



REUNION

The Society of Clerks Secular of Saint Basil
(The Basilians - The Basilian Fathers)



Volume 17 No. 4

OF THE CHURCH

OF MAN WITH GOD

December 2007

~ THE IMPORTANCE OF EPIPHANY ~

*From Metropolitan Archbishop Paul, S.S.B.
To the flock entrusted into my care:*

Christians of the European influence occasionally contemplate Epiphany, and invariably, in that contemplation, experience confusion at the emphasis placed on Epiphany by Christians who live in the area of the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean Sea.

Epiphany is the manifestation of the Trinity. The coming of the Three Wise Men, the Baptism of Christ, and the Transfiguration, are the three such manifestations with which most Christians are familiar.

The feast of the Three Wise Men adoring the child Christ becomes greater in significance if one is familiar with the people from whom the children of Israel were taken. It then becomes of even greater significance when one contemplated the who of the Three Wise Men.

Those who lived in the Eastern Mediterranean viewed those who lived in the Southern and Western Mediterranean as little more than savages with occasional departures from that savagery being marked by King David, Solomon, and a few others. Abraham, the predecessor of David and Solomon, was of a people believed to be quite savage. The reputations of Sodom and Gomorrah were well deserved and earned, not just in fornication, homosexuality, sodomy, and bestiality. Their reputation was also formed by the custom of cannibalism practiced by the people which produced Abraham and Lot. Cannibalism continued to be practiced by the Jews after the founding of the Upper

(Continued EPIPHANY on page 7)



BECOME OUTRAGED AT THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE US BE SIN LEPERS

We must foment outrage at sin and at those who would lead us into sin.

Imagine there was a person who dropped by the house of a female acquaintance. The acquaintance, remember the acquaintance was not a friend but a mere acquaintance, the acquaintance asked the person to kill the stout woman with short blond hair sitting on the front porch of the house where the acquaintance was. The person then started up their World War II Jeep, drove out of the driveway and up the steps of the front porch towards the stout, blond hired woman, chasing her and her father to opposite sides of the porch. The person then backed the Jeep down the steps, to take better aim at the stout, blond haired woman, and as the person was backing down, the stout, blond haired woman fell off the porch,

(Continued LEPER on page 12)

WHAT DO YOU ANTICIPATE DURING ADVENT SEASON?

Did you know Advent is a health indicator?

Advent basically means the coming into being. In one sense it also is an anticipatory time, a time of anticipating that which is to come into being. This dual concept is very useful in focusing on the actual.

By way of example, one in bankruptcy anticipates solvency. The advent of solvency is a time of happiness for one who was once bankrupt.

(Continued ADVENT on page 16)

POSTAGE INCREASE WILL RESULT IN FEWER ISSUES

REUNION Entering Eighteenth Year of Publication

As REUNION enters its eighteenth year of publication, increases in postage and other publication costs will force a reduction in the number of issues published each year.

The target of four issues per year has almost always been exceeded, with ten to twelve issues per year not being uncommon. It is anticipated the target of four issues minimum will continue to be met and occasionally exceeded.

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SELF RESPECT, DEJECTION, AND SIN The "Feedback" Spiritual Pool Ecosystem and, that boredom resolution indicates some potential sources of assistance.

The motive for most of an individual's deeds is the delight obtained or experienced through the deed or in the process of the deed itself.

"Good deeds" obviously include in the delight, the anticipation of eternal happiness, as well as the good done and the

(Continued FEEDBACK on page 6)

PUBLICATION NOTICE

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The sole purpose of this publication is to comply with the teachings and instructions of Jesus Christ, second person of the Trinity God, and to further His kingdom.

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Orleans) and of St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church (Waveland, Miss.); publication swaps; those who pick up a copy and those who request a "free" subscription (if any are left); **** those who make a donation of \$30.00 (or more) to Holy Innocents Orthodox Church will be mailed each print published issue of **REUNION** for one calendar year from the date the donation is received. A donation does not create an obligation for us to publish.

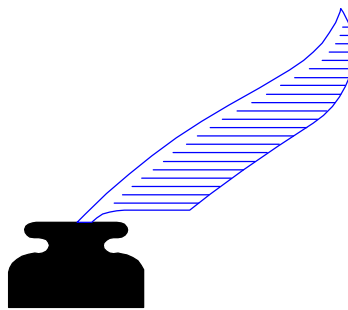
We try to publish between four and twelve issues per year, and to print publish each electronically published issue, but do not guarantee to so do due to staffing and finances.

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Changes regarding receipt of **REUNION**, including cancellation, should be noted on the form opposite and sent in with your address label.

+ Paul, S.S.B.,
Publisher .

+ The Basilians - The Basilian Fathers +

LETTERS

(The Editors reserve the right to reject any submissions, and to edit as necessary. Letters must be typed, single space, signed, and include the sender's name address, and day and evening telephone numbers - If your typed letter is accompanied by an ASCII DOS Text copy on a floppy, we will thank you with extra prayers - Ed.)

WORLD WIDE WEB:

The direct connection to the computer which functions as the message, file, and communications center for The Society of Clerks Secular of Saint Basil, is:

<http://www.reu.org>
telnet://reu.org

Issues of REUNION, in color, in Adobe PDF and HTML, are available at:

<http://www.reu.org/public/news.htm>



On Line Chat Room: at the main web site log-in <http://www.reu.org> You have to register with the system before you can use it, and it is best to send e-mail to set a "chat schedule".

**Current Active Mailing Lists
Originating From BasilNet ReuNet
HIOC BBS**

The Society of Clerks Secular of Saint Basil - The Basilian Fathers

Each ML (Mailing List) has its own rules, which are posted in the ML on a regular basis. Abbreviated commands are also in the signature of each ML message sent via e-mail. You must have permission from the appropriate ML administrator or SysOp to gate a ML.

PRAYERS

Prayer requests operates under a simple premise. When we pray for each other we fulfill a portion of our Christian duty. Prayers for the living and for the dead are allowed and welcome. Those who make prayer requests agree to include the prayer requests of all who make them here. Prayer requests MUST be moral and for moral

(Continued WEB on page 3)

If you wish to receive **REUNION** please see **** above, and fill in your name and address below and send to:

REUNION

Holy Innocents Orthodox Church
311 Hickory Avenue
Harahan, Louisiana 70123

Name _____

Address _____

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State _____ Zip _____

(Continued WEB from page 2)

purposes . . . hopefully morality will not have to be defined at length (i.e.: use common sense).

Participants and subscribers agree to honor the moral prayer requests posted, and to pray for those intentions and persons for at least one week.

BIBLE-DAY

Every day we try to post a Chapter of one of the Books of the Bible on the ML for discussion. This began with Genesis, Chapter 1, and continued to the end of Genesis, and so on to the next Book. Discussion is not limited to the Chapter posted each day. We use the Douay-Rheims translation which, while it sometimes has editorial comments biased against the Orthodox Church, is a basically a good, non political translation.

SERMONS

A place to exchange sermons by Christians. POSTERS must be, and certify they are: male; duly ordained Priests, Deacons, Ministers, or seminarians of, a Christian Church, Jurisdiction, or Religion; that the Creed of the Council of Nicea is the Creed, or expresses the basic dogma, of the Church of which each participant is a member. Rabbi may participate and post. (Us Christians may learn something). ANYONE may RECEIVE the ML.

When you post in this ML you must provide your church/religious affiliation in the post.

STUDIES

The STUDIES ML is a list which studies Orthodoxy and the Theology/Dogma of the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church. We attempt to have the text of what ever book/publication we are using posted in pertinent parts during the discussions. This is a slow moving ML, primarily because most people do not wish to or have the time to or are not inclined to read and study as is required for participation in a ML

such as this. However, for those who do, it is well worth the effort.

ONE-BODY

This is a mailing list designed to promote and further reunification of the Holy Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church with the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church and all other Jurisdictions of the Body of Christ; and to bring each and every human being into union with Christ Jesus our Lord. **Activity - very light.**

REU_PUB

This ML sends REUNION (publication) to its subscribers, in Adobe (PDF) format. In some instances this is better than the paper print issue because the pictures often are in color. The ML does support discussion, and discussion is encouraged. It is mainly used by those who desire to receive the Newsletter but do not have access to the WWW (each issue is available on-line), and those to whom we can not send a free print copy.

We have initiated a simplified method of subscribing to our InterNet mailing lists.

Simply go to:
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Enter your e-mail address in the place provided, select the mailing list to which you wish to subscribe, click the **Subscribe** button, and an e-mail will be sent to you to confirm your desire to subscribe to the mailing list.

To confirm your subscription simply follow the instructions in the confirmation message (just click the reply command on your e-mail program without changing anything in the Subject line) and you are subscribed to the mailing list.

Most of the mailing lists then send out a welcome message.

Some of the mailing lists use the mailing list name as the sender's address. Some use the sender's name, and others use Fr. Paul, or father.paul@reu.org on behalf of whoever the one who originated the message. We will bring some consistency to this sometime in the future, probably.

To un-subscribe just follow the above procedure for subscribing and click on the unsubscribe button. A confirmation message will be sent to which you should reply to confirm the un-subscription.

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THE BASILIAN FATHERS

(The Society of Clerks Secular of Saint Basil)

PRAYER INTENTIONS DURING DIVING LITURGY

It is a common and very good practice to pray for certain individuals and groups of people during Divine Liturgy.

But there are certain groups of people for whom it appears prayers are seldom offered, especially during Divine Liturgy. We should correct this, and pray for such people especially during Divine Liturgy.

Some for whom you may wish to pray during Divine Liturgy from time to time include:

Thieves - who steal with guns, who break into homes, who defraud the government and the citizenry, who feed at the public trough, who seek their own benefit at the expense or cost of others whether or not they attain the benefit sought.

