built this rejection out of a tragic *overestimation* of nature’s autonomous value that itself emerged from the Christian exaltation of the value of all of the “Seeds of the Logos” to be found throughout Creation. Some rejected it out of a tragic *underestimation* of nature’s ability to bear any connection with things godly after the devastating effects of Original Sin; out of a kind of semi-Catharism. The first set of stimuli moved from the Renaissance through certain forms of the Enlightenment down to the present; the second, from medieval Nominalism through Protestantism and other forms of the Enlightenment into our own times. Both denied that mixing of things supernatural and natural that demands our paying homage to the Christ child and His Kingship over Seeds of the Logos that are as dependent upon His aid as they are intrinsically valuable. And both ultimately leave man with the same guide to daily practical action: his own unchained will and the manifold bizarre pathways down which this can direct him.

Modernity’s Original Sin has been that of viewing man as an isolated individual “freed” from the spell of the crèche; “free” to use his will to obtain a power over the universe that is viewed either *positively*, as something that will enable him to achieve undreamed of heights, or *negatively*, as something necessary to cultivate to protect himself from the ravages of the other depraved and willful monsters that surround him. Some men have used this autonomous modern “freedom” ironically, to invent willful machine-like explanations of the universe that enslave him to impersonal forces, and even more inescapably than they ever were enslaved beforehand. Others have used it in more immediately obvious ways, to oppress the weak to the strong, and bind everyman to his most dominant personal material passion---whatever that might be. All, together,

have ripped the order of nature to shreds in the name of their “freedom” to think insane thoughts and perform insane actions, indifferent to the dictates of universal laws of Faith and Reason. Everyone demanding “freedom” for his own pet passion has helped the cause of those insisting upon other, perhaps totally conflicting “liberties”. But many who have the word “freedom” constantly on their lips have kept it there precisely because they know that they possess the will, the guile, and the power to manipulate whatever its use might be to their own personal advantage.

Pope Francis’ pastoral concerns in this Christmas, 2015, as during his whole pontificate to date, have been centered on “mercy” for those campaigning for various marital and sexual “freedoms”, on “freedom” for the environment from the ravages of the human hand, and for “freedom” of the poor from the exploitation of the rich. This latter concern has caused many people to label him a communist pure and simple, and for those obsessed with communism to associate his sexual and environmental activism with his general Marxist tendencies.

I categorically reject the idea that the pope is a communist. Moreover, his pastoral program is not flawed because of a concern for “mercy” as such. Quite frankly, I also believe that we *are* facing a great environmental crisis, and that this is connected with the naturalist Enlightenment and an

Industrial Revolution whose wretched environmental consequences Catholics were among the first who were active in lamenting. Moreover, I also am convinced that we have a global, neo-liberal, unchained free market inspired disaster on our hands that is ensuring a massive exploitation of the poor by the rich in the developed lands as well as in the Third World.

The problem with the pope’s message in Christmastide, 2015 is that he is singing the modern song of “thud”. He is calling, in practice, for the need for a “correction” and “transformation” of Catholic doctrine to aid in the “restoration of all things” not in Christ but “in fallen nature”. He is not telling us to pay homage to the child in the crèche and accept His corrective and transforming Social Kingship. He is not speaking in a Christ-centered fashion.

Hence, his “mercy” will ensure *carte blanche* for marital and sexual chaos; his environmentalism not only favors pagan naturalism and the validation of spiritual, film, and think-tank gurus of a simultaneously most dangerous and painfully lame taste, but also institutions like the World Bank that manipulate it for the profit of the global elite; his “humble” concern for the “poor” ends in a series of pointless gestures that every bureaucratic and capitalist card shark can find a way to dine off of in the future. Sad to say, the lack of the proper crèche-centered focus also simply permits every rabid nationalist, polluter of God’s earth,

and libertarian to make it seem that they form the army of St. Athanasius in our own time that Catholics must support or die.

Our modern, crèche-less modern world’s willful message of “don’t tread on me and my uncorrected natural will”---whether it be expressed with reference to the supposedly “Marxist” issues seemingly dear to the heart of the pope, or to those other economic and nationalist idols of the naturalist Enlightenment dear to the hearts of some “conservatives”, “libertarians”, or “American exceptionalists”---is always sung to the same single boring tone of “thud”: the tone produced by the human mind and heart that plunged from its medieval heights on a downward trajectory to a fallen---though not intrinsically evil---earth.

Our only means of fighting the Catharist despair that must come when men realize that the endless clash of free wills that will not accept correction in Christ reveals the universe to be a meaningless entity; our only chance of pointing things into a proper hierarchy of values and hearing the “music of the spheres” is to stand above our *Zeitgeist* and judge it. And the best first step to that goal comes from turning our eyes away from the lions and tigers and bears that our current Francis shined on St. Peter’s façade and focusing them on the oxen and donkeys led onto the *crèche* by a different Francis on a Christmas long ago at Greccio. ■

Catholic Heroes and Future Saints

by Tess Mullins

François-Athanase Charette de la Contrie was born May 2, 1763, to Michel Louis Charette, knight and lord of La Contrie, and Marie Anne de La Garde Monjeu. He entered the Navy in 1779 and in 1787, at the age of twenty-four, obtained the rank of lieutenant. Within three years he had eleven campaigns to his credit, including some in America. He was sent to serve in the North Sea and Russia, fought against the Barbary pirates, and alongside the Ottomans in their efforts against the Greeks.

Fresh off the adrenaline of these and similar campaigns, he returned France to marry his cousin’s widow, a forty-one year old heiress to her late husband’s large estate in the Vendean region. Though he was a man of action and nobility on the front line, he became bored in the beautifully peaceful rural setting and found outlets in mistresses and hunting.

Meanwhile the bloody and pagan effects of the French Revolution, which began in 1789, had reached the southern tip of France, and the peaceable Catholics of the Vendee were bristling at the outrage. These stalwart, humble peasants broke out in open revolt after a massacre of Vendeeans in 1792 by soldiers of the new Republic.

Soon members of the uprising were pounding on Charette’s door, begging him to be their leader.

He was reluctant to accept charge, being a military genius and understanding the hopelessness of the Vendean position. These men were farmers and tradesmen,

driven to fight by love of their country, families, and their simply Catholic way of life. Charette attempted first to hide, then to reason with them. The peasants persisted, made threats and called him a coward. The last was effective. He agreed to fight, on the condition that he be given absolute authority. And to prove that cowardice was foreign to him, he promised not to return home until he was either victorious, or dead.

After a string of brilliant victories which overcame the most woeful odds, Charette was named “King of the Vendee” and became the foremost enemy of the Republic. To the last he hoped to relinquish charge to the first “prince of the blood” who showed interest. He believed in the unifying ideal of such a leader, but no such leader appeared.

The Republic tried everything from bribes and treaties to outright deception in their efforts to subdue Charette. They finally succeeded in picking off his scant army and arresting him. Knowing the high price on the general’s head, Charette’s faithful bodyguard died on the battlefield with the cry, “I am Charette!” But the enemy knew better. Charette was captured, tried, and condemned that day.

