

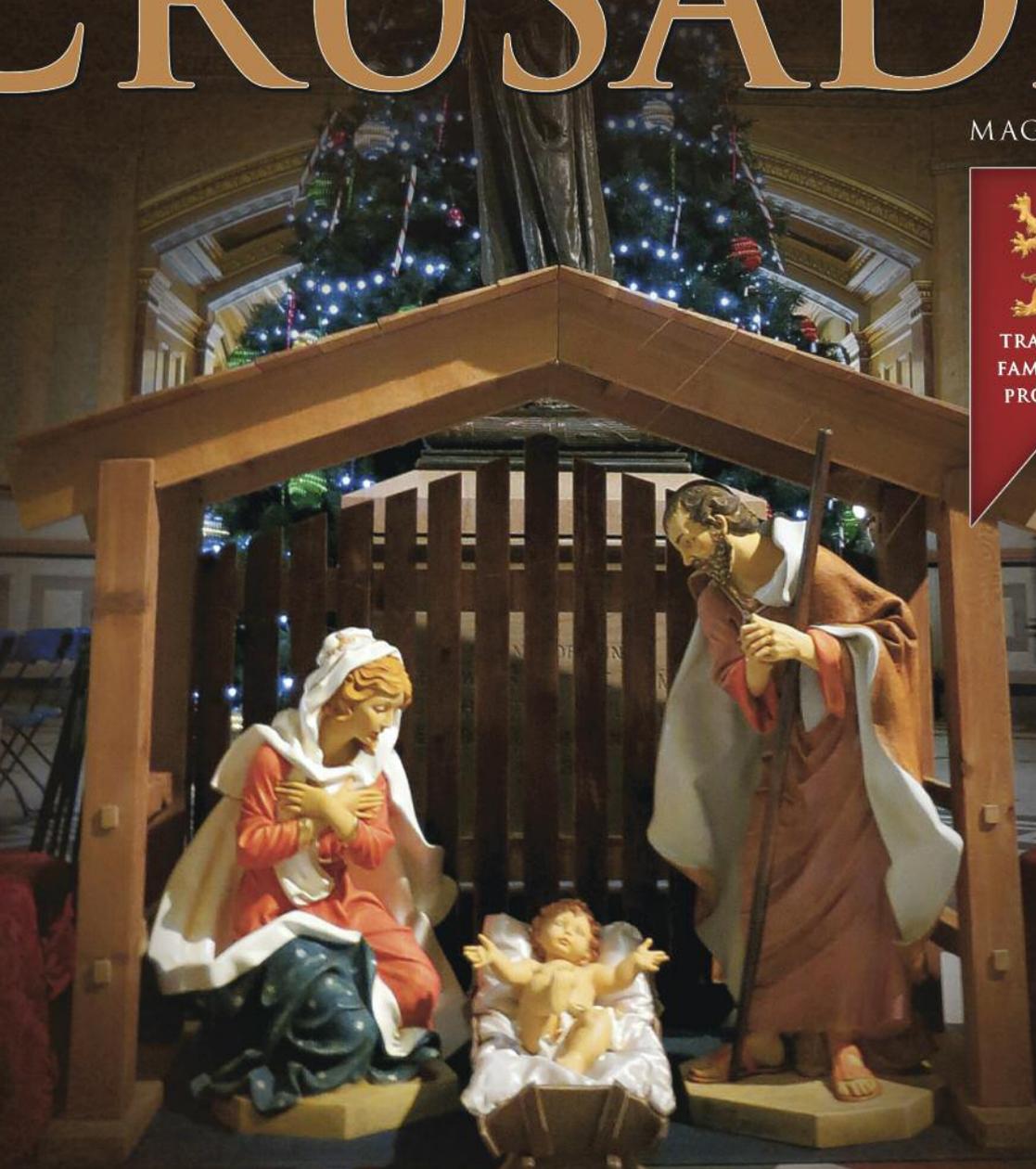
November/December 2013

CRUSADE[®]

MAGAZINE



TRADITION
FAMILY AND
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NATIVITY



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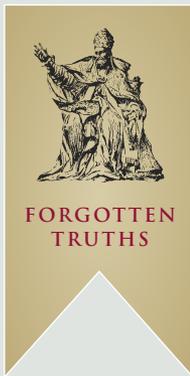
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Long Lost Moral Compass



The following part of a conversation between a blacksmith and the great Saint John Bosco, founder of the Salesians, can be found in the saint's biography by Giovanni Battista Lemoyne.

Blacksmith—"Do you know what my biggest worry is?"

Don Bosco—"Surely it must be to live and die in the grace of God."

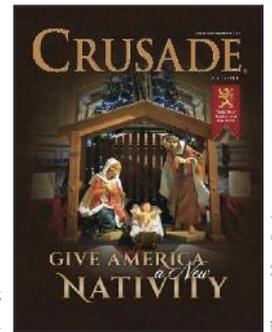
Blacksmith—"No, I'm not worried about death. I take care, though, to be prepared for it when it comes. My biggest worry is this: I am a blacksmith, and I am very much troubled when after finishing a job I have to decide on the price I must charge. As I enter the charge in my book I ask myself: 'Will the good Lord write down the same amount? If I charge more, won't that be a charge against me?' To play it safe, I always charge 20% less than the ordinary rate."

Obviously not all tradesmen can or should take such a position. However, the fact that this simple and prosperous blacksmith—and perhaps many others like him—showed such a great concern for justice can only have created an atmosphere favoring commerce in general.

Adapted from Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*, ed. Diego Borgatello (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Salesiana Publishers, 1965), 1:230.

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Nativity set on display at
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CRUSADE

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THE AMERICAN TFP

The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP) is an organization of lay Catholic Americans concerned about the moral crisis shaking the remnants of Christian civilization. Its earliest origins date back to January 1971, when the first TFP members started to group around the publication *Crusade for a Christian Civilization*. It is a civic, cultural and nonpartisan organization which, inspired by the traditional teachings of the Supreme Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, works in a legal and peaceful manner in the realm of ideas to

defend and promote the principles of private ownership, family and perennial Christian values with their twofold function: individual and social. The TFP's words and efforts have always been faithfully at the service of Christian civilization. The first TFP was founded in Brazil by the famous intellectual and Catholic leader Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira in 1960. His work inspired the formation of other autonomous TFP sister organizations across the globe, thus constituting the world's largest anticommunist and antisocialist network of Catholic inspiration.



IN BRIEF



Businesses Prefer Classical

The *Business Insider* recently compiled results regarding music from studies done in supermarkets, restaurants, and wine stores. Compared with pop music or no music, classical music caused shoppers to take their time and buy more. In restaurants, classical music encouraged patrons to stay longer, eat more and to rate the restaurant higher than when the same restaurant played music from pop's top forty list. The same results occurred in wine stores. These stores also found that they could increase the chances of a wine buyer choosing French or German wine by playing French or German music.

China's Mandatory Marxism Classes

In August, the Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Department announced that every Chinese reporter, producer and editor must go back to school for Marxism classes. In February 2014 the progress of the approximate 307,000 press corps members will be reviewed. China's Supreme People's Court also

ruled that people who post "false information" or "slandorous comments" online can be sent to prison for up to three years and those whose comments are viewed by more than 5,000 people can get ten years. In September, the first to be convicted under this law was a sixteen-year-old boy who tweeted that local police did not fully investigate the suspicious suicide of a local business owner.

Homeschooling Increases

The number of homeschooling students grew seven times faster than those enrolling in public schools for this academic year.

According to a report in *Education News*:

Recent studies laud homeschoolers' academic success, noting their significantly higher ACT composite scores as high schoolers and higher grade point averages as college students. Yet surprisingly, the average expenditure for the education of a homeschooled child, per year, is \$500 to \$600, compared to an average expenditure of \$10,000 per child, per year, for public school students.

A Confession, a Broken Engagement, and a Wealthy Marriage

BY ANDREA F. PHILLIPS

One day, in Belle Époque Paris, a young man and woman, prominent in Parisian society, entered a church seeking to go to confession in preparation for their wedding.