Pornographers, prostitutes, private persons and celebrities who engage in sexual promiscuity whether in public or privately, entertainers and the writers who portray sexual promiscuity as acceptable behavior, whether heterosexual, homosexual, lesbian, normal or perverted.

You can also pray, that never again will there be an abortion or a child harmed anywhere, for any reason, in any manner what-so-ever; for those who have killed babies by contraceptives and by abortion, and the babies killed by contraceptives and by abortion.

You can be assured that even though those for whom you pray may not appreciate the prayers now, if they respond in a positive manner to the prayers, they will appreciate the Divine Liturgies you have prayed for them.

SAINT JAMES The writer of Gems

Saint James wrote gems of unmatched value, yet he is amongst the most often neglected writers in the New Testament and of the Church Fathers.

Consider this passage, which usually is only read, considered, and pondered as part of the Divine Liturgy celebrating the feast of a Martyr Bishop - and then only occasionally.

(James 1:12-18) **1:12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love him. 1:13. Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils: and he tempteth no man. 1:14. But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. 1:15. Then, when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. But sin, when it is completed, begetteth death. 1:16. Do not err, therefore, my dearest brethren. 1:17. Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration. 1:18. For of his own will hath he begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be some beginning of his creature.**

It is Advent. We each should possess and actually radiate an increased and more intense focus on at the very least, passing beyond the stage of being some beginning of God's creature. We should be far beyond the beginning stage, but most of us continually fall below the beginning point and must continually climb back to the starting place.

But we need not continually fall below the beginning level. We actually need not fall if we but consider our footing and place our feet very carefully on to the path. We actually can travel very quickly and very great distances if we but pay attention to what we are doing, where we are going, and how we are

getting there.

There will always be the requirement that we be careful. And we may occasionally slip. But we do not of necessity ever have to fall again. And we never have to fall below the starting point if we but pay attention to what we are doing.

But if we do, the Sacraments will return us to life if we but utilize them. God did not establish the Sacraments so we could admire them from afar and examine their workings on others. He established them for the personal use of each individual human being. Some have a one time use. Others, such as Confession - Absolution, and the Eucharist, are designed to receive continual use.

Have you ever committed someone else's sin? Of course not. You and another may share the same or similar concupiscence. Actually, you almost assuredly do, for there are only a limited number of them, and only a limited number of actual sins. Technology has increased the number of methods by which temptation is presented, but the actual temptations are the same temptations which have always existed. There are no new temptations, and no new sins: just new sin enabling technology.

Search Saint James for the proven technology; the technology established by the Father of Lights. After all, He is called the Father of Lights for a good reason. The other guy, the one who was kicked out of Heaven - he is the Father of Darkness. And he also has his name for a very good reason.

The Father of Lights desires that you know where you are going. The Father of Darkness would rather you did not know where your concupiscence is leading you.

(Continued SSB NEWS on page 5)

(Continued SSB NEWS from page 4)

ST. MARY MAGDALENE NEWS
St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church
125 Hartsie Drive - 150 Angell Lane
Waveland, Mississippi 39576

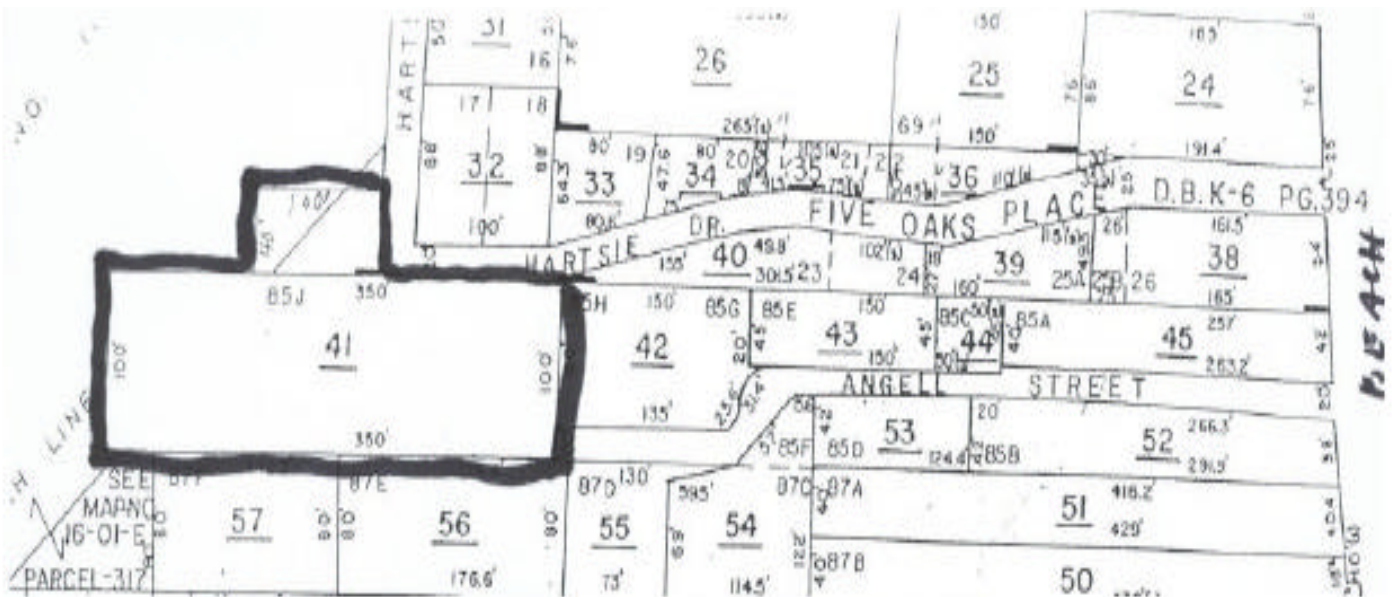
St. Mary Magdalene was destroyed by hurricane Katrina. There are no buildings or trees remaining on the property. A good natural setting is very important for maximum benefit to be derived from a spiritual retreat facility - the prime use of Saint Mary Magdalene was as a retreat house and our Mother House. That retreat house setting will require many years to re-establish at Saint Mary Magdalene.

We have therefore decided to sell the land, which is approximately one acre, composed of two adjacent lots, one being approximately 100 feet by 350 feet, the other being approximately 40 feet by 100 feet, situated approximately 550 feet from the beach of the Gulf of Mexico. (See the area outlined in bold in the above survey map. The survey map is not in true proportion due to the printing process.)

We have listed the property with Coldwell Banker Alfonso Realty, (228) 467-0244, agent Bobby Compretta, (228) 216-7197, for \$99,000.00. Inquiries should be directed to the real estate company or agent.

We would have rebuilt if the forest on the property had not been destroyed. We hope to establish another retreat house upon sale of the property.

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(Continued FEEDBACK from page 1)

good effects which result. This often is termed "positive" for the good generally is desirable and of benefit to all involved, and to society at large.

Various sins provide temporary pleasure or release, "delight", or a means of avoiding something undesirable, or a means of obtaining something desired by the sinner - often something which is also sinful. This is often termed "negative" because the process and the result is detrimental to those and that which is effected by the sin, including the sinner and if applicable, that or those which induced, enabled, or assisted in the commission of the sin.

There is a positive "feedback" which encourages the continuation of good deeds. Unfortunately, negative situations also create a "feedback" which encourage the negative.

One form of negative feedback which encourages sin is the habit of sin. But there is another, just as common, which is not just a habit but an attempt to escape from the negative or the effects of the negative.

When a person is dejected very often some sin will temporarily remove or diminish the dejection. The sin can be a simple distraction from the dejection. Or it can overpower the dejection. But it does not remove the dejection, and with the completion of the sin, the dejection returns.

The same it true when an individual experiences diminished self respect. Some sins can distract attention from the diminished self respect or lack of self respect. But the lack of self respect will return for the sin simply distracts or masks the reality.

Just as positives tend to reinforce posi-

tives, so too do negatives tend to reinforce negatives. But there are more social reinforcements of sin than there are social reinforcements of goodness. Also, the social reinforcements of sin are often presented in a convincing format as a form of good, such as to appeal to those who are dejected, or who have a diminished sense of self worth.

There is a cumulative effect in the positive or good feedback which induces an inclination to maintain a certain level of effort. This can be good for it can allow

prayer. Some follow the suggestions with certain prayers, types of prayer, and prayer systems.

Only an idiot would neglect prayer. And only an idiot or one with superlative Faith would expect prayer to rectify the problem without some additional activity on the part of the one with the problem.

One with superlative Faith does not face these types of spiritual problems. The spiritual problems they face are beyond

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a pace which can allow the goal be accomplished. But it also can induce complacency, and a falling off of good effort.

There also is a cumulative effect in the negative feedback. But this cumulative effect further diminishes self respect, and increases dejection, so-as-to require more intensive sin of an ever increasing cyclical nature if the dejection and diminished self respect are to be masked by the sin. This results in an ever increasing volume of negative, as though it were a series of toxic rivers feeding into each other and being replenished but never being emptied.

Either the toxic must be removed, or the river emptied. In either event that which is in place must be replaced with the positive. Otherwise the system will die.

Here is where most "experts" suggest

the comprehension of most people, and beyond the ability of most people to overcome. Most people therefore do not experience the spiritual problems of those with superlative Faith, for God does not allow

one to be tempted beyond one's ability to overcome the temptation.

One aspect of the resolution of this problem requires, absolutely requires, action on the part of the one with the problem.

The individual who has acquired the practice of dealing with dejection and disappointment by committing sin, and who has Faith, and has prayed for deliverance without being successfully and continually delivered from those sins, realizes something more is required.