At the site of his execution, having made his confession and been absolved by a non-juring priest, our hero refused a blindfold and said that he himself would give the signal to fire. Pointing to his chest he cried, “Soldiers, aim there – it is here that you must strike the heart of a brave man!” Then he bowed his head and received the volley.



He died 1796, having gone from the most reluctant member of the catholic counterrevolution to the most celebrated of all the Vendean leaders. Charette was no poster child of lifelong holiness; he wasn’t thrown into ecstasy at the tender age of two by contemplating his dear Lord. There are other saints to fill that role. Though not yet declared a saint, Charette nonetheless gives us an incredible example of heroic Catholic perseverance and militancy. And this from a man who was truly human; one to whose earlier weakness and folly we can all relate.

There will always be hope for even the most reluctant catholic among us, to one day see clearly the choices we must make, and to able to rise up and say, like Charette before his last battle, “I shall conquer or die for my God and my King. That is my resolve, and it will never change.” ■

An Interview of Elena Chudinova, Author of “The Mosque of Notre Dame”

By Michael J. Matt

Michael J. Matt (MJM) Can you give our readers just a few biographical notes about yourself and especially what it is about your life experiences thus far that motivated you to write *The Mosque of Notre Dame*?

Elena Chudinova (EC) I am a northerner; my family had land in the Urals. My grandfather was shot by the Communists, his brother supposedly died somewhere fighting in the army of Admiral Kolchak. My father, Peter Chudinov, was a famous scientist, a paleontologist. He has been to the United States numerous times. A lifelong friendship connected him with a renowned American scientist Everett Olson. Since my youth I have written about Russian and European history, particularly about the history of the White Army and the French Vendée. But I was never interested in Islam. In general, I am not interested in anything that does not have anything to do with European culture. However, the events of the late XX and early XXI centuries made me understand that communism is only one of the threats directed against Christianity. The Communist regime fell, but Christians are again under attack.

The events that led me to this understanding were extremely varied: both the hostage-taking by Chechens in the Moscow theater during the play in the «Nord-Ost» theatre, and September 11. When I was already writing my book, Beslan happened, which was a horrific tragedy. But we now see that Islamic terrorism shows its face everywhere.

MJM: You're a traditional Catholic Russian. I'm curious: What does the traditional Catholic movement look like in your country?

EC: I would not talk about “a movement”, but would talk about religion. Among the Russians (I am referring to ethnic Russians, not people of Polish or German origin, of whom there are more than a few in Russia), specifically among Russians, there were always Catholics. But they never were the majority. However, it is a constant phenomenon in Russian life noted in its culture. This is nothing to be surprised by. But under the communists, Catholic life in Russia was somewhat “behind” the overall developments in the life of the Church. Only after the fall of the Iron Curtain came both the innovations of Vatican II and the reaction to them – the self-determination of the traditionalists. Russia's first FSSPX mass was celebrated in August 1991, ten days before the formal destruction of the USSR. What can I say about the way things are today? Typically, traditionalist Catholics in Russia stand out for having a high educational level and right-wing views. I hope that this trend will continue.

MJM: The book has already had great success in what you call the “front line” countries of Europe where Islamic migration and Sharia have been in full force for quite some time. Do you think



Americans are adequately aware of what is in store for them to recognize the need to read your book?

EC: I cannot be sure of that. Moreover, relations between our two countries are again tense. But I hope for a victory of common sense.

MJM: You've no doubt run into some objections from those who claim that the ISIS threat, for example, is a manufactured bit of propaganda, created by the West (especially America), to frighten innocent people into compliance with draconian laws designed to strip away civil liberties and usher in some sort of police state. What do you say to this? Is ISIS really the threat we're being told it is?

EC: A widespread, world war is beginning. One fails to see this only if he refuses to do so. Mostly, it was the liberals who brought the Christian world to its current sad state. Yes, I believe liberals should be curtailed. In 1944, did newspapers come out in the United States, which wrote that «National Socialism is an imaginary threat»? On the other hand, a government has to have the trust of the people.

MJM: The new catch word on the Left these days is “Islamophobia”. Do you believe there is a degree of unfair treatment or prejudice against Muslims, based on the antics of the few militant groups we see parading around with their guns and black flags on CNN and the Fox News Channel?

EC: Many thinkers have spoken out about the destructive nature of Islam, I cannot be saying anything new. But the stupidity of journalists everywhere is amazing. After the tragedy in Paris one caller to a Russian radio station asked: “Is there a danger that Islamophobia will now increase? Good Muslims may suffer in France!” I responded: “I am not going to answer questions posed in such an immoral fashion. In Paris the dead bodies are not yet buried and the victims' families still wept. And all you are worried about is that somebody will be told that his co-religionists are disliked? This is just unbelievably low.” Mind you, we are a law-abiding civilization, we honor our laws. We have the police in order to prevent the killing of “good Muslims”. But journalists are worried not about vigilantism, but about preventing us from speaking out loud about the Islamic threat.

MJM: In that same vein, your book attempts to raise awareness that the big problem here is not first and foremost Islam, much less Islamophobia, but rather the near total loss of Christian identity in Europe. Has Christianity itself lost the will to live much less defend itself?

EC: The crusaders would not allow millions of Muslims into their countries. The Lord shows us that without the Cross all that we have ceases to be. To what extent we are Christians (and the extent to which we want to save Christian civilization is one problem) is our choice, our crucial choice today.

MJM: Can you say something about the ecumenical movement in the Catholic Church? In other words, while the Church is all about dialoguing with Islam, it seems that Islam is not particularly interested in “making friends” with Christianity. Would you agree, and what accounts for this blind optimism on the part of the modern Catholic Church?

EC: Half a century ago, the Church committed suicide. Of course, all of this is a soccer match with one goal post as we say in Russia. Christians ask forgiveness for the (often fictitious) atrocities of the crusaders. But even once, did the Muslims ask forgiveness for the horrible rivers of blood shed by them in Europe? At Vienna, Toulouse, and at Poitiers? Charles Martel did not invite the Muslims there to defeat them.

MJM: So if the answer is a restoration of Catholic identity how do you see that coming about and is there still enough time for that to even matter?

EC: Yes, that is the answer. Is there still time – I do not know. The man who goes into battle, does not know if he will prevail. But he still goes.

MJM: If the European Union's decentralizing policies continue, do you see your country—and I guess I'm referring specifically to President Putin—as being part of the problem, or part of the solution in the years to come?

EC: The Russian Emperor Alexander I gave the peoples of Europe a great idea of the Holy Alliance – Union of Christians. I see my country as part and parcel of this Union – a Union of countries, preserving their national identity, but never warring with each other. But this is just a beautiful ideal.

Now, talking about Putin – I think he is the same as all the other modern leaders. Not worse, perhaps even better than some of the others, but just as inconsistent as them.

MJM: What is more dangerous to the future stability of our world: ISIS or the European Union?

EC: I do not think that it is appropriate to pose the question in that manner. Please understand, there is a horde of bloodthirsty savages coming at us (as a Russian, I understand very well what a horde means). While there is something left of our civilization, we can fight, we can convince people. But when the destroyer comes, there will be nobody left to convince.