The young man was in and out of the confessional. Blinking in the soft light, he made a hasty genuflection in the direction of the main altar, and as he turned to leave, realized his bride was not hanging on his arm. He slid back into the pew, and as the minutes passed, he grew impatient. When, finally, after half an hour, the girl emerged from behind a velvet curtain, he said irritably,

"You took so long!"

On her explaining that she wished to prepare well for this important step in their lives, he gave voice to his displeasure with a wife-to-be who took half an hour to confess her sins.

Days later, opening a drawer in her secretary, and dipping her quill in a fine ink well, the young woman penned a few lines on a piece of stationery. Removing a ring from her finger, she enclosed it with the note.



Belle Époque: the period (1871–1914) between the end of the Franco-Prussian War and the outbreak of World War I, characterized by relative peacefulness in Western Europe and by marked advances and productivity in the arts, literature, technology, etc.

The engagement broken off, Paris hummed with the gossip, and the story made it to print.

Somewhere in the "City of Light," a wealthy merchant opened his newspaper and read, "High Society Engagement Broken Over Confession."

"Hmm..." he thought, "the fool had a diamond in his hand and didn't know it...a woman who prepares herself so conscientiously for a life commitment will take her husband and children seriously. This person knows the meaning of the word 'trust.'" And he took steps to be introduced to the lady. A courtship soon developed. The merchant proposed, was accepted, and they were married.

At their wedding, again Parisian society hummed, this time with loud clinks and hearty congratulations. The bride's long confession had attracted her not only a worthy husband, but a wealthy one! ■

References: Based on a true story taken from *Anecdotes and Examples Illustrating the Catholic Catechism* by Rev. Francis Spirago.



Was There Ever a True Order?

BY JOHN HORVAT II

Among the questions and commentaries that have come in the mail about the book, *Return to Order*, there were some very excellent questions by a very kind lady. It occurred to me that others might have the same questions and so I would like to reply.

Her questions could be summarized in the following manner: “When you say return to order, I would like to know if there has ever been a time in American history when we have even had a small amount of this order [*logos*], which we are asked to support, promote and to return?”

The questioner continues: “Maybe the only time in the past where this order existed fully was some Christendom, some Christian order in society in the Middle Ages before the Enlightenment. If this was the last time there was true order in this world, then we need to know everything we can about it. However, I find that many of the things and times of the past that we try to ‘conserve’ may not have been so wonderful in the first place. How can we be sure this order was so wonderful?”

To this kind lady, I would reply:

We propose a return to order because we need not invent it. It already exists. It is an order that comes from the nature of man himself. It is valid for all times and all peoples. It is firmly based on the natural moral law. And although it applies to everyone, the Church is its best and most secure guardian.

This order is best found in what we call an organic Christian society—that same order that gave rise to Christendom—and the remnants of which persist even to our days.



John Hovatt II, author of *Return to Order: From a Frenzied Economy to an Organic Christian Society—Where We’ve Been, How We Got Here, and Where We Need to Go*.

An organic Christian society is our wellspring. It is where we came from. It is a society that historically existed and it reached an apex in medieval Christendom. In the words of Pope Leo XIII:

“There was a time when the philosophy of the Gospel governed the states. In that epoch, the influence of Christian wisdom and its divine virtue permeated the laws, institutions, and customs of the peoples, all categories and all relations of civil society. Then the religion instituted by Jesus Christ, solidly established in the degree of dignity due to it, flourished everywhere thanks to the favor of princes and the legitimate protection of magistrates. Then the Priesthood and the Empire were united in a happy concord and by the friendly interchange of good offices. So organized, civil society gave fruits superior to all expectations, whose memory subsists and will subsist, registered as it is in innumerable documents that no artifice of the adversaries can destroy or obscure.” (*Immortale Dei*, n. 21.)

However, we do not advocate a re-

turn to an historical past but to the same principles that brought us so many of the institutions that are fast disappearing today—rule of law, representative government, traditional family and subsidiarity.

We call it an organic society because it is wonderfully adapted to our organic human nature, full of diversity and spontaneity that facilitates our life together in community. Such an order does not treat people like parts in a machine, but rather considers people as living and unique beings. Just like the organs of a body work together in unison to fulfill their goal, so also individuals and families work together in organic society toward the common good.

It is called Christian because we cannot adopt a naturalistic manner of organizing society. To work well, it must be founded upon Christian virtue. When virtues—especially the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance—are practiced in this organic Christian society, everything enters into sync because each act is in accordance with its nature. To be truly Christian, it must also be founded in the shadow of the Cross so as to help us deal with life’s sufferings. This is the foundation for true order and also true progress and prosperity.

While America never enjoyed the complete expression of this Christian organic order, it had, and still has, significant remnants. Common law, for example, was something we inherited from England, and is one of these precious remnants, compiling legal wisdom, customs (e.g. trial by jury), rights (e.g. habeas corpus) and maxims discovered and developed over centuries in England.

The cultural war we are in relentlessly attacks and destroys these remnants. This leads us to both defend these remnants and call for this order's full return.

Was this Christian organic order a perfect or idyllic order? No, like all things human it had its problems and defects. Our fallen nature always introduces sin and suffering into our lives. No order of any type can be entirely wonderful and we fool ourselves if we think we can construct a romantic order without tragedy.

However, an organic Christian order is that best suited to dealing with life's tragedies as well as its joys. This order can make life purposeful and fulfilling. It takes into consideration both the effects of grace that pull us up and the reality of our fallen nature that drags us down. As a result, it adapts well to both the sufferings and joys that this vale of tears affords and can therefore provide us with some degree of true happiness.

And so, we do well to return to this

organic Christian order—not just the remnants that still survive today but its fullest manifestation in Christendom. We do well to “conserve” this order knowing that it is not completely perfect but that it can provide a natural framework for true happiness amid our trials. Most important of all, this is something we can do now since a return to order is not about turning back the clock; it is about resetting the clock based on timeless principles. ■

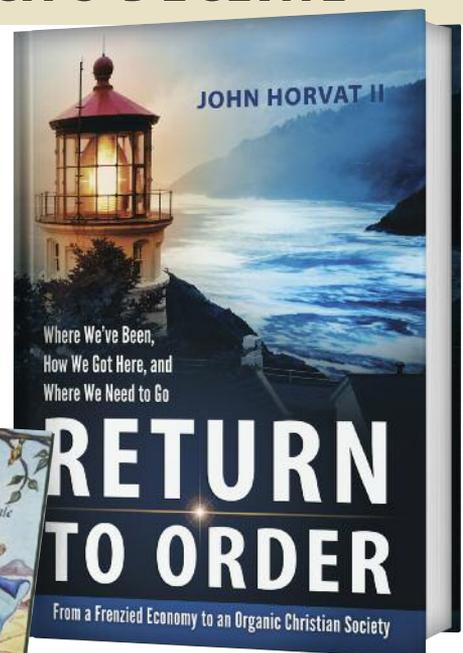
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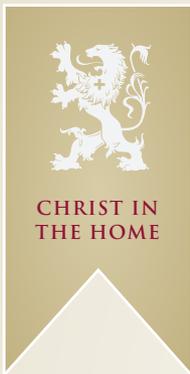
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THE SNUFF BOX

BY FATHER RAOUL PLUS, S.J.



One day, at table, a little fellow took a very greedy portion of jam. His father reproved him for it and clinched his correction with the comment, “Whoever wants to become a man—a gentleman—knows how to conquer himself.”

The child was hurt and becoming somewhat impudent retorted, “Oh, after all, Papa, you have your snuff box!”

The father immediately put his hand into his pocket, drew out the snuff box and before the whole group threw it into the fire.

That’s what we call fair play. If one wants to get another to do something, he must first of all do it himself. There should be justice. Not that children have a right to judge their parents, but parents should be careful not to give their children occasion to judge them badly.

We are sometimes amazed when young people who were very pious at one time and who have received a Christian education from start to finish, later on abandon the practice of their Faith. We must go back to the source. The mother was a practicing Catholic, the father went to Mass only when it suited him and he had very quickly given up family prayer. The children rarely saw him perform an act of worship. No other explanation is needed to clarify everything.