Those who have been unduly influenced by the Protestant concept that one is saved by Faith alone, and that no act (whether it be physical or mental) of the individual can contribute to one's salvation, runs headlong into the idiot problem. Some of the "Faith alone" proponents will allow prayer - even though prayer is an act

by the individual - but the very thought of admitting one can contribute to one's own salvation, much less must contribute to one's own salvation by acts in accordance and compliance with Faith,

(Continued FEEDBACK on page 17)

THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES ALL AND ONLY, THOSE WHO FOLLOW HIM

We know the journey of life can lead to eternal life or eternal death; to eternal happiness or eternal horror. Our guide and protector during this journey is the Holy Spirit, specially sent by the Father, and sent in Christ Jesus' name.

The Holy Spirit is not like a road map or an atlas to which we can make reference; He is not like the driver of a car in which we are a passenger. He is more like a companion who walks with us on our journey. If we are aware of Him, His very presence speaks to us, reminding us by our awareness of His presence. He also prompts us and advises us, even if we are not aware of His presence, but He does not force us to follow His advice.

We can talk with the Holy Spirit just as we can talk with any companion we have on a journey, and He will talk with us. If we allow Him, He will protect us from that which would lead us to eternal damnation, for it is important to remember that this life is nothing more or less than a journey to our eternal reward or eternal punishment.

The Holy Spirit is also the guide and protector of the Church, and the Church is Christ's Kingdom on Earth. As guide and protector of the Church, the Holy Spirit insures that the Church teaches truth, but it does not mean the Holy Spirit prevents members of the Church from committing evil. However, it does mean the Holy Spirit will correct and remove that evil which finds its way into the Church.

When members of the Church, be they clergy, laity, or those in religious orders, bring evil into the Church, the Holy Spirit has that evil removed in His own way and in His own time. It is not that policies of the Church will transgress Dogma, the truth given to us by God. Rather, it is that policies and activities of members and administrators of the Church transgress and lead

some members of the Church astray. When this happens, the Holy Spirit presents the truth and the true way to those who are in error. He does this in much the same way a companion would advise you that the road you contemplate following is impassable or will not lead to the place you desire.

The Holy Spirit is sent to each of us as our life long companion at Chrismation or Confirmation, at the beginning of our spiritual life. He also is sent to us in a special manner in times of distress through Holy Anointing, and again in Holy Anointing or Extreme Unction at the closing of our life journey.

He is there at every step, every breath, every trial, and every triumph. Acquire Him. Acquire Him by following Christ's teachings fully and completely. The Holy Spirit will remind you what Christ taught. Remember, Christ taught what the Father wished to be taught. It is in following what Christ taught that we express our love for God, and receive as a gift from God, that Divine Love, Charity. As we are possessed by Charity so we acquire the Holy Spirit. As we acquire the Holy Spirit He becomes more than a companion for we become more and more *into* Him.

Ref: Acts 8:14-17; John 14:23-31

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(Continued EPIPHANY from page 1)
and Lower Kingdoms, being discontinued when a strong religious leader with military strength, would reimpose the Law of Moses and the Covenant Moses and the Israelites made with God.

(As an aside: The first actions taken by such leaders was to forbid the custom of aborting babies and offering the babies, and young children up to several years of age, on the altars of Baal, with the people then eating the offering. The next action was to attack the cities where the effeminate gathered and to kill the inhabitants.

Today the politically correct would consider the actions of the Jewish reformation religious military leaders to be politically incorrect. The politically correct of today may have some aversion to cannibalism, but not with the abortion aspect.

Christian morality forbids the killing of abortionists and of the effeminate, but it also dictates and requires abortion be prevented as murder, and that homosexuality, sodomy, and bestiality also not be allowed. - End of the aside)

It was a common practice for Eastern Mediterranean people to depict savages as individuals with human bodies and wolf or dog heads. The children of Israel are often so depicted in Eastern Mediterranean art. (It also is important to remember that Egypt was conquered and ruled by people from the Eastern Mediterranean, which is why the Pharaohs did not look like most Egyptians.) Even in more modern times Christian Saints who were originally from savage areas are often depicted as individuals with human bodies and dog heads. A common Eastern depiction of Saint Christopher is that of a man with a human body and the head of a wolf - not inconsistent when one considers Saint Christopher, like Saint Minas, probably came from people who originally inhabited the area West of Egypt.

(Continued EPIPHANY on page 15)

THE FAMILY CHURCH

Just after he was born, Saint Joseph was presented in the temple and redeemed in accordance with Mosaic Law, and so he learned from his earliest days to follow the Law of God and to love God and be loved by God and be possessed of Charity, of Divine Love, and to possess that same Charity. The Virgin Mary was virtually raised in the Temple, and Loved God and was loved by God and became possessed by Charity and possessed Charity, Divine Love.

They were trained in Faith, Religion, and dogma, by their parents, and because of that they did likewise for Jesus, even though He is both the subject and source of Faith, Religion, and dogma.

Joseph and Mary were taught to be good from their earliest moments of life, and they taught Jesus to be good from the earliest moments of His life, even though in His instance such training was not necessary, for He is the source of all good.

In a very real sense, Mary and Joseph were each raised in a church, for their families were as though the family was a small church; and so when they formed a family with Jesus, their family was as though it were a small church.

One of the few situations where the Virgin Mary, and Jesus, and even God the Father, are confirmed as really appearing to someone - what is called an approved apparition or ecstasy - is at Soufanieh, in Damascus, Syria. There the Virgin Mary began appearing to Mirna Nazzour in 1982, about six months after she had married Nicholas Nazzour, who is about twenty years her senior.

It is very important to realize this is happening to a married woman, not to a nun or a virgin or a priest. For almost a year after the Virgin Mary began appearing to Mirna, Mirna and Nicholas stopped living as husband and wife. Then the Virgin Mary told Mirna to live her life, but not to let life prevent her from continuing to pray. Jesus was even

more explicit, and told Mirna to be a wife to Nicholas.

For centuries the married state was looked upon as being less holy than life as a religious, priest, or monastic. The cenobites or celibates were deemed as the holiest, then monastics, then married priest, then married laity. This ranking is wrong, very wrong, for there is no ranking in holiness according to the married or single life, nor is there a ranking according to the status of virgin or parent. Indeed, being a good parent may well require more holiness than being celibate. But that is immaterial.

What is material, what is important, is that a married woman is the chosen messenger of God and of the Theotokos; that this married woman became a mother and remains the recipient of apparitions of Jesus and of the Virgin Mother of God; that as proof of these appearances and messages, olive oil often comes from Mirna's hands and face when she prays, that she receives the stigmata on certain occasions; that Mirna was Melkite or Byzantine Roman Catholic (she became Orthodox several years after she and Nicholas married) and her husband is Orthodox; and that Nicholas, the husband, is about twenty years older than his wife.

In their differences in age they obviously are a reflection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, though in both being the parents of their children they obviously are not such a reflection. Mirna and Nicholas Nazzour and their children form a family church, just like the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph and Jesus. The Nazzour family is a normal family, just like your family. They are normal people, just like you.

And they are an example of what we are supposed to be, a family church, a sort of little church which belongs to the bigger Church of Priests and religious and laity headed by Jesus.

Mirna and Nicholas were friends for a long time before they married, and they are best friends as well as husband and

wife. This is as it should be, and is an example of what a family should be.

God has given them to us not just as messenger of unity, for reunification of the Church, but also as an example of unity in the family, as an example that the family is to be holy, that it can be holy and being holy is normal for a family.

You should already know these things, but from time to time it is good to be reminded of them.

Ref: Gal 4:1-7; Luke 2:33-40

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**IN PURSUING CHRIST WE
MAKE THE PATH TO HIM
OPEN TO ALL**

It seems as though every generation thinks its generation is in the most evil of all times.

But truly, in our generation, any person who even thinks of trying to be good is a voice in the wilderness crying out: Make straight the way of the Lord.

It is not a good thing that our generation is so evil. But it is a good thing that there are many who try to be good.

In trying to be good, just in trying, we prepare ourselves for Christ, prepare ourselves to follow Christ., and begin to follow Christ. In trying to be good we also help prepare others for Christ, and to follow Christ. We do this by giving good example, and giving example, whether it be good example or evil example, is grossly under rated. Considering all of the evil examples which are pounded into our minds every day, through every source imaginable, when good example is given it stands out, is noticed, and is noted.

Of course we must attain some level of success in our attempt to be good. But success does come with persistence. Even though we may not see it in ourselves, or not see it at the level we expect or desire, success does come with persistence.

In many ways it is good that we do not perceive our successes in attempting to become holy, for if we perceived them, we might become inclined to rest on our successes, and thus slide back into more sinful lives. If we perceive in ourselves just enough success to encourage us to continue our attempt to become worthy of Christ and of his reward, then we will be inclined to continue our pursuit of holiness.

This will make us continue to be a beacon to others, a beacon showing that holiness is attainable and desirable.

Showing that holiness is desirable is very important.

When we are good, and act in Godliness, others not only see our pursuit of the eternal reward of eternal happiness. They also see the positive effects of our being good, of being Godlike. This prepares the way for others to decide to attempt to become good, and for their pursuit of God.

Thus, in our attempting to be good, and in our being good, we not only prepare the way for Christ to be in us, and us in Christ. We also prepare the way for Christ in others. We prepare others to accept Christ, to attempt to lead Godly lives and to lead Godly lives.

Those who do not accept Christ only have one alternate to Christ. That alternate may seem to be desirable, for it is not a life which pursues what God desires, but, rather, is a life which pursues the lifestyle of the libertine. It is a life which pursues that which gratifies as immediately as possible and to the point of excess such that only the gratification exists and the individual is lost in that gratification. And truly, the individual is lost in that gratification. But almost immediately he is found again, for the satisfaction which the libertine finds is transitory.

We seek that which is permanent. The only permanent is to be found only in Christ God.