MJM: Can you say something about persecution of Christians? We see more and more of it, both in terms of physical martyrdom in the Mideast as well as a “dry martyrdom” here at home. Does the encroaching criminalization of Christianity's fundamental moral tenets in and of itself embolden those who would establish Sharia Law throughout the world?

EC: To reiterate, I see that the persecution of the Cross did not end with the fall of communism, but a new persecution came. I do not know who benefits from being a lobbyist of the destructive, anti-Christian forces today. But I see that every government in our countries lobbies them. Do you remember the attempt to build a Muslim center on the spot where the destroyed Twin Towers once stood? I do not believe that something like that just simply happens.

MJM: Finally, from your experience and given the alarm you're attempting to raise, what has your book accomplished so far and what do you hope to see it accomplish now that it is available for the first time in English?

EC: I consider the publication of my book in the English language to be very important. Today, English is not only the language of the Anglo-Saxon world, but also the language of international communication. Now, the book can be read by virtually every educated person. There were two milestones on the difficult path of this book. First was its publication in French in 2009. Then it was important for me, whether the French will accept this book as «their own», since it dealt specifically with the fate of France. The French recognized it, at least, the French with rightwing views. The second milestone is its English edition, for it brings the book to a new level of accessibility to readers in different countries. What is important to me now? I would like to see the book adapted for cinema. A cinematic adaptation produces a great effect on people, a louder effect. This would be very difficult, in today's tolerant, liberal state of the cinema industry. But miracles happen sometimes. With God all things are possible.

MJM: Thank you very much for your time. And may God bless and protect you in your courageous work on His behalf.

EC: I would like to once again express my great appreciation to the “Remnant Books”. I believe that the publication of this book is our joint victory in a world of tolerant lies. ■

Apollyon Unleashed

By Susan Claire Potts

Part III

It's early morning, still dark in Palmer Woods. The street lights are on, shining on the glaze of frost that covers the ground. There's not a sound in my writing room, but the silence won't last. Soon the rumble of engines and the thud of wheels on the pavement will break the quiet dawn

The neighbors are going to work. The few children who live in the great old houses will be shuttled off to school. An hour more, and the houses will be empty.

The life has been sucked right out of the neighborhoods.

The mothers are gone. Not just here, but all across America. There are a few who are holding on, raising their children, creating a home. But it's a lonely task. Pope Pius XI wrote that woman is the heart of the home.¹ That heart has been broken.

Women have changed. They had to, in order to adjust to what Pope Paul VI called "the recent evolution of society,"² wherein "a change is also seen both in the manner of considering the person of woman and her place in society."³

It changed, all right.

And the Pope didn't fight it. The bishops accepted it. The professors extolled it. And married Catholic women had to figure out what to do with their lives once their femininity was distorted and their queenship taken away. The home and woman's place in it were reduced to an after-thought. Home became where you go after work.

Manners are different now that women have that "new place in society." Men don't stand up in a restaurant when a woman approaches the table. They don't take off their hats in her company or watch their language. They don't nod respectfully when she passes by on the street nor walk on the outside of the sidewalk. Nobody says *ma'am*.⁴ Why bother?

A new imperative, an artificial "gender equality," has rendered these courtesies obsolete. Old women lament their loss; young women never knew such gallantry. Who remembers the reason for



them? Who knows what they meant?

Please, may I remind you?

Men did all these things because women weren't like them. There was something about womanhood, a dignity that commanded honor. It had nothing to do with business success or graduate degrees or winning elections. Her dignity was rooted in maternity—either actual or potential. It was the source of her power and her mystery. No man could do what she did. She could bring forth life. No worldly accomplishment could ever equal that.

So, of course, it had to be destroyed. The woman's focus had to change. Her fecundity had to be monitored; her life had to be sterilized. It was all part of the transformation.

And Rome was complicit. Using their power to bind and loose, the popes of the Decade of Revolt engineered and imposed a systematic unravelling of the Catholic way of life. As I wrote in Parts I and II of this essay, there were three major attacks that destabilized the home and pushed the woman out: (1) The end of obligatory Friday abstinence; (2) The radical changes in the Roman Calendar; and (3) most lethal of all, the years-long "taking under advisement" the morality of the Pill, which will be treated in Part IV.

The attacks came in waves, spanning the decade of the sixties. Sometimes they were separate; sometimes they overlapped. Whether the onslaught was deliberate or merely misguided, only God knows. But even before the sacred liturgy was ravaged, the groundwork was

laid. Tradition was shattered. The arrows of destruction hit their mark. Woman was weakened; her maternal governance, undermined. The home couldn't stand.

No human society can survive once the home is ruined. The Church would endure, the Faith would live, but Christendom was doomed.

Let history record: we are witness to its collapse.

The First Target: The Kitchen Table

No one thought it was an attack when Pope Paul VI set aside the Friday Law of Abstinence. But it was. The *relaxation* toppled the universal order and discipline of the Church Militant. Abstaining from meat on Friday was part of our uniform. We wore it proudly. It was a mark of distinction and honor, demonstrating to everyone that we were *in the world, but not of it*.

We were soldiers of Christ.

The woman kept the uniform pressed. The iron was in her hand. As part of a sisterhood of homemakers, united in ancient custom and fidelity, she could carry out her mission undisturbed. Her house was in order. There were no arguments; the Friday abstinence was not open to negotiation. She planned the meals, made sure the discipline was observed at her table. It was under her control; she *made it happen*.

The tradition was safe. But Rome stripped it away.

No longer backed by law, the woman lost her authority. If her husband wanted steak and the children wanted

hot dogs on Friday, who was she to say *no*? Her talent to unite and her role in remembrance were snatched from her.

She could try to carry on, but it wasn't the same once everything was optional. The discipline she had upheld and the customs that flowed from it were gone. Now, she was subject to the vagaries of everybody else's appetites.

The ranks were dispersed. Unit cohesion was gone. It was every man for himself.

The ramifications of the breakdown were horrific, and the effects are still felt. The Church wasn't supposed to change—everybody believed that back then. Little things, maybe, but nothing important. God didn't change, and the Church reflected His changelessness. There was security in that certitude and hope for Heaven.

But the pope pulled the rug out from under the people by destroying an integral part of Christian life.

What did it mean? people wondered as they tried to reason it out. *This whole Friday thing must not have been God's will to begin with—it's all just human stuff. They say it's discipline, not doctrine. What's the difference? Something's sin one day and not the next? First you go to Hell for eating meat on Friday and now you don't? Doesn't make sense.*

Confusion took hold. And Apollyon marked his first victory.

People forgot what the rule was all about. They weren't reminded that the law of Friday abstinence was not an arbitrary obligation. It had deep meaning and substance: the virtue of obedience lay behind it.

That's what the devil was after. We know his character—from the very beginning, from the Temptation of Eve, he wanted that obedience gone. He lusted for the submission of Christ's bride, the subjection of the Church to himself.

The wind blew from the fires of Hell, and a new teaching took hold—the idea that the penance a person chooses for himself is better than that he does because he has to. It was more than error; it was a lie, but it went largely unobserved. People were no longer told that something done under obedience to the discipline of the Church is superior to that chosen by themselves because it entails a voluntary submission to the will of God.