The same holds true for the spirit of sacrifice, for prayer, and for refined manners.

Here is a child at table who has a mania for crumbling his bread into little pieces or to scatter crumbs all about his plate. The mother corrects him for it, only to hear the reply, “Oh, but Papa does it too!”

So it goes with everything. Children record with unerring fidelity the examples they witness. And since examples strike incomparably harder than words, parents preach in vain, if they themselves do not practice; instead of forming, they deform. Who knows whether the little irregularities of today will not culminate in the regrettable crimes of tomorrow.

Great consideration should be given to the fact that “the child is father to the man.” Parents are



The good or bad example given by a parent may create a life-long impression on a child.

therefore bound to watch themselves, their habits, their behavior, their speech.

Parents will be so free at table; they criticize the Pope, the bishops, the pastor, such and such persons among their relatives and acquaintances. Their judgments are only too frequently severe or at least imprudent. Need they be astonished if later their children, “who come from such Christian families,” are free in passing criticisms about their highest superiors and other persons most deserving of respect. Whose fault is it?

“But they’re so small; they don’t understand what we’re talking about!” How do you know? Although they do not understand everything or at least not right away, some impression will stay with them, and the habit of judging indiscriminately will be well planted to sprout later.

What great damage has been done! What out-and-out imprudence! ■

Adapted from Raoul Plus, S.J.’s *Christ in the Home* (Colorado Springs, CO: Gardner Brothers, 1951). This book is a treasure chest of advice for Catholics on the practical and spiritual concerns of raising a family. To obtain a copy, visit www.GardnerBrothers.com.

GIVE AMERICA a New NATIVITY

While many communities have festive “holiday displays” with colorful toys, candy canes and assorted lights, most of these public arrangements are void of any mention of why we are actually celebrating. In an effort to keep Christ in Christmas and remind others of the reason for the season, the Nativity Scene Committee was formed. In recent years the committee has helped individuals erect nativity scenes in the state capitals of Illinois, Mississippi, and Rhode Island.

Mr. Jim Finnegan is the founder and co-chairman of the Nativity Scene Committee. In this interview with *Crusade*, he described a bold new plan to send free nativity sets to anyone who is willing to display them in any state capital building or public property.



Crusade: Why is it important that every city have a nativity scene?

Jim Finnegan: This is probably the most important question you will ask me.

We have a responsibility as Catholics, as do all Christians, to celebrate Christmas for what it really is—the celebration of Christ’s birth. Attacks on Christmas through the years have made the average person almost embarrassed to say “Merry Christmas” or display a nativity scene.

These next few years will determine if Christ still has a public place in this season. Are we going to be the parents whose children and grandchildren will ask “You did nothing and stayed quiet while people pushed Christ out of Christmas?”

But this is about more than how to properly celebrate the season. Really, activists who are concerned for the freedom of the Church from the whims of state infringement will realize the need to bring the nativity scene back. Not allowing the state to “embarrass away” our belief in Christ’s birth is at the head of the battle to keep Christian moral values in society.

Crusade: But large nativity scenes are rare and expensive. How should our readers get a nativity scene?

Jim Finnegan: In the past, nativity scenes have been as you said—rare and expensive—because people were not taking the steps to stand up for their rights as private citizens to purchase and display them.

However, we have a solution to this problem and this is what makes this effort so exciting. We have a person of means who will provide nativity scenes at no cost to individuals who want to make an effort to get them displayed in either their state capital or local public property.

The state capitals are what we really stress as the most important places. Nativity scenes are already in three state capitals: Illinois, Mississippi, and Rhode Island. We want a nativity scene in all fifty state capitals but they will also be sent to those who can place them in public properties of high visibility and high traffic.

The free nativity scene is very beautiful and will be given at no cost and shipped for free. Interested parties should contact us through the information on our website www.AmericanNativityScene.com.

Crusade: As United States citizens do we have a right to display these nativity scenes in state capitals and on public property?

Jim Finnegan: Absolutely. There is no longer any question about that. A Federal Court decision has set the legal precedent for this action in all fifty



Mr. Jim Finnegan, founder of the Nativity Scene Committee.



The "God Squad" made up of carpenters, electricians and other devoted individuals who put up and take down the nativity scene at Daley Plaza in Chicago each Christmas.

states. The honorable James Parsons gave his decision in *Gruitzmacher v. Chicago Building Commission* and our good friends at the Thomas More Society will help anyone with legal problems in this regard.

I would like to stress that we not only have this right through this recent decision but as Christians we can claim the history of our nation as our precedent. As a nation, the United States was born from immigrants who came here to openly profess their faith free from infringement. When our ancestors fought in the Revolutionary War they fought for a nation under God where its citizens could enjoy the religious freedom to express their Judeo-Christian values, views and beliefs.

However, as with all rights we must use them or be in danger of losing them. And for those who see a "war on Christians," what better way to stand up for our right to influence America than to continue our joyous celebration of the real meaning of Christmas.

Crusade: Still, what obstacles might a hostile local council or atheistic group make?

Jim Finnegan: There is a common saying, "You will know that you are over the target when the anti-aircraft starts." If your local council or atheist group gives complaints I think the nativity set is more needed there than anywhere else.

You will get responses from groups like "Freedom from Religion" or some complaints from atheists. But remember that this is your legal right and they know it is your legal right. Their efforts are only nuisance legal attacks which we already have the answer for. With the precedent set by our Illinois Nativity Scene Committee in the *Gruitzmacher v. Chicago Building Commission* decision we now have the right to have a nativity scene space on public property. And the Thomas More Society of pro-bono lawyers is ready to help anyone who is

given trouble.

In Arlington Heights Park every possible seasonal decoration was there except Christmas decorations. It had Frosty the Snowman, Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer, candy canes but no nativity scene. At first the park authorities hesitated to allow Christ in because they also feared from hearing from these atheistic groups but when we came there with the legal

precedent, the park agreed. They were happy when we put our disclaimer simply stating that "this nativity scene is owned and operated by the Illinois Nativity Scene Committee."

At most the atheists can claim their space as they did in Arlington Heights by putting up banners saying "There is no God or devils or angels." But their very action is a plus for getting the story of Christmas out there. It works against them in the end.

So, basically, some groups may try to intimidate and insert fear into your effort, but we have all the calling cards and court cases on our side. In fact a man by the name of Rob Sherman, who is a type of a head of the atheist effort throughout the country, tried to stop us in Illinois. But after complaining to the park about us he showed up at our ceremony. I welcomed him there that day and I said, "Rob you differ from us entirely and I am sure you know that, but I know that you know about the First Amendment." And he agreed. He differed about us putting it there, but he clearly saw we had a right to be there.

Crusade: Have any of your nativity sets ever been vandalized or stolen?

Jim Finnegan: You ask a great question. Have you heard the old saying, "That God often writes straight with crooked lines?" This is exactly what had happened fifteen years ago when the Christ Child was stolen out of our Daley Plaza nativity display in Chicago. I got a call in the early morning from the police telling us that it was stolen.

At first I had a lot of agony and a lot of worries about retrieving it so I called for a press conference and I was never so busy in my life. The phone never quit ringing. I had calls of concern from people all across America, even from the mayor of Boston (who was ambassador to the Holy See at that time). I was on TV news shows and after that I could hardly take my hat and coat off when I got home.

At that conference one of a reporter's questions was, "Do you think that you will get the Christ

Child back?” And I said, “Before today I would have said, ‘no’ but after today I think that we have a fifty-fifty chance.” Within twenty-four hours after the press conference, the police department called saying that two men had taken the Christ Child after a Chicago Bears football game but that they would leave it at a locker at a Greyhound station for pick up. It was not damaged.

Five years later the same thing happened, but in this case the police saw it being taken. It was a young student from the Art Institute in Chicago. And he claimed that it was such a beautiful statue that he had to have it. Later on, he admitted that he was Jewish and that the statue was bothering him, so we do not know where the truth is, possibly somewhere in between.

Now we use a protective cable across the Christ Child, which you cannot see, to prevent future attempts. But in both cases when He was taken, the Christ Child was returned and not vandalized.