We worship Christ because we not only believe Him to be God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity which is God, but because we also have Faith, Hope, and Charity - Divine Love - at least to some extent.

We should take the opportunity of this instant in time, and the opportunity of every interlude from the daily chaos of the world, to renew our Faith, Hope, and Charity through prayerful request to God that He renew and strengthen them in us.

And as God renews and strengthens our

Faith, Hope, and Charity, we will each become a stronger voice crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord.

Then, the wilderness will become smaller and smaller, until the whole world follows the path cleared by the Lord.

Ref: Philipp 4:4-7; John 1:19-28

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CHILDREN'S PAGE

The Orthodox - Basilian Catechism

Q. 818. Why is it a work of mercy to pray for the living and the dead?

A. It is a work of mercy to aid those who are unable to aid themselves. The living are exposed to temptations, and while in mortal sin they are deprived of the merit of their good works and need our prayers. The dead can in no way help themselves and depend on us for assistance.

Q. 819. Which are the chief corporal works of mercy?

A. The chief corporal works of mercy are seven:

1. To feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to ransom the captive, to harbor the harborless, to visit the sick, and to bury the dead.

Q. 820. How may we briefly state the corporal works of mercy?

A. We may briefly state the corporal works of mercy by saying that we are obliged to help the poor in all their forms of want.

Q. 821. How are Christians aided in the performance of works of mercy?

A. Christians are aided in the performance of works of mercy through the establishment of charitable institutions where religious communities of holy men or women perform these duties for us, provided we supply the necessary means by our almsgiving and good works.

Q. 822. Who are religious?

A. Religious are self-sacrificing men and women who, wishing to follow more closely the teachings of Our Lord, dedicate their lives to the service of God and religion. They live together in societies approved by the Church, under a rule and guidance of a superior. They keep the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, and divide their time between prayer and good works. The

houses in which they dwell are called convents or monasteries, and the societies in which they live are called religious orders, communities or congregations. There are also those religious who dwell singly or in small groups in communities in the world, or who live in seclusion, and even religious who are married - though there is no such thing as a married Abbot or Abbess. Married religious are usually members of societies which follow ancient canons and precepts, or, are members of lay organizations which are part of a monastic order.

Q. 823. Are there any religious communities of priests?

A. There are many religious communities of priests, who, besides living according to the general laws of the Church, as all priests do, follow certain rules laid down for their community. Such priests are called the regular clergy, because living by rules to distinguish them from the secular clergy who live in their parishes under no special rule. The chief work of the regular clergy is to study, provide study and teaching material, teach particularly in colleges, and give missions and retreats.

Q. 824. Why are there so many different religious communities?

A. There are many different religious communities:

1. Because all religious are not fitted for the same work, and
2. Because they desire to imitate Our Lord's life on earth as perfectly as possible; and when each community takes one of Christ's works and seeks to become perfect in it, the union of all their works continues as perfectly as we can the works He began upon earth.

LESSON TWENTIETH: On the Manner of Making a Good Confession

Q. 825. What should we do on entering the confessional?

A. On entering the confessional we should kneel, make the sign of the Cross, and say to the priest, "Bless me, father"; then add, "I confess to Almighty God and to you, father, that I have sinned."

Q. 826. Which are the first things we should tell the priest in Confession?

A. The first things we should tell the priest in Confession are the time of our last Confession, and whether we said the penance and went to Holy Communion.

Q. 827. Should we tell anything else in connection with our last confession?

A. In connection with our last confession we should tell also what restrictions -- if any -- were placed upon us with regard to our occasions of sin, and what obligations with regard to the payment of debts, restitution, injuries done to others and the like, we were commanded to fulfill.

Q. 828. After telling the time of our last Confession and Communion what should we do?

A. After telling the time of our last Confession and Communion we should confess all the mortal sins we have since committed, and all the venial sins we may wish to mention.

Q. 829. What is a general confession?

A. A general confession is the telling of the sins of our whole life or a great part of it. It is made in the same manner as an ordinary confession, except that it requires more time and longer preparation.

Q. 830. When should a General Confession be made?

A. A general confession:

1. Is necessary when we are certain that our past confessions were bad;
2. It is useful on special occasions in our lives when some change in our way of living is about to take place;
3. It is hurtful and must not be made

(Continued CATECHISM on page 11)

CHILDREN'S PAGE

(Continued CATECHISM from page 10)

when persons are overtly scrupulous.

Q. 831. What are the signs of overt scruples and the remedy against them?

A. The signs of overt scruples are chiefly:

1. To be always dissatisfied with our confessions;
2. To be self-willed in deciding what is sinful and what is not.

The chief remedy against them is to follow exactly the advice of the confessor without questioning the reason or utility of his advice.

Q. 832. What must we do when the confessor asks us questions?

A. When the confessor asks us questions we must answer them truthfully and clearly.

Q. 833. What should we do after telling our sins?

A. After telling our sins we should listen with attention to the advice which the confessor may think proper to give.

Q. 834. What duties does the priest perform in the confessional?

A. In the confessional the priest performs the duties:

1. Of a judge, by listening to our self-accusations and passing sentence upon our guilt or innocence;
2. Of a father, by the good advice and encouragement he gives us;
3. Of a teacher, by his instructions, and
4. Of a physician, by discovering the afflictions of our soul and giving us the remedies to restore it to spiritual health.

Q. 835. Why is it beneficial to go always if possible to the same confessor?

A. It is beneficial to go always, if possible, to the same confessor, because our continued confessions enable him to see more clearly the true state of our soul and to understand better our occasions of sin.

Q. 836. Should we remain away from confession because we cannot go to our usual confessor?

A. We should not remain away from confession because we cannot go to our usual confessor, for though it is well to confess to the same priest, it is not necessary to do so. One should never become so attached to a confessor that his absence or the great inconvenience of going to him would become an excuse for neglecting the Sacraments.

Q. 837. How should we end our Confession?

A. We should end our Confession by saying, "I also accuse myself of all the sins of my past life," telling, if we choose, one or several of our past sins.

Q. 838. What should we do while the priest is giving us absolution?

A. While the priest is giving us absolution we should from our heart renew the Act of Contrition.

LESSON TWENTY-FIRST: On Indulgences

Q. 839. What is an Indulgence?

A. An Indulgence is the remission in whole or in part of the temporal punishment due to sin.

Q. 840. What does the word "indulgence" mean?

A. The word indulgence means a favor or concession. An indulgence obtains by a very slight penance the remission of penalties that would otherwise be severe.

Q. 841. Is an Indulgence a pardon of sin, or a license to commit sin?

A. An Indulgence is not a pardon of sin, nor a license to commit sin, and one who is in a state of mortal sin cannot gain an Indulgence.

Q. 842. How do good works done in mortal sin profit us?

A. Good works done in mortal sin profit

us by obtaining for us the grace to repent and sometimes temporal blessings. Mortal sin deprives us of all our merit, nevertheless God will bestow gifts for every good deed as He will punish every evil deed.

Q. 843. How many kinds of Indulgences are there?

A. There are two kinds of Indulgences -- Plenary and Partial.

Q. 844. What is Plenary Indulgence?

A. A Plenary Indulgence is the full remission of the temporal punishment due to sin.

Q. 845. Is it easy to gain a Plenary Indulgence?

A. It is not easy to gain a Plenary Indulgence, as we may understand from its great privilege. To gain a Plenary Indulgence, we must hate sin, be heartily sorry for even our venial sins, and have no desire for even the slightest sin. Though we may not gain entirely each Plenary Indulgence we seek, we always gain a part of each; that is, a partial indulgence, greater or less in proportion to our good dispositions.

Q. 846. Which are the most important Plenary Indulgences granted by the Church?

A. The most important Plenary Indulgences granted by the Church are:

1. The special Indulgences which a Patriarch or a Jurisdictional Primate grants on great occasions by which he gives special faculties to confessors for the absolution of reserved sins;
2. The Indulgence granted to the dying in their last agony.

Q. 847. What is a Partial Indulgence?

A. A Partial Indulgence is the remission of part of the temporal punishment due to sin.

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(Continued **LEPER** from page 1)

headlong into a three foot deep, above ground swimming pool which was next to the porch. When she fell into the pool she hit her head on the concrete under the pool, broke her neck, and drowned. The person in the Jeep then backed the Jeep into a space at the rear of the driveway, and went into the house to continue the visit with the acquaintance, doing everything without consideration or thought.

This is an outrageous story. Many would deem it ridiculous and improbable, but comparable situations occur very often - to the extent they are not uncommon. Each of those situations is a situation of sin, and sin is outrageous.

The moving picture and television industries, along with the Internet and some of the print publication industries, constantly invite you to sin either by active participation in immoral life styles or through inducing you to desire such life style activities, and by inducing you to imagine yourself participating in such activities. People constantly accept these invitations in large numbers, usually with little or no thought.

Pornography and sins of sex lust are most often thought of as the main evils which emanate from modern technology. But promotion by the news media and the so-called social sophisticates, of suicide and abortion, as well as disparagement of marriage, degradation of human life, ridicule of individual ineptitudes and infirmities, outright lies, and blasphemy, are constantly fed to the general public - and the general public swallows this poison without thought.

As a result we have a mass of self made lepers, lepers diseased by sin. Lepers being eaten by the very sins they commit. Moral lepers doomed to die from the disease of sin they contracted through lack of thought.

People become trained to engage in sin by repeated exposure to sin situations - situations more properly termed near occasions of sin.

Throughout our lives we are trained to respond to stimuli, to react in pre-determined manners to specific and general situations. When a child is offered food on a spoon, it is trained to open its mouth. When you are introduced to someone, both of you are trained to offer and to shake hands, or to bow, or to acknowledge one another in some other manner.