It was the demon's masterstroke. By taking away the obligation—an easy one, at that—people lost the sense of obedience to the Church. Worse, they

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¹ Pius XI, *Casti Connubi*, December 31, 1930

² Paul VI, *Humane Vitae*, July 25, 1968

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ That noun of address is disparaged, as if it is insulting somehow, indicating a woman is—God forbid!—old. Foolish arbiters of how we talk. Don't they know *ma'am* is short for madame, which means *My Lady*?

Apollyon Unleashed

S. Potts/Continued from Page 11

lost the knowledge that the Church spoke for Christ—that He manifested His will through the disciplines and rules of the Catholic Church. All that was set aside. It was each man for himself. Everyone became his own general, making his own rules, deciding what he would do, never mind regulations. There weren't any.

At first, people might have tried to do something—give up meat, do an act of charity, give alms. But after awhile, the penitential aspect of Friday faded. One thing followed another. First, the fear of breaking the rules died away, soon followed by the loss of the fear of Judgment. Last, and most devastating, people lost their fear of God. *What's to fear?* they said to themselves. It doesn't matter. Rules can be broken. And they went their merry way.

But the fear of God is beginning of wisdom the Holy Scriptures say—and any fool can see there's not much wisdom in the world.

All because of the relaxation of a simple rule.

The Second Target: The Calendar

The next attack was the radical reorganization and revision of the liturgical year. Like the relaxation of Friday abstinence, the changes in the calendar hit the woman first and hardest because she was the guardian of the culture, the Mistress of Ceremonies of daily life. Without even having to think about it, Catholic wives and mothers lived by the calendar. It marked the rhythm of their lives. There was always something to observe, something to mourn or to celebrate. They were the ones to do it.

It was different then. I remember the women at Holy Family long ago—aged Sicilian women, long departed, who took me under their wing while revolution rocked the church. They were holding on, refusing to change, keeping the customs of the Old World in the middle of Detroit.

Like mothers, they taught me how to keep the liturgical year in the kitchen. The calendar was our guide. There were different foods for different days: wheat for Santa Lucia, fava beans on St. Joseph's Day, keep quietly during Lent, artichoke frittata and sweet peppers in sauce after Holy Face devotions on the



third Thursday of every month. The rhythm rolled on, year after year.

But then the jolt came that disrupted everything. With cold disregard to Catholic sensibility, the old calendar was removed and a new one imposed. There were over two hundred changes. Two-thirds of the year jumbled! No one knows what day it was anymore.

It happened a long time ago, before the present pope was even ordained, and the wounds have not yet healed. How could they? Things have gotten even more confusing with Pope Benedict XVI bringing back the 1962 calendar for use with the Old Mass.⁵ So now we have two calendars! How's that for the *hermeneutics of continuity*? Talk about confusion. The problem is, neither one seems real now. The connection to the past was broken.

But let's go back to 1969 and *Mysterii Paschalis*, Pope Paul VI's radical *motu proprio* that reorganized the liturgical year and "revised the liturgical celebrations of Jesus Christ and the saints."⁶ It was done, the experts said, because of the "progress in historical understanding and hagiographical studies."

The Roman Calendar had been changed numerous times over the centuries—a saint moved here or there, new ones added, new Feasts promulgated. It was development and growth of a living thing, the young sapling growing into a towering tree, rich and heavy with fruit.

This change was different. The New

5 I won't call it the Extraordinary Form. The *Novus Ordo* is the thing that's "out of the ordinary." And Tridentine is imprecise. The Old Mass (old *form*, if you must!) predates Trent by hundreds of years. I much prefer simple words: old and new. The qualifiers are understood.

local celebrations: Valentine, Anastasius, and Canute. The glorious Passion of St. Boniface and the acts of Prisca, Dorothy, Eustace, and Giles were declared unhistorical. Two others, a certain Cyprian and Justin, were declared "fictional."

So where was the certainty about canonizations, about the Church's knowledge of heavenly things? Gone. Cast aside.

The psychological impact was profound. In days past, mothers of families, teachers, and nuns would mark the Saint of the Day, relating the wondrous works of virgins and martyrs, of popes and kings, of nuns and queens. Soldiers and sailors and confessors of the Faith were remembered.

But they couldn't be sure anymore, could they? The past was mocked, as if previous popes and councils, the guardians of the Faith, were a bunch of medieval ignoramuses.

Nobody could really know for certain who was in Heaven and how they got there. A general conclusion was reached: Everything can change. It's impossible to hold on, so why try? Better not be too rigid about anything. Things can change any minute.

And they were right. They did.

The third arrow was the worst of all. Worse than disciplines and days, human life itself was under attack.

The woman was stricken at the very heart of her nature—her maternity. So many staggered. So many fell. And the Catholic home was razed.

It will take the Hand of the Carpenter to rebuild it.

To Be Continued Next Issue

Calendar rocked the lives of ordinary Catholics. It was catastrophic. Feasts were moved; names were changed. Beloved saints were removed, cast off like dead fish. It was said that the lives of certain friends in Heaven could not be verified; their acts were "fabulous," and not in the wonderful sense of the word, but pertaining to fables. A stinking pall of falsity and historical revisionism lay over the holy calendar.

This was dishonor at the highest levels. St. Barbara was gone, and St. Christopher. They were the most well known, but there were so many others—Telephorus, Domitilla and Marcellus. Symphorosa and her seven sons. The list was long. Other saints were determined not to be "of universal importance," and were relegated to a few

Father Says, "Read The Remnant!"
And, Clearly, Father Knows Best



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A Remnant Book Review...

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER

The Annulment Crisis in American Catholicism, by Robert H. Vasoli

Oxford University Press 1998

Reviewed by Vincent Chiarello

On May 1, 2006, Robert H. Vasoli, Associate Professor Emeritus in the Department of Sociology at Notre Dame University, passed away. What had not, however, was the timely importance of his ground-breaking book, *What God Has Joined Together, The Annulment Crisis in American Catholicism*. This book describes “annulment mills,” - a phrase he popularized, if not coined - which are moving many Church dioceses into perilous grounds because of the relatively easy and quick annulments that are being granted in unimaginably large numbers in this country. He was to

become an “expert” in this matter, often helping others who contested church annulment decrees to navigate their way through the Church’s arcane procedures that could easily have been overlooked. Among those who saw the earliest trends toward a form of “Catholic divorce,” Prof. Vasoli sought to explain how and why such a phenomenon had happened. And therein lays a tale.

A personal note: from 1998, the year that *What God Has Joined Together* was published by the prestigious Oxford University Press, until a few years before his death, I corresponded with Prof. Vasoli, and still have his letters. I

do not exaggerate when I state that the annulment crisis affected him deeply and personally. It may not be known that Prof. Vasoli, who had been married for 15 years, had also been faced with a situation that was *terra incognita* to him: his then wife sought an annulment without the least explanation to him as to why she was doing so. In this moment of bewilderment, Vasoli sought out advisers who would help him understand what was happening when a Catholic diocesan marriage tribunal 600 miles away declared that his marriage was “dead,” without any attempt to listen to his side of the story. But anyone who was sentient at the time knew something was afoot, and Vasoli wrote: “I was not

yet familiar with the hard data, but any reasonably perceptive Catholic could hardly fail to witness or hear about the sudden return to the sacraments of relatives, friends and neighbors who had divorced and remarried...evidenced by an unprecedented increase in annulments granted by American marriage tribunals.”