Composed of a wholesome, dedicated, happy bunch, the “God Squad” enjoys the great feeling of being able to contribute to such a noble endeavor as setting up nativity sets in the public square.

Crusade: Generally what public reaction is to be expected?

Jim Finnegan: The opening of the nativity scene will be the happiest day of your life! The city’s citizens will be so happy and grateful for your work. Even after the unveiling ceremony, people will call you to give their thanks. Every year I receive about ten or twelve calls from people saying “What a beautiful, beautiful ceremony!” “Thank you very much.” “Can I help you?” or “How can I make a donation?” I assure you it will truly be a beautiful and memorable part of your life.

Crusade: Setting up a nativity scene in their city or state capital might still sound scary to our readers. Could you please explain how to do this in five steps?

Jim Finnegan: Yes, but let me say from the beginning that we are so grateful to *Crusade Magazine* for giving us the opportunity to reach over 120,000 subscribers with this offer. We know you will help us reach those willing to save Christmas.

1. Pick possible public property locations. We would love to get one into all fifty state capitals but other public property locations are also acceptable: inside or outside a court house, inside or outside a city hall, a high visibility public property spot in your city or state park.

2. Contact us through the information on www.AmericanNativityScene.com to discuss the location and so that we can collect your shipping information for your free nativity set. Inside the set you will find a statue of the Baby Jesus, Our Lady, Saint Joseph and an angel. All of these will be sent with free shipping to any home in the fifty United States thanks to the help of an anonymous donor.

3. Next, form a committee with two to six friends. A committee sounds like a lot of work but it’s actually fun. This is just a once-a-year thing but the committee will guarantee your effort to secure a permit for the display. We recommend that you name the committee after your state, city or town. “The Ohio Nativity Scene Committee” or “The Seattle Nativity Scene Committee” for example.

4. After obtaining a permit, find a handyman who can volunteer to make a simple structure to house the figurines. Some may worry that they can’t afford a professional carpenter but it doesn’t have to be a professional job. Committees for two very poor parishes simply asked parishioners until they found someone who could volunteer their time.

The handyman should then make a sign that says, “This nativity set is sponsored and cared for by the (your city or state) Nativity Scene Committee.” This sign will help protect the local government from lawsuits by atheistic groups. The details of this sign will be covered in the advice we and the Thomas More Society will provide.

5. Now that you have a permit, a committee, a handyman and your sign, you should prepare the structure and set a date for an unveiling ceremony. We recommend the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Christmas hasn’t started yet but it is the easiest

time for people to come to the ceremony and to let people know where the nativity scene will be in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Crusade: You mentioned that this unveiling ceremony is the most important part. Could you explain in five steps again how to do an ideal unveiling?

Jim Finnegan:

1. Publicize it:

Contact the local media stations, contact the local churches, and contact the Knights of Columbus or similar organization. Just send them all a letter or call them on the phone. Again we will help you with advice if you need it. Local news sources often have very little to report on and they will love you for inviting them to the event and you can be sure of positive coverage. Also see if local churches can put it into their bulletin. Ask your local Knights of Columbus to help with that and with getting people to the event.

2. Get a choir, band or bell choir:

For a truly beautiful nativity scene unveiling you should find a free children's choir.

In almost any city there will be a homeschooling choir group, a bell choir, or school choir that will be delighted to help you with this.

3. Plan a few short speeches:

Ask your favorite local priest, Knights of Columbus representative or TFP member to give some words on the importance of the set for the city.



The Santa Maria Del Popolo Handbell Choir provides the music and Christmas songs to start the season right.

This will help to set the tone.

4. Ask for donations:

Pass around the hat to help you cover your first year's wood costs. Donations will also allow you to develop your scene with more figures, straw, animals, plants, etc. Asking for donations will also put you in contact with those who might join your committee.

5. Lastly, ceremoniously place the Christ Child in the crib:

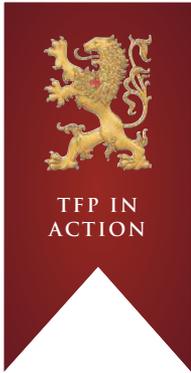
This is the most important part of the event. After all the singing and the two or three speeches it's important to have a young child ceremoniously place the Christ Jesus into the manger. You can announce this moment by saying:

"Now for the moment we have all been waiting for, we will place the Christ Child in the crib and by doing so we will be placing Him in the hearts and minds of the citizens of this city and state." ■



The statues shown on the left are a sample of the ones you would get from Mr. Finnegan. They average 25 inches tall and weigh 27 pounds combined.

To place an order, please visit www.AmericanNativityScene.com or email info@americannativityscene.com or call 847-894-6315



Student Action Takes Catholic University to Task

BY VINCENT GORRE

The University of San Diego's mission statement proudly proclaims that it is a "Roman Catholic institution." Founded as a women's college in 1949 and merged with a men's college in 1972 to form what is now a Catholic institution of higher learning in San Diego, California, its list of "core values" includes academic excellence, knowledge, community and ethical conduct.

However, it has not escaped the notice of TFP Student Action that this Catholicity often conflicts with reality. Painful evidence of this occurred back in April when the University held its second pro-homosexual "drag show" on campus, despite protests and the efforts of TFP Student Action's online petition which garnered over 8,000 signatures in a few days. Then, just one month later, a job offer for Planned Parenthood was posted on the University's website. Posting a job for the largest abortion provider in the country is clear evidence that the University seemed to support an organization that is considered the antithesis of Catholic moral teaching. TFP Student Action's Director John Ritchie promptly wrote an email to Dr. Mary Lyons, president of the University, to express his concern. After a week with no answer, another email was sent, followed by a phone call and voice mail message to the University's assistant director of leadership programming. Finally, on June 19, 2013, an email from the University's vice-president of university relations confirmed the removal of the job posting as a result of TFP Student Action's complaint.

The job posting incident was not isolated, as TFP Student Action continued to discover other actions of the University that raised concerns of inconsistency with its Catholic identity. In August, an online protest was organized to stop a pro-abortion club from being recognized by the University. Law Students for Reproductive Justice (LSRJ), a student organization notorious for promoting the pro-abortion agenda, was active on the USD campus. After complaining to university officials, John Ritchie received a troubling reply from Dr. Timothy O'Malley, vice-president of university relations, who wrote: "The fostering of legal expertise in all aspects of the law is consistent with the educational objectives of the USD School of Law." But, as John Ritchie rightly pointed out, abortion advocacy is never consistent with Catholic education.

Why would a Catholic university mock its Catholic identity by promoting abortion and homosexuality? It seemed



Central to the Student Action mission is defending moral values on campus. This is done through direct action on campus or online.

obvious that the University's administration and faculty were aware but continued to condone these activities. In 2003, Jim Holman, a San Diego area newsman reported that the University's Department of Theology and Religious Studies was staffed by known pro-homosexual activists* led by its then- chairman, Dr. Joseph Columbo, a declared homosexual. Other faculty members specialize in so-called "theologies of liberation," such as feminist theologian Maria Pilar Aquino. Another faculty member of notoriety is Evelyn Kirkley, a well-known pro-homosexual activist who is also the adviser of PRIDE, USD's organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer, and questioning undergraduate students and allies. Miss Kirkley often speaks off campus on "gender issues."

The University of San Diego is not alone in betraying its Catholic identity. In a survey conducted by TFP Student Action late last year, 52% of Catholic colleges sponsor pro-homosexual student clubs that violate Catholic Church teaching. TFP Student Action's online protest petition urging Catholic university presidents to disband pro-homosexual clubs within their institutions generated an initial 24,000 signatures from students and concerned parents. "More and more students are confronted with visible, active and well-funded pro-homosexual clubs that openly contradict natural law and undermine good moral values," said John Ritchie. ■

*"Gay Friendly—What's with USD's Theology Department?" *San Diego News Notes*, November 13, 2003.