A team athlete is trained to respond in different ways to different actions of the opposing team, and is trained to make that response quickly.

One in the military is trained to respond to a potential attack in a measured manner, and to an actual attack in a more rapid and more thorough manner.

The general public has also been trained. It has been trained by the forces of sin, the forces of evil, to respond to sin stimulations by sinning.

We must re-train ourselves, and assist the general public to re-train, so that we all respond to sin stimulation with five quick, rapid, and thorough responses. The first is to recognize that an invitation to sin is being made. The second is to reject that offer. The third is to be and to express outrage at being placed in a near occasion of sin. The fourth is to call upon the assistance of God and all the Heavenly Hosts and Saints to assist us. The fifth is to demand the near occasion of sin be removed - and this fifth often means we must do something to adjust our lives. All five of these things must happen immediately, as though they were all happening at once.

If we do this, and make this part of our essence, then we will find ourselves saying: Lord, I have sin-leprosy, please make me clean. And Christ will touch us with His finger in the Sacrament of Confession, and He will make us both clean and healthy.

Ref: Rom 12:16-21; Gospel Mat. 8:1-13

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WHAT ABOUT THE SOPHISTICATED?

“Put ye on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience:” (Col 3:12) What are the “bowels of . . . humility”, of modesty? Perhaps it is being the teachers of an entire nation, the repository of all knowledge of not just an entire nation but of a very strong religion, listening in awe and with respect to a twelve year old Boy explaining that knowledge partially by asking questions and partially by explanations so clear as to leave no doubt those explanations are accurate.

There was hope for the learned doctors of the Jewish faith for they listened to and pondered the wisdom of this twelve year old Boy. Likewise there is hope for all of mankind, if we will but listen to and ponder the wisdom of that same twelve year old Boy, grown to full manhood in which He reveals Himself to be God.

If we only apply what Christ taught to the material world, and ignore His divinity, the world will be a much better place in which to live. That alone will not deliver eternal salvation, but it may open the door. Why, then, is there such a strong but sneaky and underhanded drive to attack the divinity of Christ? Why do the broadcast networks attack the divinity of Christ, and even the concept of an afterlife? The recent (early 2007) Barbara Walters “special” on heaven was nothing more than attack on the concept of an afterlife. The CBS 48 Hours special on the birth of Christ was nothing more than attack on the virginity of the Blessed Ever Virgin Mary, the Gospels - particularly their relation of the birth of Christ - and thereby an attack on the divinity of Christ.

Why the attacks? Because the people who run these organizations, and the vast majority of the so called “sophisticates” believe themselves to be wiser and more powerful than God.

(Continued **WISDOM** on page 15)

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(Continued WISDOM from page 12)

Combine this with the simple decision they have made which was the same decision Satan made and espoused when he said, "I will not serve," and we realize how foolish these people are.

Perhaps they do not wish to go to Hell alone. Perhaps they fear their compatriots will repent at the last moment, and therefore they seek to entrap you so they will not be alone in Hell.

But we have this fantastic example of the wise men of the time of Christ, listening to Him with rapt attention when Christ was but twelve years of human age, though in divinity He was as He remains, ageless, before all ages.

Why would anyone wish to follow the example of the foolish, even if they do sneer at us with the seeming tolerance of the super sophisticated? Their seeming sophistication is in reality, stupidity. As the seemingly sophisticated walk casually into the fires of eternal damnation in Hell, will you also casually walk with them? Or, if you decide to walk with them, will you do so in fear? Why walk with them at all?

Pray for them. Attempt to teach them, especially by being examples of goodness. But do not walk with them, not even a little, short, distance. Call to them from afar with your good example while you walk with Christ. Being so sophisticated, they must know you are right and they are wrong. They just need a little humility, like the humility of the doctors in the temple.

Being simple minded and knowing one is simple minded when it comes to matters of God is a great advantage. It allows one to learn more and more about God, and to appreciate Him more and more. It makes humility and intellectual modesty regarding knowledge of God very easy to obtain, keep, and maintain. It fosters the peace of Christ in each of us and in all of us as one body. It does induce great sorrow for those who deem themselves to be too sophisticated to have concern for God and what God de-

sires, for the peace of Christ induces great Charity - Divine Love - for everyone, included the sophisticated.

Do not allow the sophisticated to fool you as they have fooled themselves. Think of Tony Brown of Tony Brown's Journal, who, during a recent interview (2007), agreed with an author that Saint Paul had misdirected the message of Jesus. They both made it clear that the message of Jesus was tolerance and that all disagreements of any nature can be settled by reasonable discussion. They made it clear that Saint Paul corrupted the message of Jesus, tying it to spiritual matters and making the hereafter more important than the here and now. One need but read the Gospels to determine Saint Paul was correct, and Tony Brown and his guest were wrong.

Always remember, ". . . *whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*" (Col 3:17). Perhaps those who are sophisticated find nothing attractive in God who is infinite in age, wisdom, and holiness, becoming human and at the human age of twelve years, obeying His parents as part of obeying lawful authority established by that same God. If this is the reason the sophisticated ignore and reject God, then, perhaps, just perhaps, being sophisticated is really being a court jester acting in the true nature of a fool.

Ref: Col. 3:12-17; Luke 2:42-52

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(Continued EPIPHANY from page 7)

Scholars throughout the world have only recently had great amounts of written text to study. Prior to the invention of the printing press there were but few libraries. Outside of these few libraries, books or scrolls or written texts not used in commerce were even more rare. Those who possessed such documents and had no use for them often sold them for ready money. Those who possessed written text and were able to read them usually did read them, and gained the reputation of being scholarly and wise.

Thus it was that those who were not Jews but were familiar with the unique Jewish concept that there is but one God and that one God is not something nebulous but actually possesses the quality of personhood, were usually scholars.

That such a savage people as the children of Israel actually was the source of such unique concepts made the Israelites even more interesting to the learned of the world. They and their religious beliefs were studied intensely. These scholars, living easily under the Pax Romana, understood the Messiah of the Israelites was to be concerned with spiritual matters more than material matters. This was something the Jews, who continually resented the Pax Romana, who realized their fall from independence resulted from their own sins as a people against God's laws but refused to return to more than a surface practice of their religion, had difficulty accepting - for what good was spiritual redemption if it did not include material wealth and independence.

The three Wise Men from the East therefore were intrigued by the developments which coincided with Israelite prophecy. In their minds was the great question, could something so wonderful as God being made incarnate actually occur, and occur exclusively in the savages of Israel? Why not!

(Continued EPIPHANY on page 16)

(Continued **EPIPHANY** from page 15)

When Christ was born, His birth was announced to the children of Israel by the Angels singing in the presence of the shepherds. The shepherds, who should have been shaken by such a sight, were obviously fortified by special Graces from God, and went to observe what the Angels had announced.

And when they observed Christ, they found everything to be exactly as the Angels had said it would be. But they also saw something, we do not know what it was or what it was not, but they saw something which made them believe immediately that this child Christ is the Messiah, that He is God.

Angels singing over the mountainside is not an every day occurrence (or an every night occurrence). It was something which was seen and heard by many, many people. It was the type of occurrence which would be told to every stranger who would listen. It is this type of occurrence which would become very widely known very quickly. And what ever it was the shepherds saw, or what ever they saw that was missing, would also have become common knowledge throughout the area very quickly.

Yet nothing was done about the birth of The Christ; In all of Israel nothing was done.

When the three Wise Men came to Jerusalem seeking the baby Christ, God, they were amazed that the Jews were ignoring His birth. They were amazed that neither the Jewish king nor the Roman officials could arrange for them to meet Him.

When they left the city and resumed their journey, they again saw His star and followed it to the house where He lived.

And upon their seeing the Christ child, God, they immediately saw something, or saw that there was something lacking, which informed them this Person is indeed God incarnate.

It is through the Three Wise Men that the birth of Jesus Christ, God, fully divine, fully human incarnate from the Ever Virgin Mary, was made known to the Gentiles.

In a very real sense, then, Christmas is for the Jews, the children of Israel. And Epiphany, the Feast of The Three Wise Men, is for the Gentiles, for all who are not Jews, all who are not children of Israel.

The significance and the announcement is the same for both. God has become incarnate so that He can make recompense for the sins of mankind. Mankind is incapable of making recompense to God - only God can make recompense to God. But God was not the transgressor - mankind was the transgressor. Therefore a man had to make the recompense. Therefore only God incarnate - a single person of full and complete divine nature and of full complete human nature - could make recompense. That Person is here, is the announcement.

Every scholar of Israeli prophecy knew that this God-Man was and would continue throughout His Earthly life to be sinless. Every such scholar knew He would be crucified to death as the ultimate sin offering for mankind. And every such scholar had great curiosity as to what the God-Man would do during His life. Would He teach? Would He teach in a formal setting? Would His teaching be by example alone? What were the conditions for activating this redemption? How would it work? If there were certain things which must continually be done, would there be a system of assistance for those who experienced difficulties?



+ *Paul, S.S.B.*

(Continued **ADVENT** from page 1)

The Season of Advent is the time during which we anticipate the birth of The Christ. Though He was born thousands of years ago, and when the Season of Advent is over what we celebrate is His birth, the anticipation of His birth during this season is very real. His birth was one of the most important events in the history of mankind.

The most important events in the history of humankind include: the creation of humankind; the fall of humankind in the commission of original sin; the enabling of each individual to attain eternal union with God with the incarnation of Christ, and His subsequent redemption of humanity.

The reasons these are amongst the most important events in the history of mankind should be obvious - but just in case they are not:

Without the creation of mankind none of us would be here; none of us would exist.

Mankind existed in a special relationship with God, but lost that special relationship with God due to sin. Only God could mend the breach which was created because God was the one offended and amends must always be made at the level of the one offended or at a higher level. Since mankind created the breach, mankind had to repair the breach, but was incapable of making amends at the level of the Divine. An impasse to reconciliation therefore instantaneously existed with the original sin.