In Catholic parlance, an “annulment” means a ruling by a Church court that a union between a man and a woman, even if it featured a Church wedding, is not a valid marriage because it fails one of the traditional tests, such as a lack of genuine consent, or a

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Vatican Betrays Jews...Again

Remembering My Jewish Uncle at Christmastime

By Father John Echert

About a dozen years ago from a military tent in a deployed desert location, in temperatures more than 100 degrees warmer than it is here now in Minnesota at Christmas time, I responded to the following web question that was submitted to me as the *Scripture Expert* for Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN):

Father Echert, just WHAT is going on in the Church? In the recently released announcement of our bishops they say that we can't try to convert Jews to the Catholic Faith because of the Old Covenant and that Vatican II mandated this. Really! Well what if a Catholic said, “Hey forget Catholicism, I want to be Jewish!” Does it REALLY matter to be Catholic? If the likes of our bishops and Cardinal Kasper are correct then it really doesn't. Have we lost our minds?

Answer by Fr. John Echert:

From what I have read of the document, parts of it strike me as contrary to divine revelation and I predict that it will not be approved by the Vatican, or perhaps the bishops themselves. As I understand it, this draft was put together by a committee, and it does not have approval by the body of bishops. It is an embarrassment, lacks any teaching authority, and serves to reveal the thinking of some people who hold powerful positions in the national conference. If a document such as this gains approval, as it currently stands, I will seriously consider the prospect that we are moving into one of the signs of the end times, namely, apostasy.

While not intending it my EWTN



response took on a life of its own and it was quoted in the *New York Times* and *America Magazine* among others and in diocesan papers nationwide. It even appeared in the *Remnant*. That response also cost me my tenured position at our seminary and Catholic university. I was falsely accused of being “anti-Semitic” by a bishop and a rabbi but I refused to retract my statement. In the end the controversial document *Reflections on Covenant and Mission* was dumped, as was I. But divine providence rescued me to become pastor of churches at which we offer Tridentine Masses daily.

I stand by my statement to this day and if anything I am now even more convinced by the signs that we are approaching the end times—whether of the entire world or western civilization is your guess. I write this because while *Covenant and Mission* was never approved by the U.S. bishops—as I had predicted—a document eerily similar in tone and content has just now been

released by the Vatican itself, titled *The Gifts of God are Irrevocable*. This 10,000-word statement commemorates the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, a Second Vatican Council document on the *Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions*.

An entire edition of the *Remnant* could not provide space enough to critique this most recent Vatican statement so I will limit myself to one observation; namely, like the now defunct document of a dozen years ago, it too fails to acknowledge that the Old Covenant is no longer salvific for anyone, including modern day Jews. It follows, then, that Jews are as much in need of Christ and the Church as anyone else for salvation and we should, therefore, continue to evangelize the Jews for their own supernatural good.

Much is made in the title and the body of this document regarding a Pauline statement that “the gifts of God are

irrevocable” to suggest that the Old Covenant remains salvific for modern day Jews. This is simply not the case, as is taught by Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The Apostle himself, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, says of the Old Covenant: “Now in saying a new [covenant], he hath made the former [covenant] old. And that which decayeth and groweth old is near its end.” It is true that for the sake of the Patriarchs God has not abandoned Jews but they too need Christ and the Church to be saved.

As for taking a neutral or hands off approach to evangelizing Jews, this is simply incompatible with the divine mandate of Christ who commanded: “Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be condemned.” So as with *Covenant and Mission* so too for *Irrevocable Gifts*, I give them both a big “Bah, Humbug!”

Let me note that my passion on the subject of the evangelization of the Jews is personal and not merely theoretical. Every Christmas for many years as I was growing up my Jewish relatives joined my family for Christmas Eve dinner, after which we opened up presents around a Christmas tree. A nativity set was prominently displayed in our home as well as other Catholic symbols. The last Christmas Eve before my Jewish uncle died he even joined in singing Christmas carols, including Silent Night. Unfortunately he never converted to Christianity but I am convinced that he opened his heart to Christ that Christmas Eve.

May Christ be spiritually born into the hearts of all of us this Christmas, including the Jewish people! ■

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER

V. Chiarello/Continued from Page 13
psychological incapacity to undertake the obligations of marriage. It is no accident that the “Holy Year of Mercy,” beginning on December 8, is Pope Francis’ move to reduce the procedural requirements and liberalize even further the rules for obtaining an annulment.

Although thoroughly detailed in Vasoli’s book, “annulment” is difficult to explain easily because it is what the Church refers to as a “declaration of nullity,” although nothing is made “null” through the process. A Church tribunal in a Church court declares that a marriage thought to be valid in Church law fell short of one of the essential elements required for a binding union. Msgr. Pio Pinto, Dean of the Roman Rota, addressed this issue in the Vatican’s newspaper, *Osservatore Romano*, in early September of this year. Msgr. Pinto, who was chosen by the pope to replace the deposed Cardinal Burke as the head of the Apostolic Signatura, the Church’s Supreme Court, wrote that the pope’s desire for a true reform of the process must begin with, “...putting the poor at the center, that is, the divorced-and remarried, held or treated as far away, and asking of the bishops a true and proper *metanoia*. That is, a ‘conversion,’ a change of mentality that convinces and undergirds them to follow the invitation of Christ, presented to them by their brother, the Bishop of Rome, to pass from the restricted number of a few thousand declarations of nullity to the huge number of people who might obtain the declaration of nullity...but who are left outside the existing system.”

Msgr. Pinto’s numbers are quite different from those that are included not only in Prof. Vasoli’s book, but also by others who have seriously studied this transformational change in Church policy. In 2005, an article in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* (a serious theological/pastoral journal) claimed that there had been an increase from 338 annulments in the U.S. in 1968, to 5,403 in 1970, to a peak 61,945 in 1991. Since then, the explosion has stabilized at around 40,000 U.S. annulments per year. Truth be told, tribunals are not getting tougher on granting annulments; they are getting fewer petitions for annulments because many in that situation are not interested in obtaining them. The article states that in the U.S. since 1964, U.S. marriage tribunals **have consistently ruled for annulment in about 97 percent of the cases they accept** (emphasis mine). Seventy percent of annulments worldwide are accounted for by American marriage tribunals though the U.S. has a mere six percent of the world’s Catholic population.

But there is another aspect to these numbers. The article’s author, Robert J. Kendra, goes on to state that when US tribunal rulings in favor of annulment are referred to the Roman Rota, the Vatican entity that adjudicates such matters, **95% of those US annulments are rejected**. The Rota, however, only reviews about 1 in every 2000 US annulment cases (mostly because US Catholics are unaware they can appeal to the Rota), but over the years many



hundreds of annulments granted by US tribunals have been rejected by Rome. It is noteworthy that Pope John Paul II, both in 1987 and 1988, and Pope Benedict XVI in 2009, issued calls for a stricter interpretation of church law in their annual addresses to the Roman Curia, but most informed observers believe those injunctions have not significantly changed the practice of U.S. church courts. It is probable that beginning December 8, those earlier papal pleas will be discarded even further. One of the more famous (infamous?) cases of the Roman rejection of a declaration of nullity in the U.S. was that of Sheila Rauch Kennedy, author of *Shattered Faith*, which described her ordeal in the annulment proceedings.