AMERICA NEEDS FATIMA[®]

November/December 2013

PROGRESS REPORT

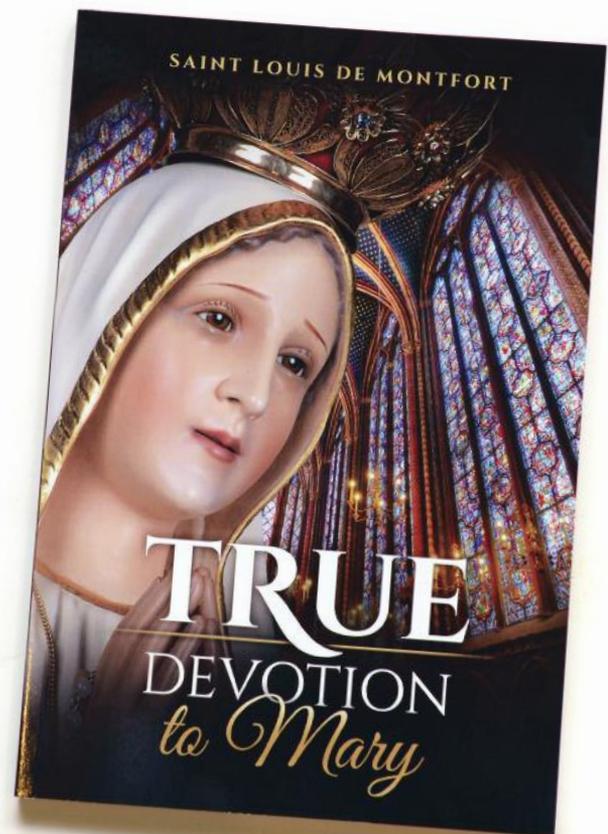
A Spiritual Treasure Shared with 100,000 Souls

BY VINCENT GORRE

In line with its commitment to promote not only the message of Fatima but also the messenger herself who is the Mother of God, America Needs Fatima successfully published and distributed 100,000 copies of the spiritual classic, *True Devotion to Mary* by the great Marian apostle Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort to its members and supporters.

Acknowledged as one of the most important sources to better understand the role of Our Lady in the sanctification of souls, *True Devotion to Mary* has inspired and influenced numberless Catholics from all walks of life. The attentive reader will discover in this book the secret to an easy and sure way to Our Lord Jesus Christ. Pope Saint Pius X, one among many popes who recommended the reading and practice of *True Devotion to Mary*, granted the Apostolic Benediction to all those who read it.

The book is like a “powerhouse treasure that God has placed in the hands of His children to help us in the bitter events through which we are living,” said America Needs Fatima director Robert E. Ritchie. He encouraged those who received this special edition of *True Devotion to Mary* to help in the campaign to spread the book to thousands more in order to “ignite a revival in America.” ■



To order your free copy of *True Devotion to Mary*, call (888) 317-5571.



Protests in New York City and Los Angeles

BY JACK BURNHAM

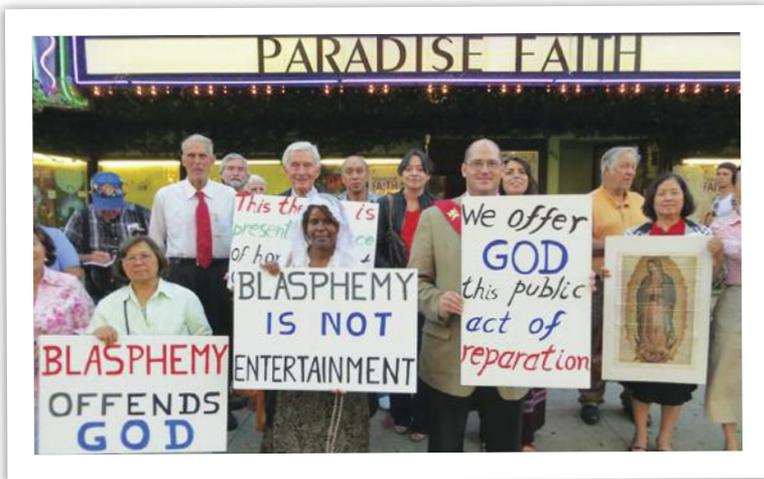
How many of us can remember where we were and what we were doing over any given Labor Day weekend in our lives? Well, twenty-one America Needs Fatima supporters from the New York City area, led by twenty men of the American TFP's Student Action and the TFP's Holy Guardian Angels band will be hard pressed to forget where they were this past Labor Day weekend of Sunday, September 1, at 2 p.m.

Instead of joining their countrymen in the enjoyment of a legitimate national "day off" from the stress of working to support themselves, these modern-day Friends of the Cross stood proudly in the public square protesting the outrageously blasphemous movie *Paradise: Faith*.

They were inspired to come, some from over 100 miles, by their wholesome indignation at the incessant insults and degradations made against Our Lord, Our Lady, and anything Catholic. *Paradise: Faith*, is the latest in a wave of blasphemous films, plays, and "art" exhibits.

The Catholic Church's priesthood was well represented by Father Christopher Salvatori. His arrival bolstered our intrepidity and we all refreshed when, just after the protest, he gave us all his priestly blessing right there on the sidewalk.

Much of the enthusiasm of our New York City rally of reparation had been sparked through the "communion of saints" by another twenty-one of our America Needs Fatima mem-



With less than 48-hours' notice in New York City and Los Angeles, protesters answered a call of prayer to take place in front of theaters in their respective cities, offered in reparation for the outrageous and blasphemous movie *Paradise: Faith*.

bers in Los Angeles. Five days earlier, with only two days' notice, they protested the same film at a theater in West Hollywood. Led by American TFP member Michael Whitcraft, these good people also manifested their repudiation of one more cruel blasphemy of all we hold sacred. ■



America Needs Fatima and its anti-blasphemy network of members proudly stand alongside the members of the American TFP as one of their apostolic actions in the public square of America.

Stay in email contact with us at www.ANF.org/Alerts.



Miami Group Joins the Protest

BY SERGIO DE PAZ

When I read America Needs Fatima's protest description of the sacrilegious film *Paradise: Faith*, I quickly sent an email alert to my personal contact list. It was terribly short notice—just two days from the last showing of the film—but I was confident in Our Lady's ability to use my small efforts for some greater good.

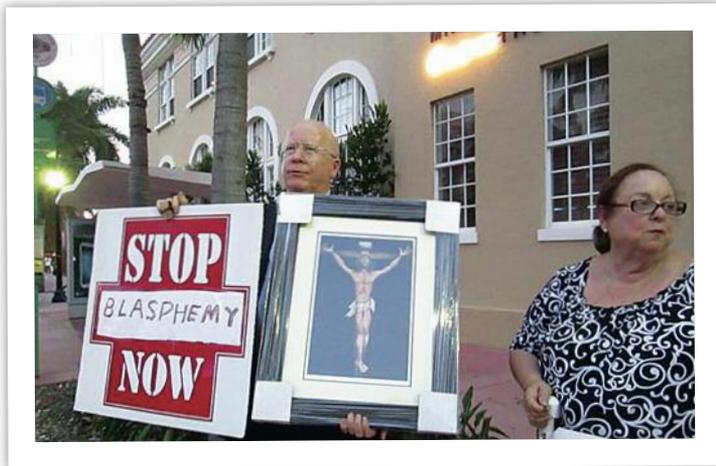
Some of my friends immediately agreed that no matter how few people joined us, we simply had to protest in public. We decided to pray a public rosary of reparation the next evening during the film's 7:00 p.m. showing.

While we were praying, a young lady who works at the theater came out to speak with us and take our picture. "I want you to know that I am Catholic," she said, "and I really appreciate what you are doing defending the Faith."

As we were leaving, she came back out and said, "Please don't go! I enjoy your presence here." It seemed Our Lady used our presence outside the theater to draw a special soul closer to her.

May we all correspond to the inspirations we are given, and act promptly for the triumph of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, foretold at Fatima. ■

Friends of ANF protesting the blasphemous movie, *Paradise: Faith* in Miami, Florida.