The incarnation of Christ spanned the breach. His passion and death made amends for the sin offense. His resurrection gave proof of the rapprochement and of the conditions, requirements, and systems established by Christ for the application and enabling of that rapprochement for each individual human.

(Continued **ADVENT** on page 17)

(Continued **ADVENT** from page 16)

Obviously, the birth of The Christ was a very important event, and it behooves those who benefited from His birth, to celebrate that event. Since every human has benefited from the birth of The Christ, it behooves every human to celebrate His birth - even if they do not believe in Him, or do not believe He ever existed, or that He is God incarnate.

It also is proper to anticipate the celebration of His birth, and to prepare ourselves for that celebration, and for the announcements of His birth, as though they were the actual events.

Unfortunately, the true significance of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, is lost on many. There are many who anticipate large sales and profits during Advent. They anticipate those large sales and profits as being obtained from those who anticipate providing and receiving an over abundance of material goods at the end of the Season of Advent, at the Advent, at the Celebration of the Birth of The Christ, and the celebration of its announcement to the world through the Magi. But the sellers of those material goods do not anticipate even one piece of those goods will be a gift for The Christ. And very few of those purchasing the material goods anticipate giving even one of them to The Christ.

Advent is a type or an example of the proper and of the improper use of all of the gifts which have been given to us by God - from existence to death including all which mankind deems desirable and undesirable; and its application to the eternity after death.

One of the most obvious gifts is sexuality. Its proper application serves to strengthen the love of husband and wife in a lifetime marriage. Improper application results in a sensual abandon reminiscent of *Canis familiaris* on a cold morning.

The focus of an individual, and of a society, during the Season of Advent, is

highly indicative of the core focus of that individual and of that society. It is a reliable indicator of the spiritual health of the individual, and of a society.

Those who disagree with the spiritual indicator properties of the focus of an individual or a society during the Season of Advent, especially those who deem Advent to merely be the period of time before a traditional mid-winter celebration which is accompanied by gift swapping, are in very poor spiritual health, thus proving Advent to be a reliable indicator of spiritual health.

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(Continued **FEEDBACK** from page 6)
is anathema to these idiots.

The individual who has acquired the practice of dealing with dejection and disappointment by committing sin, and who has Faith, and has prayed for deliverance without being successfully and continually delivered from those sins, realizes something more is required.

The specifics of what more is required are best given by explained example which can then be extrapolated to other potential resolutions or personal systems of assistance until combinations which are effective are ascertained.

What do you do when you are bored? If "it" is a sin, forget "it". But if "it" is not a sin, consider doing "that" when tempted because of dejection or disappointment. If "it" is a "near occasion of sin", something which can easily lead to sin, delete "it" from your "to do list".

It is best if what you do is an activity and specifically an activity which you can successfully accomplish. It should also be of a nature which does not tempt you to sin, and which can be done without committing sin. The successful accomplishment instills a real success which serves to lessen the dejection or the diminished self respect.

By way of example, if knitting is such

an activity, it would be a sin to knit at work when you are supposed to be producing for your employer - unless your job is to knit.

But if you like knitting, and if you are, or you are becoming, accomplished at it, that simple activity can override the dejection, disappointment, or lack of self respect which can induce you to sin.

The same is true of gardening.

But one of the most effective activities is reading. Of course, avoid the "check out counter 'smut' novels" and the spy / murder mysteries wherein is depicted more sexual activity than in a triple "X" movie.

There are, however, numerous authors who write adventure novels and novels, wherein the good guys generally win, and the bad guys general lose.

The main benefit of such novels is that there is depicted in the book and therefore into your imagination, the successful overcoming of evil by someone who is basically good, but who exhibits imperfections just like you exhibit imperfections. Thus you are entertained. You also internalize the fictional character's triumph over evil, despite his or her imperfections. You also project the defeat of the evil person or people towards those who have demeaned you - and if it is an unusual novel where one of the "bad guys" repents or attempts to mend his or her ways, then you have assimilated that additional potential as relates to those who played a part in your diminished state.

Use the tools and assets which are readily available to bolster and supplement the effects of prayer and your positive spiritual desires. Thus you will increase the potential of responding to dejection and that which has the potential of diminishing your self respect, in a manner which induces holiness and positive spiritual growth.

It can also help keep boredom at bay.

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CATHOLIC-ORTHODOX DOCUMENT ON THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

VATICAN CITY, NOV 15, 2007 (VIS) - Made public today was the final document of the plenary assembly of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The meeting was held in the Italian city of Ravenna from October 8 to 14 under the presidency of Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and His Excellency Ioannis, metropolitan of Pergamo.

The title of the final document is: "Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church. Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority."

Commenting on the 46-paragraph-long text in an interview with Vatican Radio, Cardinal Kasper affirmed that "the document speaks of the tension between authority and conciliarity (or synodality) at the local (i.e., diocesan), regional and universal levels. The important development is that for the first time the Orthodox Churches have said yes, this universal level of the Church exists and also at the universal level there is conciliarity, synodality and authority; this means that there is also a Primate; according to the practice of the ancient Church, the first bishop is the bishop of Rome."

"However," the cardinal continued, "we did not talk of the privileges of the bishop of Rome, we merely indicated the praxis for future debate. This document is a modest first step and as such it gives rise to hope, but we must not exaggerate its importance."

"The next time," added the president of the pontifical council, "we will have to return to the role of the bishop of Rome in the universal Church during the first millennium. Then we must also talk of the second millennium, of Vatican Councils I and II, and this will not be

easy; the road is very long and difficult." The cardinal also commented on the fact that the delegation from the Russian Orthodox Church had abandoned the plenary assembly, explaining that "there was an inter-Orthodox problem over the recognition of the autonomous Church of Estonia" about which Moscow and Constantinople take different views.

"This is an inter-orthodox question," he reiterated, "and we cannot interfere; yet we are extremely sad and concerned because it is important to us that the Russian Orthodox Church should also participate in our future dialogue. Hence we cannot interfere but we wish to ask Moscow and Constantinople to do their best to find a solution, a compromise."

"If they wish," the cardinal concluded, "we can also facilitate this solution, either at the bilateral level between Moscow and Constantinople, or at the pan-Orthodox level, but there is not doubt that we want the Russian Orthodox Church to anticipate. It is a very important Church, we do not want to dialogue without the Russians and we wish to work to achieve this aim."

(God forbid the Romans should attempt to mediate. - Ed.)

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ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND CANONICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE SACRAMENTAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH. ECCLESIAL COMMUNION, CONCILIARITY AND AUTHORITY

Ravenna, 13 October 2007

Introduction

1. "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17, 21). We give thanks to the triune God who has gathered us – members of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church - so that we might respond together in obedience to this prayer of Jesus. We are conscious that our dialogue is restarting in a world that has changed profoundly in recent times. The processes of secularization and globalization, and the challenge posed by new encounters between Christians and believers of other religions, require that the disciples of Christ give witness to their faith, love and hope with a new urgency. May the Spirit of the risen Lord empower our hearts and minds to bear the fruits of unity in the relationship between our Churches, so that together we may serve the unity and peace of the whole human family. May the same Spirit lead us to the full expression of the mystery of ecclesial communion, that we gratefully acknowledge as a wonderful gift of God to the world, a mystery whose beauty radiates especially in the holiness of the saints, to which all are called.

2. Following the plan adopted at its first meeting in Rhodes in 1980, the Joint Commission began by addressing the mystery of ecclesial *koinônia* in the light of the mystery of the Holy Trinity and of the Eucharist. This enabled a deeper understanding of ecclesial com-

(Continued NATURE on page 19)

(Continued NATURE from page 18)

munion, both at the level of the local community around its bishop, and at the level of relations between bishops and between the local Churches over which each presides in communion with the One Church of God extending across the universe (Munich Document, 1982). In order to clarify the nature of communion, the Joint Commission underlined the relationship which exists between faith, the sacraments – especially the three sacraments of Christian initiation – and the unity of the Church (Bari Document, 1987). Then by studying the sacrament of Order in the sacramental structure of the Church, the Commission indicated clearly the role of apostolic succession as the guarantee of the koinônia of the whole Church and of its continuity with the Apostles in every time and place (Valamo Document, 1988). From 1990 until 2000, the main subject discussed by the Commission was that of “uniatism” (Balamand Document, 1993; Baltimore, 2000), a subject to which we shall give further consideration in the near future. Now we take up the theme raised at the end of the Valamo Document, and reflect upon ecclesial communion, conciliarity and authority.

3. On the basis of these common affirmations of our faith, we must now draw the ecclesiological and canonical consequences which flow from the sacramental nature of the Church. Since the Eucharist, in the light of the Trinitarian mystery, constitutes the criterion of ecclesial life as a whole, how do institutional structures visibly reflect the mystery of this koinônia? Since the one and holy Church is realised both in each local Church celebrating the Eucharist and at the same time in the koinônia of all the Churches, how does the life of the Churches manifest this sacramental structure?

4. Unity and multiplicity, the relationship between the one Church and the many local Churches, that constitutive relationship of the Church, also poses the question of the relationship between the authority inherent in every ecclesial

institution and the conciliarity which flows from the mystery of the Church as communion. As the terms “authority” and “conciliarity” cover a very wide area, we shall begin by defining the way we understand them¹.

1 Orthodox participants felt it important to emphasize that the use of the terms “the Church”, “the universal Church”, “the indivisible Church” and “the Body of Christ” in this document and in similar documents produced by the Joint Commission in no way undermines the self-understanding of the Orthodox Church as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, of which the Nicene Creed speaks. From the Catholic point of view, the same self-awareness applies: the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church ‘subsists in the Catholic Church’ (Lumen Gentium, 8); this does not exclude acknowledgement that elements of the true Church are present outside the Catholic communion.