Sheila Rauch, who is Episcopalian, took the required classes and was married to Joseph Kennedy, the eldest son of Robert F. Kennedy, in a Catholic Church ceremony in 1979. They had twin boys before they divorced in 1991. Two years later, while preparing to remarry, Kennedy filed for an annulment, and the Archdiocese of Boston, in 1996, granted initial approval of his request. But before it could issue a final decision, Rauch Kennedy appealed to the Vatican. “The [annulment] process was very dishonest and it was a process in which I was being bullied. But I was very lucky. I had help from outside of the Archdiocese. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have known about appealing to Rome, and how to do it. I feel for the people who don’t get help.” One of the more important persons “from the outside” who helped Sheila Rauch Kennedy was Prof. Vasoli.

One cannot help but wonder if the name “Kennedy” had influenced the members of the tribunal to grant the annulment; after all, this was Boston where, Vasoli writes, “... in 1987, it accepted every one of the 1,197 petitions presented.” An “annulment mill,” indeed.

Near the end of his perceptive dissection of the recent Synod, Chris Ferrara wrote recently in these pages: “Finally, this charade of a Synod, **like the precipitous and semi-secret ‘annulment reform,’** (emphasis mine) demonstrates a fact that can no longer be denied: this pontificate is an ongoing clear and present danger to the Church.” What, then, was Signor Ferrara referring to?

In a September 10 *New York Times* article following the publication of Msgr. Pinto’s article, and a Vatican press conference, outlines of the “semi-secret annulment reform” were described: the pontifically blessed new procedures would make it easier for Roman Catholics to obtain marriage annulments, a move, the reporters intoned, “intended to streamline a process long criticized by post-Vatican II Catholics as too cumbersome, complicated, and expensive.” These new rules will take effect on Dec. 8, the “Year of Mercy,” and are expected to speed up cases in which neither spouse is contesting the annulment. These fast-track cases may be heard as soon as 30 days after a couple files an application, and at most within 45 days. **Further, to accelerate the process even more, the new procedures also eliminate one of the two church trials that had been required of all couples seeking**

an annulment. (emphasis mine). It will still be possible to appeal an initial annulment ruling, but under the new guidelines, the number of such cases is expected to drop sharply. Under these new rules, bishops can either directly oversee a case or delegate responsibility to local diocesan commissions. And given the global shortage of priests, the bishops can now appoint lay members of a diocese to serve on such panels. Church historian, Roberto de Mattei, whose review of the Synod’s results was very similar to Ferrara’s, wrote about the change: “By restoring the judgment on annulments to the bishops, Bergoglio didn’t change the status of the divorced, but made an enormous, silent act in reforming the papacy.”

What must be noted here is that none of this was discussed at a Synod that supposedly centered on the “family,” and what the Church could do to aid the basic institution of all life that is now under attack in most of the Western world. It does not require a huge leap of faith to recognize that the pope intentionally sought not to raise this issue in an open forum; that is undeniable. By placing greater authority with local bishops to oversee the streamlined process, one also recognizes that where Rome was once a serious impediment to untrammelled license in granting annulments, that will no longer be the case. How, then, would Sheila Rauch and Robert Vasoli look upon this change? After all, both of their formal petitions to annul the “declaration of nullity” by a US tribunal were approved by the Roman Rota.

In a letter written to me in January of 2001, Prof Vasoli stated that a “benefactor” had requested that Oxford Press run off 1,000 additional copies, “to be sent to all the U.S. bishops and to all Catholic colleges, universities, and seminary libraries lacking a copy.” Given the climate at the Synod and the move to liberalize even further the Church’s traditional legitimate hesitation in granting “decrees of nullity,” such an effort might provide some perspective to what is currently happening under this pontificate.

I never met Prof. Vasoli, but I wish I had, for despite the turmoil in his life, he was a man of very deep faith and belief in the Church. In that same letter, he ended with this: “Whenever your spirits are at low ebb over the state of Catholicism in the U.S., you can find consolation and hope in the fact that the Church survived many crises in the past, and in Christ’s solemn promise that the gates of Hell would not prevail against the Church He founded. Sincerely in the Lord, Robert H. Vasoli”

Vasoli’s book is easily available at Amazon. After reading it, I assure you that you will not only come away being far more informed about the annulment crisis, but also convinced that it was written by a very devoted Catholic teaching at an institution that has lost much of its Catholic identity in the years since his death. ■

Will the Remnant's Open Letter to Pope Francis do Any Good?

By John Vennari

The first call for Pope Francis' resignation that I saw was in an email this past April from my friend Robert Mauro, a veteran Catholic fighter whose writings sometimes appeared in *The Wanderer*.

Mr. Mauro was outraged, rightly so, that Pope Francis said virtually nothing regarding Ireland's vote on "same-sex" marriage. Francis provided no guidance and no resistance whatsoever.

Mauro's email, which I posted with his permission, said, "The recent post-election comments of Vatican Secretary of State that the Pope was 'saddened' by the Irish vote mean nothing. The Pope could have prevented the passage of the Irish Referendum by speaking out early and often against 'gay marriage'."

Mauro went on to lament that Francis' opposition was necessary to overcome the financial support for "gay marriage" in Ireland by wealthy companies such as Google, Twitter and others. He noted that by all appearances, nearly half of the Irish Association of Catholic Priests seemed to favor this abomination, and various priests and bishops simply told the people they should be guided by their "consciences". Omitted, of course, was any mention by these same priests and bishops of the Catholic's duty to form a correct conscience according to perennial Church teaching.

"It is said," Mauro concluded, "that several other nations in Europe which have not so far adopted 'gay marriage' may be encouraged by the Irish vote and may try to adopt 'gay marriage.' If such attempts are made and the Pope does not immediately and frequently oppose their actions to legalize 'gay marriage,' in these nations, Catholics must respectfully urge the Pope to resign his office."

Mauro is also repulsed, again rightly so, by the seemingly pro-homosexual attitude we encounter from the Bergoglian.

Robert Mauro is a true Catholic gentleman not prone to hysterics. When someone as serious and mild-mannered as Mr. Mauro starts calling for a resignation, it shows the Francis crisis is of monumental proportions.

Yet we know it to be true.

Francis' entire Pontificate, as *The Remnant's* petition (see 12/08/15 issue) catalogs in pitiless detail, is one of scandal, boisterous confusion, colossal omissions and bad example. Again and again he favors the most damaging aspects of the Vatican II orientation. And like a wayward daughter who continually horrifies her parents by bringing home the worst of men, Francis repeatedly favors the most vile theologians — such as the pro-homosexual Cardinal Martini whom he called a "Father for the whole Church," and the perfidious Cardinal Kasper, in front of whom Francis appears to be intimidated. When recently visiting Rome's Lutheran Evangelical Temple, and asked by a Catholic whether a non-Catholic spouse may receive Communion, Francis responded, "The question on sharing the Lord's Supper isn't easy for me to respond to, above all in front of a theologian like Cardinal Kasper! I'm scared!"