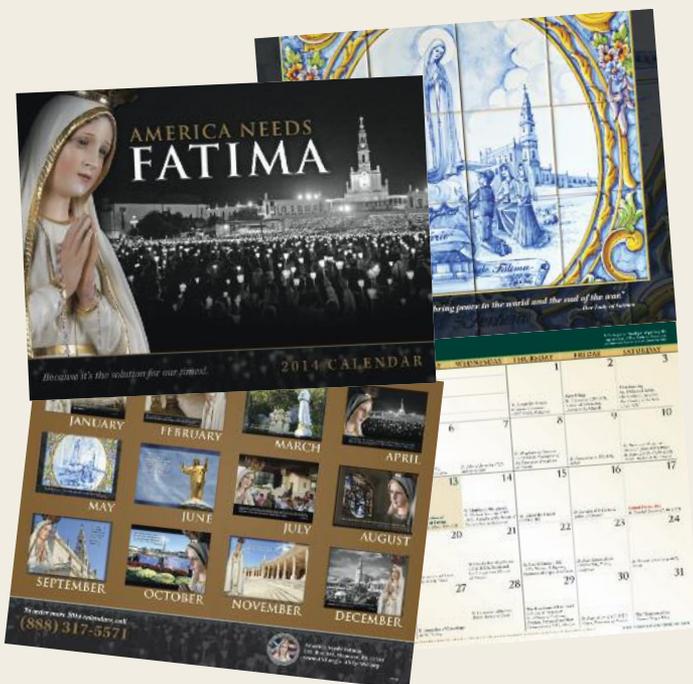
2014 Fatima Calendar Is Out

This year America Needs Fatima has distributed more than 275,000 Fatima calendars featuring a series of pictures from Fatima, Portugal.

Our photographer Michael Gorre travelled to Fatima specifically for the purpose of capturing a unique selection of images hoping to give our members and friends, many of whom may never be able to travel to Fatima, some idea of the great shrine and its surroundings.

The America Needs Fatima calendar has been one of our most popular publications and the 2014 calendar will not disappoint. It is spiritual, inspiring and practical. Besides a beautiful selection of images from Fatima and Aljustrel, the calendar includes the saint of each day of the year as well as important dates and reminders for our civil and religious feasts, celebrations and holy days of obligation. ■

We hope you will enjoy the 2014 America Needs Fatima calendar and if you should need an extra one, please call us at 1-888-317-5571.





CUSTODIAN'S
CORNER

When Our Lady Touches a Soul, Get Ready for the Unexpected!

For almost two decades, America Needs Fatima Custodians have been visiting thousands of American homes every year bringing the Fatima message to families. All of our Fatima Custodians travel with a beautiful 48" statue of Our Lady of Fatima and a well-prepared presentation on the Fatima apparitions and Our Lady's message to the world. One such Custodian is Mr. José Walter Ferraz, father of seven children, who has been on the road making Fatima visits since 1997. It so happened that one of his sons fell very ill and had to be admitted to the hospital. The situation was serious so Mr. Ferraz requested a break from his visits and left for Pennsylvania, leaving the statue in the safe hands of a good couple in New Port Richey, Florida. The story that follows is one that shows what amazing things Our Lady does when we least expect them.

Dear Custodian Jose,

I want to thank you again for the wonderful visit we had with the Pilgrim Statue of Fatima and for the extra pleasure of having her live in our home for a week. It was truly a wonderful experience and brought forth a miracle that I would like to relay to you.

I don't know if you remember us; you have so many visits to make. I am sure, after a while, they all run together. However, you asked us to keep the Blessed Statue while you flew back to Pennsylvania to visit with your son. We were more than delighted to do so.



Mr. José Walter Ferraz, an America Needs Fatima Custodian, holds a 48" statue of Our Lady of Fatima that brings hope to those homes that welcome her.

For the time that you were in Pa., the beautiful Virgin Statue of Fatima was enthroned in our living room on a table resplendent with a white lace tablecloth, flowers, and candles. I need to interject here that my husband, Ron, had been away from the Church for over 30 years, although I go to Mass daily. One morning, my husband asked if I said, "Good morning," to the Blessed Virgin; and I said I hadn't even thought about it. He then told me he talked with her every morning. This was a surprise to me because I had to coerce him to attend the service as that was his poker night.

On the Saturday before Palm Sunday while the statue was still in our home, my husband told me he was going to confession! I was floored! Ronny went to confession on Saturday and returned to holy Mass and the Catholic Faith on Palm Sunday and is now steeped in faith and belief in the miracle of the Blessed Mother. He said she called him to come home. Thank you, dear Lady of Fatima: that's my miracle!

I thought you might like to know the glorious work you are doing, and the miracle you are bringing to others.

Yours in Christ,

D.E., New Port Richey, Florida

To schedule a Fatima visit in your home, call (888) 460-7371.



Our Readers Write...



Dear Mr. Ritchie,

I thank you for sending me the picture of the miraculous fresco of Our Lady of Good Counsel from Genazzano, Italy. It arrived at my home at a time that only Our Lady herself knew. My son R. was in critical care in D.C. due to a blood disorder that wreaked havoc in his heart, lungs, and his entire body. R. was in a coma for eight weeks.

He also had a bacterial blood infection, the cause of which the doctor could not find. That beautiful photo of Our Lady arrived and I wrote a prayer to Our Lady on the



The miraculous fresco of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Genazzano, Italy.

back, asking her to heal my son and to remove the infection from his blood. I bought a frame and hung the picture in my living room.

Mr. Ritchie, two days later that infection left my son's blood. Doctors still do not know what caused it. My son R. lives in southern Maryland and his dear priest had his name put on the altar at Easter at a Mass said by Pope Francis.

My son had double pneumonia for six weeks; lungs needed draining; on a ventilator to breathe; blood clots in both legs; and was bleeding internally. He was suffering from the effects of a mild stroke all during the eight weeks in critical care. The doctors did not think my son was going to make it.

As a mother, I prayed my Rosary daily as I always do and prayed for acceptance of Our Lord's will. In the hospital my son had four doctors caring for his needs and I pray they will remember how I would place my rosary on my son every time I prayed it for him, and realize it was God and Our Lady's hand upon him.

My son was brought out of the coma at the end of the eight weeks. He then was in ICU [Intensive Care Unit—Ed.] three weeks, and in another room for one week. The hospital gave my son a grant to go to a home/rehab for one month as he does not have insurance.

My dear Lord Jesus took care of everything for my son—hearing my pleas through the wonderful Rosary and intercession of Our Mother.

Yes, Mr. Ritchie, my son still has a long road ahead, but Our Lord and Our Lady are seeing R. through this. He went from a wheelchair, to a walker, and now a cane. He is able to attend Mass and is planning to marry on September 14. My son is a perfect example of the power in the Holy Rosary and Faith and Hope.

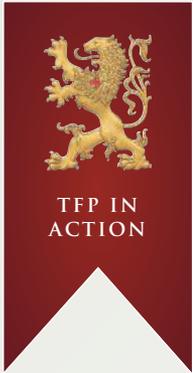
"Thank you" does not seem enough, but I say again to you, "thank you" for the beautiful picture. We treasure it.

Sincerely,

M.E.B., Fayetteville, Pa.

P.S. Thank you for all the beautiful, wonderful items you have sent me. God bless you, Mr. Ritchie, and may Our Mother's hand be upon you also for the love you show her. You are very special to Our Lady! May your hard work be rewarded.

Send us your feedback by writing to us at Crusade@TFP.org



EAGLE OR TOAD: the Choice Is Theirs

BY JOHN RITCHIE

The boys' battle cry rang out across the valley: "It's better to be an eagle for a minute, than a toad for a lifetime." At the annual Call to Chivalry Summer Camp at Saint Louis de Montfort Academy, two teams clashed in a lively contest of shield ball. Other challenges included a treasure hunt, archery, skeet shooting, tomahawk throws, chess, ping-pong, swimming and a two-day hike in the Appalachian Mountains.

In addition to the challenging outdoor games, camp participants enjoyed talks about the lives of many "eagles" throughout history. Some examples were Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Philip Neri, the Swiss Guards, the Siege

of Malta, the Battle of Lepanto, Saint John Bosco, the lives of holy Popes and the Papal Zouaves. The boys also learned how to make medieval chainmail and were treated to an illustrated demonstration on the history of the sword, from the Middle Ages to the present, by fencing master Roark Mitzell.