1. The Foundations of Conciliarity and of Authority

1. Conciliarity

5. The term conciliarity or synodality comes from the word “council” (synodos in Greek, concilium in Latin), which primarily denotes a gathering of bishops exercising a particular responsibility. It is also possible, however, to take the term in a more comprehensive sense referring to all the members of the Church (cfr. the Russian term sobornost). Accordingly we shall speak first of all of conciliarity as signifying that each member of the Body of Christ, by virtue of baptism, has his or her place and proper responsibility in eucharistic koinônia (communio in Latin). Conciliarity reflects the Trinitarian mystery and finds therein its ultimate foundation. The three persons of the Holy Trinity are “enumerated”, as St Basil the Great says (On the Holy Spirit, 45), without the designation as “second” or “third” person implying any diminution or subordination. Similarly, there also exists an order (taxis) among local Churches, which however

does not imply inequality in their ecclesial nature.

6. The Eucharist manifests the Trinitarian koinônia actualized in the faithful as an organic unity of several members each of whom has a charism, a service or a proper ministry, necessary in their variety and diversity for the edification of all in the one ecclesial Body of Christ (cfr. 1 Cor 12, 4-30). All are called, engaged and held accountable – each in a different though no less real manner – in the common accomplishment of the actions which, through the Holy Spirit, make present in the Church the ministry of Christ, “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14, 6). In this way, the mystery of salvific koinônia with the Blessed Trinity is realized in humankind.

7. The whole community and each person in it bears the “conscience of the Church” (ekkesiastikè syneidesis), as Greek theology calls it, the sensus fidelium in Latin terminology. By virtue of Baptism and Confirmation (Chrismation) each member of the Church exercises a form of authority in the Body of Christ. In this sense, all the faithful (and not just the bishops) are responsible for the faith professed at their Baptism. It is our common teaching that the people of God, having received “the anointing which comes from the Holy One” (1 Jn 2, 20 and 27), in communion with their pastors, cannot err in matters of faith (cfr. Jn 16, 13).

8. In proclaiming the Church’s faith and in clarifying the norms of Christian conduct, the bishops have a specific task by divine institution. “As successors of the Apostles, the bishops are responsible for communion in the apostolic faith and for fidelity to the demands of a life in keeping with the Gospel” (Valamo Document, n. 40).

9. Councils are the principal way in which communion among bishops is exercised (cfr. Valamo Document, n. 52). For “attachment to the apostolic

(Continued NATURE on page 20)

(Continued **NATURE** from page 19)

communion binds all the bishops together linking the épiskopè of the local Churches to the College of the Apostles. They too form a college rooted by the Spirit in the 'once for all' of the apostolic group, the unique witness to the faith. This means not only that they should be united among themselves in faith, charity, mission, reconciliation, but that they have in common the same responsibility and the same service to the Church" (Munich Document, III, 4).

10. This conciliar dimension of the Church's life belongs to its deep-seated nature. That is to say, it is founded in the will of Christ for his people (cfr. Mt 18, 15-20), even if its canonical realizations are of necessity also determined by history and by the social, political and cultural context. Defined thus, the conciliar dimension of the Church is to be found at the three levels of ecclesial communion, the local, the regional and the universal: at the local level of the diocese entrusted to the bishop; at the regional level of a group of local Churches with their bishops who "recognize who is the first amongst themselves" (Apostolic Canon 34); and at the universal level, where those who are first (protoi) in the various regions, together with all the bishops, cooperate in that which concerns the totality of the Church. At this level also, the protoi must recognize who is the first amongst themselves.

11. The Church exists in many and different places, which manifests its catholicity. Being "catholic", it is a living organism, the Body of Christ. Each local Church, when in communion with the other local Churches, is a manifestation of the one and indivisible Church of God. To be "catholic" therefore means to be in communion with the one Church of all times and of all places. That is why the breaking of eucharistic communion means the wounding of one of the essential characteristics of the Church, its catholicity.

2. Authority

12. When we speak of authority, we are referring to exousia, as it is described in the New Testament. The authority of the Church comes from its Lord and Head, Jesus Christ. Having received his authority from God the Father, Christ after his Resurrection shared it, through the Holy Spirit, with the Apostles (cfr. Jn 20, 22). Through the Apostles it was transmitted to the bishops, their successors, and through them to the whole Church. Jesus Christ our Lord exercised this authority in various ways whereby, until its eschatological fulfilment (cfr. 1 Cor 15, 24-28), the Kingdom of God manifests itself to the world: by teaching (cfr. Mt 5, 2; Lk 5, 3); by performing miracles (cfr. Mk 1, 30-34; Mt 14, 35-36); by driving out impure spirits (cfr. Mk 1, 27; Lk 4, 35-36); in the forgiveness of sins (cfr. Mk 2, 10; Lk 5, 24); and in leading his disciples in the ways of salvation (cfr. Mt 16, 24). In conformity with the mandate received from Christ (cfr. Mt 28, 18-20), the exercise of the authority proper to the apostles and afterwards to the bishops includes the proclamation and the teaching of the Gospel, sanctification through the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, and the pastoral direction of those who believe (cfr. Lk 10, 16).

13. Authority in the Church belongs to Jesus Christ himself, the one Head of the Church (cfr. Eph 1, 22; 5, 23). By his Holy Spirit, the Church as his Body shares in his authority (cfr. Jn 20, 22-23). Authority in the Church has as its goal the gathering of the whole of humankind into Jesus Christ (cfr. Eph 1,10; Jn 11, 52). The authority linked with the grace received in ordination is not the private possession of those who receive it nor something delegated from the community; rather, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit destined for the service (diakonia) of the community and never exercised outside of it. Its exercise includes the participation of the whole community, the bishop being in the Church and the Church in the bishop (cfr. St Cyprian, Ep. 66, 8).

14. The exercise of authority accom-

plished in the Church, in the name of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, must be, in all its forms and at all levels, a service (diakonia) of love, as was that of Christ (cfr. Mk 10, 45; Jn 13, 1-16). The authority of which we are speaking, since it expresses divine authority, cannot subsist in the Church except in the love between the one who exercises it and those subject to it. It is, therefore, an authority without domination, without physical or moral coercion. Since it is a participation in the exousia of the crucified and exalted Lord, to whom has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (cfr. Mt 28, 18), it can and must call for obedience. At the same time, because of the Incarnation and the Cross, it is radically different from that of leaders of nations and of the great of this world (cfr. Lk 22, 25-27). While this authority is certainly entrusted to people who, because of weakness and sin, are often tempted to abuse it, nevertheless by its very nature the evangelical identification between authority and service constitutes a fundamental norm for the Church. For Christians, to rule is to serve. The exercise and spiritual efficacy of ecclesial authority are thereby assured through free consent and voluntary cooperation. At a personal level, this translates into obedience to the authority of the Church in order to follow Christ who was lovingly obedient to the Father even unto death and death on a Cross (cfr. Phil 2, 8).

15. Authority within the Church is founded upon the Word of God, present and alive in the community of the disciples. Scripture is the revealed Word of God, as the Church, through the Holy Spirit present and active within it, has discerned it in the living Tradition received from the Apostles. At the heart of this Tradition is the Eucharist (cfr. 1 Cor 10, 16-17; 11, 23-26). The authority of Scripture derives from the fact that it is the Word of God which, read in the Church and by the Church, transmits the Gospel of salvation. Through Scripture, Christ addresses the assembled community and the heart of each

(Continued **NATURE** on page 21)

(Continued NATURE from page 20)

believer. The Church, through the Holy Spirit present within it, authentically interprets Scripture, responding to the needs of times and places. The constant custom of the Councils to enthrone the Gospels in the midst of the assembly both attests the presence of Christ in his Word, which is the necessary point of reference for all their discussions and decisions, and at the same time affirms the authority of the Church to interpret this Word of God.

16. In his divine Economy, God wills that his Church should have a structure oriented towards salvation. To this essential structure belong the faith professed and the sacraments celebrated in the apostolic succession. Authority in the ecclesial communion is linked to this essential structure: its exercise is regulated by the canons and statutes of the Church. Some of these regulations may be differently applied according to the needs of ecclesial communion in different times and places, provided that the essential structure of the Church is always respected. Thus, just as communion in the sacraments presupposes communion in the same faith (cfr. Bari Document, nn.29-33), so too, in order for there to be full ecclesial communion, there must be, between our Churches, reciprocal recognition of canonical legislations in their legitimate diversities.

II. The threefold actualization of Conciliarity and Authority

17. Having pointed out the foundation of conciliarity and of authority in the Church, and having noted the complexity of the content of these terms, we must now reply to the following questions: How do institutional elements of the Church visibly express and serve the mystery of *koinônia*? How do the canonical structures of the Churches express their sacramental life? To this end we distinguished between three levels of ecclesial institutions: that of the local Church around its bishop; that of a region taking in several neighbouring local Churches; and that of the whole inhabited earth (*oikoumene*) which em-

braces all the local Churches.

1. The Local Level

18. The Church of God exists where there is a community gathered together in the Eucharist, presided over, directly or through his presbyters, by a bishop legitimately ordained into the apostolic succession, teaching the faith received from the Apostles, in communion with the other bishops and their Churches. The fruit of this Eucharist and this ministry is to gather into an authentic communion of faith, prayer, mission, fraternal love and mutual aid, all those who have received the Spirit of Christ in Baptism. This communion is the frame in which all ecclesial authority is exercised. Communion is the criterion for its exercise.