I'm scared?

In short, I am convinced it is good and praiseworthy to publicly call for Francis to either uphold the true Faith or renounce the Petrine office.

There are, of course, some who may object that the petition will do no good, that Francis will not step down as a result, that Francis, being immersed in decades of modernist thinking, will be utterly baffled that anyone would consider him a danger to the Faith.

These considerations fail to take into account the principal purpose of drawing

up such a petition. Yes it is likely our efforts will not result in Francis swerving into the path orthodoxy, or reckoning himself as unfit to lead.

The principal good from such a public petition, however, is that of *teaching* and *strengthening* others; to perhaps shake them from a sense of false obedience; to spotlight major deviations from the Faith so those of good will be not taken in; to counter the prevailing superstition that Catholicism demands blind submission to the unorthodox whims of a radical Pope.

Ultimately, the petition is drawn up to

defend the Catholic Faith that we are bound to hold "whole and inviolate," which must not be corrupted, as Pius X warned, by the "profane novelties" of Modernism.

And as the "Libellus" in the Petition observes, we have moved in this Pontificate from profane novelties to barking lunacies and worse.

The damage to the Faith and to souls is beyond calculation. I believe it fitting to respectfully call for the resignation of this man who seems to have no idea of what is the nature and purpose of the Papacy. ■

AP Reports on Remnant's Open Letter to Pope Francis

By Michael J. Matt

From the Associated Press's Nicole Winfield, in a Dec. 17, 2015 story entitled "Pope Enters 80th Year Popular as Ever, but with Criticism"—a story that appeared in secular newspapers all around the world:

VATICAN CITY (AP) -- Pope Francis entered his 80th year on Thursday amid hopes among his critics that it will be his last — at least as pope. While Francis remains enormously popular among most rank-and-file Catholics, a small but vocal group of conservatives who have never much cared for his radical agenda have grown increasingly strident in criticizing the pope now that there is little doubt left about his priorities.

They have taken aim at the just-concluded synod on family issues, where the divisive issue of Communion for the civilly remarried took center stage. They have raised alarm at Francis' call for a more decentralized church and his loosening of the Vatican's marriage annulment process. They have winced at his environmental alarmism, wondered what's in store for Catholic orthodoxy in this Holy Year of Mercy and blasted as sacrilege the recent screening of nature shots on St. Peter's Basilica.

The Remnant, a small, traditionalist U.S. newspaper, last week penned an open letter begging Francis to change course or resign, arguing that his papacy was "causing grave harm to the church."

"You have given many indications of an alarming hostility to the church's traditional teaching, discipline and customs, and the faithful who try to defend them, while being preoccupied with social and political questions beyond the competence of the Roman Pontiff," the newspaper said. "This appalling situation has no parallel in church history."

To put it more simply: "Many people in the Vatican want Francis dead," said Francesca Chaouqui, the woman at the heart of a leaks scandal currently



convulsing Francis' Vatican. In an interview last weekend with Italy's *La Stampa* newspaper, Chaouqui said Francis' in-house reforms and nominations have emboldened his enemies, many of whom were in the Vatican when Francis was archbishop of Buenos Aires and had a less-than-pleasant relationship with Rome.

Some of these cardinals and bishops are openly resisting his reforms while others inside and out of the Vatican are simply waiting out his pontificate under the argument that popes come and go but the Curia remains.

"Pope Francis is no longer trusted by many conservative Catholics and the number who don't trust him has grown enormously since the synod," conservative columnist Damian Thompson wrote in Britain's *Spectator* last month. He said he doesn't see the dust settling until the next conclave, "which lots of conservative Catholics want to happen as soon as possible."

The Argentine Jesuit, who has rarely backed down from a fight, seems unfazed and quite possibly emboldened by the criticism. And there is no indication that it poses any real threat to his broad popularity since the concern has been confined in the public sphere at least to mostly Anglo-Saxon and Italian pundits writing in predictably conservative publications, claiming to speak for a growing number of otherwise anonymous Catholic laity and clergy.

Next Monday will be a good litmus test to show just how far Francis is willing to push the envelope when he gathers the Curia for his traditional Christmas

greetings. It was at that usually jovial affair last year that Francis issued a blistering, public dressing down of his closest collaborators by diagnosing the "15 ailments of the Curia." He accused the cardinals and bishops of the Vatican bureaucracy of using their careers to grab power and wealth, of living "hypocritical" double lives and of forgetting — due to "spiritual Alzheimer's" — that they're supposed to be joyful men of God. It didn't go down well.

"Since then, the murmuring of criticism of Jorge Mario Bergoglio has grown, always though anonymously given the pope's reaction to anyone who criticizes or irritates him," Italy's veteran Vatican analyst and frequent Francis critic Sandro Magister wrote recently. "Many are wondering what he'll say this time." In fact, many wonder what the pope says a lot of the time.

Canon lawyer Edward Condon, a strong supporter of Francis who doesn't count himself among his conservative critics, said the pope's casual and free way of speaking has nevertheless led to confusion among the faithful about where he stands on certain key issues. Writing recently in Britain's *Catholic Herald*, Condon suggested that was the result of papal interpreters who truncate his remarks and spin them to suit their own agendas, aided by a pope who is uninterested in following his own media coverage and advisers uninterested in advising him how it's all playing out.

"If the pope isn't trying to leave himself open to constant contradictory interpretations, what is going on?" Condon asked. "The most obvious answer seems to be that he is simply unaware of the turmoil carrying on outside the Vatican walls."

What transpired on the Vatican walls last week has for many been the last straw. On Dec. 8, a major Catholic feast day honoring the Virgin Mary and the official start of Francis' Holy Year of Mercy, the Vatican projected National Geographic and other images of animals and nature on the facade of St. Peter's Basilica.

Continued next page

The Last Word...

Away with *Bride of Francistein!*

By Father Celatus

Name calling is common among kids. But we were taught that it was wrong to call names and told to respond to names with, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but names can never hurt me!” If truth be told, we found that this did nothing to stop name-calling and we abandoned it when one bully threw sticks and stones at us for saying it. After that we changed our response to, “I know you are but what am I?!” Nowadays kids are taught to respond “You frighten me!” and file for a hate-crime with Child Protection.

It is a given that young children will call each other silly or hurtful names but when a pope hurls insults recklessly and unjustly at his own flock it is unprecedented. Among the ever growing number of names and insults hurled by Francis of Rome against innocent Catholics we have: *Promethian, Neo-Pelagian, Pharisee, Gnostic, Fomenter, Ideologue, Elitist, Monster, Leprous, Smarmy, Sourpuss and Pickled pepper-face*. To which names *The Last Word* responds back to Francis, “I know you are but what am I?!”

Actually there are many names being said of Francis, Bishop of Rome, the least appealing of which is *Pope*. Here is a sampling of names drawn from various online blogs and articles: *Modernist, Mad Man, Infidel, Peronist, Globalist, Radical, Rationalist, Redistributionist, Environmentalist, Wrecking Ball, Wolf, Heretic, False Prophet, Anti-Pope, Abomination, Evil Clown, Thug and Bully*. And now, typical of bullies, it appears that Francis can dish it out but he can't take it when it comes to names and criticism.