Just as the heroes of old fought for the rights of the Church and defended the weak, the widows and orphans, the boys experienced first hand that the modern-day crusader must also stand up and fight for everything holy, honorable



Top: A great landmark of the Pennsylvania Summer Camp was a prayerful protest in front of the Harrisburg abortion facility. It was something the abortion clinic was not counting on.
Right: Summer Camp participants dressed in colorful attire, get ready for the medieval games.



and good. Thus, putting chivalry into practice, camp participants held a peaceful and prayerful rally for the unborn at the abortion facility in Harrisburg, Pa.

With rosaries in hand, the youthful cadre took a stand. Their sense of purpose was visible. “My generation rejects abortion,” read one sign. Other posters read: “Honk against abortion,” and “A child is a blessing, not a disease,” and “Purity is the answer.” By engaging in this cultural battle, they felt the joy and power of the eagle, while learning that the virtues of chivalry are not dead or obsolete, but thriving in the hearts of many who wish to live for an ideal higher than self.

The event culminated with medieval games followed by a formal banquet. “What’s that trumpet blast for?” camp participants wondered, as a large cake resembling Castel Sant’Angelo in Rome entered the hall. Moments later, Godfrey of Bouillon—an “eagle” if ever there was one—entered; his rousing speech highlighting the source of true manly courage: holy purity.

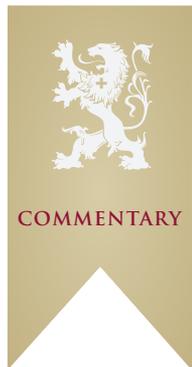
Young voices rang out in approval: “Deus Vult! Deus Vult!”—signifying their choice to be eagles, and not toads, because God wills it! ■



A variety of aspects of activities during the camp: regular and daily prayers in the chapel, an intriguing treasure hunt, loud and lively conversation during meals, a fantastic cake for the medieval banquet resembling Castel Sant’Angelo, a class by medievalist Roark Mitzell on swordsmanship, which grabbed every boy’s attention.

“Rehabilitation” of Liberation Theology?

BY LUIZ SOLIMEO



“Not only is participating in class struggle not opposed to universal love, but today, this commitment is the necessary and inescapable means of making this love concrete, as this participation is what leads to a classless society, a society without owners and dispossessed, without oppressors and oppressed.”

This statement is not found in the writings of “Che” Guevara or any manifesto of the Colombian FARC guerrillas or other group of revolutionary subversives.

It is found in the book *A Theology of Liberation*, by Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian priest, who has been called the “father” of liberation theology.¹

Liberation Theology v. Church Theology; Why Is “Liberation Theology” Back in the News?

Liberation Theology is back in the news because in its September 4, 2013 edition, *Vatican Insider*, the religious blog of the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, from Turin, deals with two articles on the publication of the book *Dalla parte dei poveri. Teologia della liberazione, teologia della chiesa* (which the blog translates as Taking the Side of the Poor—Liberation Theology), available in bookstores starting September 9.

The first, written with the consent of the blog’s writer, is titled, “The *Osservatore Romano* Rehabilitates Liberation Theology.” The second, by vaticanist Andrea Torielli, is headlined, “The Church Legitimizes Liberation Theology.”²

The book’s special hook is its authors. It was the joint effort of the aforementioned Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez and his disciple, Archbishop Ludwig Müller, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Liberation Theology: the Most Significant Theology?

Archbishop Müller writes: “The Latin American ecclesial and theological movement known as ‘liberation theology,’ which had worldwide repercussion after Vatican II, should be listed, in my

opinion, among the most significant currents of twentieth century Catholic theology.”

Further on he states: “It is only by means of liberation theology that Catholic theology has been able to emancipate itself from the dualistic dilemma of the here and now and the afterlife, of earthly happiness and ultra-earthly salvation.”³

Marxist Inspiration

Have we forgotten that liberation theology, which spread widely throughout Latin America from the 1970s on, develops from the premises of Marxist class struggle and the concept that the poor are “the oppressed?” This school of thought holds that the role of theology—and therefore of the Catholic Church—is to “liberate” the poor from the “oppressive structures” of private property and free enterprise. It sees socialism as the only system capable of ending injustice, by establishing complete equality in the political and socio-economic spheres.

This is not merely another utopian theory discussed in cafés (or, worse yet, in our sacristies), for “liberation theologians” actually believe that theology is made from “revolutionary praxis.”



Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez is a Peruvian priest and he is considered to be the founder of liberation theology, a Marxist interpretation of the Gospel condemned by Pope John Paul II.

A central element of liberation theology and teologia del pueblo, “people’s theology,” and other variations is to consider the poor, or “the people,” as “the oppressed.”

The end result is that this “theology” has led countless Catholic youngsters, even priests, to take up weapons and join the Communist guerrilla outfits, both rural and urban, that have plagued the region for over forty years. At the same time, through the so-called Basic Christian Communities, this subversive current played a decisive role in creating socialist parties in Latin America, including the “*Partido dos Trabalhadores*,” “Workers’ Party,” which has been in power in Brazil since 2003.

Praxis, the Sole Deciding Factor

After his book was condemned, Fr. Gutiérrez purged it of Marxist expressions and published its “light” version.

However, it is not enough to change wording or labels without altering content. Sarah Kleeb, who studied Fr. Gutiérrez’s thought and the revised (1988) edition of his book, makes this comment:

“While Gutiérrez goes to explicit lengths to distance himself from Marx... this seems to be done only in a token fashion, and that his understanding of injustice remains forceful even in light of his modifications of methodology.”⁴

Yet, even if Liberation Theology did not employ Marxist premises, it would still be unacceptable as a theological methodology because it does not start with data from Revelation as interpreted by the Magisterium of the Church (the close norm of the Faith) but from praxis, that is, from the events.

In his 1984 book *Rapporto sulla Fede*, then Cardinal Ratzinger, criticizing the methodology of liberation theology, pointed out: “Truth is realized in history and its praxis.” And, he added, “Action is truth. Hence even the ideas which are employed in such action are ultimately interchangeable. Praxis is the sole deciding factor. The only true orthodoxy is therefore orthopraxy.”⁵

Thus, liberation theology sustains that men are not enlightened, guided and led to eternal life by Revelation and the truths of the Faith under the teaching authority of the Magisterium. Rather, what gives sense to their faith are historical developments, the political struggle and even guerrilla warfare. According to this system, to engage in class warfare is to have faith.

A False Concept of “the Poor”

A central element of liberation theology and *teologia del pueblo*, “people’s theology,” and other variations is to consider the poor, or “the people,” as “the oppressed.”

This conflictive notion has nothing to do with the true love for the downtrodden as preached by Our Lord Jesus Christ, a love that has informed the Church’s works of charity for centuries.

In fact, it is nothing but an adaptation of the Marxist conception of “redeeming [the] proletariat” inasmuch as it is “oppressed,” “disenfranchised,” “marginalized.”

Leonardo Boff, a former Franciscan friar and highly “acclaimed” liberation theologian, leaves no doubt as to what liberation theology means when referring to “the poor.” He wrote in the newspaper of the Archdiocese of São Paulo that God loves the poor “not because they are pious and good but simply because they are victims of the oppression that impoverishes them.”⁶

It is therefore disturbing that the unofficial newspaper of the Vatican takes up the defense of liberation theology and Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez.

It is likewise surprising that a vaticanist like Tornielli can be so bold as to title his story, “The Church Legitimizes Liberation Theology.” ■

Notes:

1. Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 276.

2. “*L’Osservatore Romano* riabilita la Teologia della liberazione” <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/vaticano/dettaglio-articolo/articolo/teologia-thology-teologia-27563/>; La Chiesa sdogana la teologia della liberazione <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/vaticano/dettaglio-articolo/articolo/vaticano-vatican-teologia-della-liberazione-freedom-theology-27570/>

3. In Sandro Magister, “Peace Made Between Müller and Gutiérrez. But Bergoglio Isn’t Falling For It,” <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1350589?eng-y>

4. Sarah Kleeb, “Envisioning Emancipation: Karl Marx, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and the Struggle of Liberation Theology”: Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion (CSSR), Toronto, 2006. Accessed on 22 October 2012.