The Last Word suggests this in light of the recent statement made by a Vatican spokesman clarifying the role of the *Missionaries of Mercy* who will be dispatched worldwide to “welcome those in search of pardon.” These *Missionaries* will receive the authority to pardon “even those sins reserved to the Holy See” which include: violation or profanation of the Holy Eucharist; an accomplice in a sin against the sixth commandment; unauthorized ordination of a bishop; direct violation of the seal of confession; and physical violence against the Roman Pontiff. Regarding what constitutes the

last offence, he said: “I would say that we need to understand well ‘physical violence,’ because sometimes words, too, are rocks and stones, and therefore I believe some of these sins, too, are far more widespread than we might think.”

So according to this creative interpretation of a canon, words alone may constitute ‘physical violence’ against the pope and require *Missionaries of Mercy* to pardon the offender. Bloggers beware lest you find yourselves excommunicated, along with desecrators of the Holy Eucharist. Since *The Last Word* has itself written harsh words against Francis must we now change our byline to read *The Excommunicated Word?*

Certainly criticisms of a pope are nothing new but the sheer volume and intensity of criticisms and the plethora of papal name-calling associated with this pontificate are without precedent. It was Francis himself, remember, who started name-calling. But we are not calling Francis names because he started it. That would be childish. Besides, traditional Catholics are long used to being treated with

contempt and being called silly names by fellow Catholics. No, this is not a matter of retaliation; rather, it is a matter of exposing the truth about the absurdities of this papacy and standing up for our Holy Mother the Church.

Yes, despite what Francis recently remarked about God being both Father and Mother, in reality God is our Father and the Church is our Mother. Unlike the fictitious *Heather Has Two Mommies*, we Catholics have both a Father and a Mother: God the Father and Holy Mother Church. It is also fitting to view the relationship between God and the Church with the biblical image of God as Groom and Church as Bride. In other words, we Catholics have a supernatural set of Parents who are wedded to each other eternally.

The Last Word suggests that a principal reason for which there is so much passion in the name-calling and criticisms directed at *Your Pope* is that he is abusing and casting aside our Mother in favor of a *Mistress*. And while we have long endured attacks upon ourselves as traditional Catholics, we will not stand by in silence while our Holy Mother the Church is so outrageously treated. Sure, attacks upon the Church from within commenced fifty years ago but now the head of the household himself is completely out of control.

Who is this twisted *Mistress* who has taken the place of Holy Mother Church? Let's call her the *Bride of Francistein*, since she is most recently a creation of his handiwork more than others. *Bride of Francistein* is really a composite corpse, much like the original *Bride of Frankenstein*. Only this monstrous mistress is constructed from spiritually dead parts rather than those dug up from a grave. The *Bride of Francistein* is composed of many lifeless limbs, among which we include: Protestantized Liturgies, Religious Liberty, Modernist Theology, Radical Ecology, Homosexualized Clergy and various Worldly Accommodations.

By the way, as with many adulterous relationships, some troubled kids come with *Bride of Francistein*. These brats include the secular world, the media, false religions, compromised Catholics and many more. These children can be recognized by their superficial love for the *Mistress* and their deep hatred for our Mother. Traditional Catholics also have siblings by our own Mother, many of whom remain silent and some even defend the head of the household as he assaults our Mother. Shame on you, Neo-Catholics!

Bishop of Rome Francis, we appeal to you to put an end to your abuse of our Mother and put aside your adulterous relationship with the *V2 Mistress*. Away with *Bride of Francistein!* Short of that know that we have already joined our name to *The Remnant* petition for you to renounce the Petrine Office and we will continue to criticize any inappropriate words and actions of the *Francistein of Rome*. And don't bother to send any *Missionaries of Mercy* our way, as we are boycotting your *Year of Mercy*. ■

AP Reports on Remnant's Open Letter

M. Matt/Continued from Page 15

The spectacular sound and light show, sponsored among others by the World Bank, aimed to both highlight Francis' environmental appeal and coincide with the final stretch of climate negotiations in Paris.

Criticism among conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic was swift and severe.

“The sense that St. Peter's Basilica has been profaned is strong,” Italian Catholic author Antonio Socci wrote on his Facebook page. “The holy place par excellence, the heart of Christianity transformed on a maxi-screen for the show of the ‘New World Power Ideology’ — and the Nativity crib was left in darkness.”

REMNANT COMMENT: Here at The Remnant we do a fair amount of complaining about Christophobic media bias in the mainstream press. This story, however, reminds us that we should perhaps do more to highlight the exceptions. The AP's Nicole Winfield is one such exception, having over the years covered traditional Catholic issues and initiatives with balance and journalistic integrity. This report on the growing opposition to Pope Francis among conservative Catholics on both sides of the Atlantic—in the midst of a fawning media love affair with Francis—is yet another case in point.

The success of [The Remnant's Open Letter to Pope Francis](#), by way, has little to do the number of signatures appended to it. We asked for not one single signature outside of the Remnant's

stable of writers before we posted it. We approached no one else because we were not looking for a coalition. In the December 8, 2015 issue of The Remnant, we officially launched this Open Letter sans a request for additional signatures. It was a simple statement of public resistance from The Remnant.

We were very pleased when so many of our online visitors wanted to sign our letter, of course, and we encourage everyone to do the same. But first and foremost this was an open letter, the purpose of which is to draw attention to the fact that Francis is becoming a perceived threat to Christianity among serious, practicing and devout Catholics.

Our Open Letter hit 50,000 views and was translated into 10 languages in the first week, by the way, with the promise of additional translations coming in almost every day. Only one of these translations was actually commissioned by us. The rest were spontaneous offerings from allies all around the world. It's “the remnant” in action against an exceedingly problematic pontificate.

Still, I don't expect Francis to take note of anything other than Francis, and he certainly won't be shaken by our humble efforts. But that's not the point. This act of open and public protest is for the historical record too, which, as my friend John Vennari points out in his article (see above), in the present we hope will assist Catholics in not being deceived and in coming to a greater understanding of what

has happened to our Church under this most obvious modernist infiltration.

We also hope and pray that our Open Letter will ultimately play some small part in encouraging bishops and even cardinals to publicly resist Francis to his face even as Paul resisted Peter to his, whether Francis has become senile or is malicious or is just incompetent—we don't know and it doesn't matter. Members of the hierarchy must ultimately take the reins and oppose his increasingly bizarre agenda, which promises to get much worse over the coming year.

The 17th century Jesuit Doctor of the Church, St. Robert Bellarmine, in his work *De Romano Pontifice* leaves no doubt about this:

“Just as it is lawful to resist the pope that attacks the body, it is also lawful to resist the one who attacks souls or who disturbs civil order, or, above all, who attempts to destroy the Church. I say that it is lawful to resist him by not doing what he orders and preventing his will from being executed.”

Pope Francis must be resisted by proper ecclesial authority for his own good, the good of souls and in principled defense of the human element of Christ's Church. The Catholic faithful have a sacred duty before God to raise their voices in respectful protest.

In the meantime, please pray for Pope Francis, keep the old Faith and stand with us against the Modernist invasion of our Church for as long as it takes. Viva Cristo Rey. ■