5. Pope Benedict XVI, *Vittorio Messori, The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), pp. 183, 185. (Our emphasis.)

6. *O Cristão e a Luta Pela Justiça*, “The Christian and the Struggle for Justice” in *O São Paulo*, April 6, 1982, p. 10.



CHRISTMAS

A God So Small, Yet Infinite; Infinite and Yet So Small!

BY PLINIO CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA

“**A**nd the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

St. John’s Gospel (1:14) thus announces the awesome moment when the Son of God “dwelt among us” so as to manifest His glory.

Yet, how discreet, how humble, how hidden was this first step taken by the King of the universe along His path of suffering, struggle, and triumph!

Let us meditate on the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ with the Gospel of Saint Luke (2:1-7).

“And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria.

And all went to be enrolled, everyone into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child.

And it came to pass that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Picture a poor wedded couple, simply dressed, crossing the Holy Land’s arid countryside on the way to Bethlehem. Mary travels seated on a young donkey, while Joseph proceeds on foot, pondering the words of the angel who revealed to him the miraculous character of his virgin spouse’s pregnancy.

As they reach Bethlehem, the winter night falls. But no one receives them, “because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Is it for them that there is no room, since they have no prestige? Prestige commonly comes, especially in decadent times, from money and concessions to the vices of the times and the spirit of the “world” (this spirit being understood in the sense the Gospels give it). But this holy couple is poor and gifted with a highly religious spirit—virtues the “worldly” find particularly detestable.

Nevertheless, Saint Joseph and Our Lady descend from the

highest lineage of Bethlehem of Judea. Saint Joseph is a prince of the House of David, and Our Lady likewise descends from the kings of Judea.

However, so decadent are the Chosen People that in their eyes Saint Joseph is nothing but a poor carpenter, while Our Lady, his relatively well-off cousin, has chosen to share his poverty.

What are they doing in Bethlehem?

They are obeying the decree of the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, who, certainly for vanity's sake, had ordered a census to ascertain how many were subject to his power.

The prince of the House of David, in travelling to the city of his birth, manifests the glory of the foreign emperor. Saint Joseph is conquered, Caesar Augustus is the conqueror. And Bethlehem fails to recognize her illustrious children.

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). Mary and Joseph, bearing the very Son of God, are rejected by their own people and are thus obliged to seek shelter in a cave inhabited by animals. So it is in the intimacy and isolation of that dwelling place for beasts, that history's most important event up till that time unfolds: the Word of God, made flesh in the most pure womb of Mary, comes into the world.

* * *

Thus we get a glimpse of the kind of joy proper to the Nativity: great solitude and deprivation, but at the same time great elevation. For over such misery descended riches without name, riches unlike any others on the face of the earth: the Child-God, wrapped in swathes of cloth and lying in a manger where animals feed.

None save that couple witness or know how to appreciate this scene of indescribable grandeur.

The highest glory is there present in a tender Child who, crying, hungry, and cold, extends His little arms towards His mother, requesting a little milk or cloths for a covering. And Our Lady knows that it is the Creator Who opens His arms to her! The Sovereign of the universe cries, beseeching a bit of milk and warm clothing!

We can imagine the contrast between the supernatural ambience and the poverty of the grotto. There the Child Jesus is adored by all the angels in a magnificent choir, the celestial court celebrating the greatest feast up to then. Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, with extraordinary brilliance, give glory to God through the Nativity. That glory permeates the grotto discreetly, for it is necessary that those outside not take note, that only souls of faith perceive it, and only in intimacy. There, reclining, praying, is Our Lady, the most perfect soul in all the history of mankind, save only the divine Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. For Our Lady alone is worth more than all the souls before her, during her time, and thereafter; more than all who existed, exist, and will exist until the end of the world. She alone is worth more than all the angels.

A short distance away, praying to the Child-God and to Our Lady, is the humble cabinetmaker, the deposed prince, ob-

scured by history and by the misfortunes that befell his ancestors. That man received an honor proper to no one else: he was chosen to be the spouse of the mother of the Word Incarnate, the adoptive father of the very Son of God!

* * *

This takes place at midnight, when little moved in the ancient world. We can imagine the silence, the abandonment. The inhabitants of the nearby city of Bethlehem comfortably rest in their beds. Outside, even the livestock sleep, while the Divine Infant is born. Everything is empty and alone; darkness reigns. Only within that grotto does a small light flicker. Only that couple is there, they and the Child Jesus, the King of ages, the God-Man Himself.

This divine event takes place before a few. The greatest of honors is born and resides entirely in a frail Infant. The most important historical event up to that time comes to pass in secret, in such a way that the sole witnesses to that august scene desire to meditate, to remain silent, desiring rather to feel the Nativity within themselves than to loudly proclaim it. It is the affectionate reverence of those who know not how to render gratitude for the extraordinary honor of touching, in such an intimate way, so high a mystery, coupled with pity and compassion for a God who consented to make Himself so small. How to express respect so great that it approaches fear, and tenderness so profound that it seems almost to liquefy the soul? Lofty veneration, then, lofty adoration, and lofty tenderness.

This also seems to explain the nocturnal aspect of the Nativity. We cannot conceive of it taking place save at night, for darkness is necessary for radiating so discreet a light. Therein we find the joy characteristic of Christmas, which hesitates to expand itself for fear of losing its delicacy and intimacy.

* * *

We thus understand why such Christmas carols as “Stille Nacht” are customarily sung in a low voice, almost as if to oneself. They are sung as if not to awaken the Child Jesus. This is one aspect of the genius of “Stille Nacht,” composed by a simple German schoolmaster in the nineteenth century, yet now the preeminent Christmas carol of all ages. Hearing it, we have the impression that the choir is in a corner of the cave of Bethlehem. The choir sings with such emotion, yet in a very low voice, so as not to disturb the Divine Infant, nor the ineffable, internal song with which Our Lady is lulling her Son.

In this way one understands the thousand delicacies in the notes of “Silent Night,” and the tenderness of the Nativity. It is a song expressive of a kind of compassion for Him who is being celebrated: how small this infinite God; how infinite this small God!

Centuries of Christian civilization were needed for the most celebrated of Christmas songs to bloom like a flower in the Catholic Church. ■

BEYOND THE BALL OF FIRE

BY THOMAS RYDER

Saint Francis of Assisi once said, “Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.”

In a similar way, God often uses His own creation to guide and to teach us, without the use of words. We do need to be attentive, although, more often than not we are “too busy.” And yet, God is forever faithful; He constantly supplies all that we need, in order to know, love and serve Him in this world, and thus be happy with Him in the next, as the Catechism says.

Our illustration is a sunset viewed from Block Island. It was a fleeting “painting,” so to speak, created by God only for the moment, never seen before in quite the same way, and never to be seen again. Captured by my camera, I share it here with you.

Surrounded by such splendor, my mind reached for the Artist. The center of the scene was a large fiery disc, the sun. This disc, combined with the grandeur and immensity of the ocean, and the dancing reflections of the dimming rays on the water, all filled the moment with a deep sense of Our Lord’s presence. “Come to Me all of you who labor...” (Matt 11:28). My mind was called

to another disc, white in appearance, far more incandescent than the setting sun: the Holy Eucharist.

The only sounds were those of the waves, gently breaking against the rocky shore. The constant rhythmic movement of the waves was definitively confined by the solidity of the earth and the loftiness of the sky. The contrast between this tranquil, awesome scene, and our modern daily lives, was nothing less than stark. I thought of all our human instabilities and insecurities, in the face of the Divine admonition: “Be still and know that I am God...” (Psalm 46:10).

But while our good Lord offers us these innumerable opportunities, will we pay attention to His divine messages? Or will we remain glued to the television, the computer screen, the iPhone, or the iWhatever, fascinated by a thousand of our man-made novelties and distractions? We are human and thus need material things; but our happiness depends on God and our souls will only be filled with that which is more than what we are. The earthly will not fill a heart made for the infinite. “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee, Lord.”

*My mind was called
to another disc, white
in appearance, far
more incandescent
than the setting sun:
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