19. Each local Church has as its mission to be, by the grace of God, a place where God is served and honoured, where the Gospel is announced, where the sacraments are celebrated, where the faithful strive to alleviate the world's misery, and where each believer can find salvation. It is the light of the world (cfr. Mt 5, 14-16), the leaven (cfr. Mt 13, 33), the priestly community of God (cfr. 1 Pet 2, 5 and 9). The canonical norms which govern it aim at ensuring this mission.

20. By virtue of that very Baptism which made him or her a member of Christ, each baptized person is called, according to the gifts of the one Holy Spirit, to serve within the community (cfr. 1 Cor 12, 4-27). Thus through communion, whereby all the members are at the service of each other, the local Church appears already "synodal" or "conciliar" in its structure. This "synodality" does not show itself only in the relationships of solidarity, mutual assistance and complementarity which the various ordained ministries have among themselves. Certainly, the presbyterium is the council of the bishop (cfr. St Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Trallians*, 3), and the deacon is his "right arm" (*Didascalia Apostolorum*, 2, 28, 6), so that, according to the recommen-

dation of St Ignatius of Antioch, everything be done in concert (cfr. *To the Ephesians* 6). Synodality, however, also involves all the members of the community in obedience to the bishop, who is the protos and head (*kephale*) of the local Church, required by ecclesial communion. In keeping with Eastern and Western traditions, the active participation of the laity, both men and women, of monastics and consecrated persons, is effected in the diocese and the parish through many forms of service and mission.

21. The charisms of the members of the community have their origin in the one Holy Spirit, and are directed to the good of all. This fact sheds light on both the demands and the limits of the authority of each one in the Church. There should be neither passivity nor substitution of functions, neither negligence nor domination of anyone by another. All charisms and ministries in the Church converge in unity under the ministry of the bishop, who serves the communion of the local Church. All are called to be renewed by the Holy Spirit in the sacraments and to respond in constant repentance (*metanoia*), so that their communion in truth and charity is ensured.

2. The Regional Level

22. Since the Church reveals itself to be catholic in the synaxis of the local Church, this catholicity must truly manifest itself in communion with the other Churches which confess the same apostolic faith and share the same basic ecclesial structure, beginning with those close at hand in virtue of their common responsibility for mission in that region which is theirs (cfr. Munich Document, III, 3, and Valamo Document, nn.52 and 53). Communion among Churches is expressed in the ordination of bishops. This ordination is conferred according to canonical order by three or more bishops, or at least two (cfr. Nicaea I, Canon 4), who act in the name of the episcopal body and of the people of God, having themselves received their ministry from the Holy Spirit by

(Continued NATURE on page 22)

(Continued **NATURE** from page 21)

the imposition of hands in the apostolic succession. When this is accomplished in conformity with the canons, communion among Churches in the true faith, sacraments and ecclesial life is ensured, as well as living communion with previous generations.

23. Such effective communion among several local Churches, each being the Catholic Church in a particular place, has been expressed by certain practices: the participation of the bishops of neighbouring sees at the ordination of a bishop to the local Church; the invitation to a bishop from another Church to concelebrate at the synaxis of the local Church; the welcome extended to the faithful from these other Churches to partake of the eucharistic table; the exchange of letters on the occasion of an ordination; and the provision of material assistance.

24. A canon accepted in the East as in the West, expresses the relationship between the local Churches of a region: "The bishops of each province (ethnos) must recognize the one who is first (protos) amongst them, and consider him to be their head (kephale), and not do anything important without his consent (gnome); each bishop may only do what concerns his own diocese (paroikia) and its dependent territories. But the first (protos) cannot do anything without the consent of all. For in this way concord (homonoia) will prevail, and God will be praised through the Lord in the Holy Spirit" (Apostolic Canon 34).

25. This norm, which re-emerges in several forms in canonical tradition, applies to all the relations between the bishops of a region, whether those of a province, a metropolitanate, or a patriarchate. Its practical application may be found in the synods or the councils of a province, region or patriarchate. The fact that the composition of a regional synod is always essentially episcopal, even when it includes other members of the Church, reveals the nature of synodal authority. Only bishops have a de-

liberative voice. The authority of a synod is based on the nature of the episcopal ministry itself, and manifests the collegial nature of the episcopate at the service of the communion of Churches.

26. A synod (or council) in itself implies the participation of all the bishops of a region. It is governed by the principle of consensus and concord (homonoia), which is signified by eucharistic concelebration, as is implied by the final doxology of the above-mentioned Apostolic Canon 34. The fact remains, however, that each bishop in his pastoral care is judge, and is responsible before God for the affairs of his own diocese (cfr. Cyprian, Ep. 55, 21); thus he is the guardian of the catholicity of his local Church, and must be always careful to promote catholic communion with other Churches.

27. It follows that a regional synod or council does not have any authority over other ecclesiastical regions. Nevertheless, the exchange of information and consultations between the representatives of several synods are a manifestation of catholicity, as well as of that fraternal mutual assistance and charity which ought to be the rule between all the local Churches, for the greater common benefit. Each bishop is responsible for the whole Church together with all his colleagues in one and the same apostolic mission.

28. In this manner several ecclesiastical provinces have come to strengthen their links of common responsibility. This was one of the factors giving rise to the patriarchates in the history of our Churches. Patriarchal synods are governed by the same ecclesiological principles and the same canonical norms as provincial synods.

29. In subsequent centuries, both in the East and in the West, certain new configurations of communion between local Churches have developed. New patriarchates and autocephalous Churches have been founded in the Christian East, and in the Latin Church there has

recently emerged a particular pattern of grouping of bishops, the Episcopal Conferences. These are not, from an ecclesiological standpoint, merely administrative subdivisions: they express the spirit of communion in the Church, while at the same time respecting the diversity of human cultures.

30. In fact, regional synodality, whatever its contours and canonical regulation, demonstrates that the Church of God is not a communion of persons or local Churches cut off from their human roots. Because it is the community of salvation and because this salvation is "the restoration of creation" (cfr. St Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., 1, 36, 1), it embraces the human person in everything which binds him or her to human reality as created by God. The Church is not just a collection of individuals; it is made up of communities with different cultures, histories and social structures.

31. In the grouping of local Churches at the regional level, catholicity appears in its true light. It is the expression of the presence of salvation not in an undifferentiated universe but in humankind as God created it and comes to save it. In the mystery of salvation, human nature is at the same time both assumed in its fullness and cured of what sin has infused into it by way of self-sufficiency, pride, distrust of others, aggressiveness, jealousy, envy, falsehood and hatred. Ecclesial koinônia is the gift by which all humankind is joined together, in the Spirit of the risen Lord. This unity, created by the Spirit, far from lapsing into uniformity, calls for and thus preserves – and, in a certain way, enhances – diversity and particularity.

3. The Universal Level

32. Each local Church is in communion not only with neighbouring Churches, but with the totality of the local Churches, with those now present in the world, those which have been since the beginning, and those which will be in the future, and with the Church already in glory. According to the will of Christ,

(Continued **NATURE** on page 23)

(Continued NATURE from page 22)

the Church is one and indivisible, the same always and in every place. Both sides confess, in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, that the Church is one and catholic. Its catholicity embraces not only the diversity of human communities but also their fundamental unity.

33. It is clear, therefore, that one and the same faith is to be confessed and lived out in all the local Churches, the same unique Eucharist is to be celebrated everywhere, and one and the same apostolic ministry is to be at work in all the communities. A local Church cannot modify the Creed, formulated by the ecumenical Councils, although the Church ought always "to give suitable answers to new problems, answers based on the Scriptures and in accord and essential continuity with the previous expressions of dogmas" (Bari Document, n.29). Equally, a local Church cannot change a fundamental point regarding the form of ministry by a unilateral decision, and no local Church can celebrate the Eucharist in wilful separation from other local Churches without seriously affecting ecclesial communion. In all of these things one touches on the bond of communion itself – thus, on the very being of the Church.

34. It is because of this communion that all the Churches, through canons, regulate everything relating to the Eucharist and the sacraments, the ministry and ordination, and the handing on (paradosis) and teaching (didaskalia) of the faith. It is clear why in this domain canonical rules and disciplinary norms are needed.

35. In the course of history, when serious problems arose affecting the universal communion and concord between Churches – in regard either to the authentic interpretation of the faith, or to ministries and their relationship to the whole Church, or to the common discipline which fidelity to the Gospel requires - recourse was made to Ecumenical Councils. These Councils were ecumenical not just because they assembled

together bishops from all regions and particularly those of the five major sees, Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, according to the ancient order (taxis). It was also because their solemn doctrinal decisions and their common faith formulations, especially on crucial points, are binding for all the Churches and all the faithful, for all times and all places. This is why the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils remain normative.

36. The history of the Ecumenical Councils shows what are to be considered their special characteristics. This matter needs to be studied further in our future dialogue, taking account of the evolution of ecclesial structures during recent centuries in the East and the West.

37. The ecumenicity of the decisions of a Council is recognized through a process of reception of either long or short duration, according to which the people of God as a whole – by means of reflection, discernment, discussion and prayer - acknowledge in these decisions the one apostolic faith of the local Churches, which has always been the same and of which the bishops are the teachers (didaskaloi) and the guardians. This process of reception is differently interpreted in East and West according to their respective canonical traditions.

38. Conciliarity or synodality involves, therefore, much more than the assembled bishops. It involves also their Churches. The former are bearers of and give voice to the faith of the latter. The bishops' decisions have to be received in the life of the Churches, especially in their liturgical life. Each Ecumenical Council received as such, in the full and proper sense, is, accordingly, a manifestation of and service to the communion of the whole Church.

39. Unlike diocesan and regional synods, an ecumenical council is not an "institution" whose frequency can be regulated by canons; it is rather an "event", a kairos inspired by the Holy

Spirit who guides the Church so as to engender within it the institutions which it needs and which respond to its nature. This harmony between the Church and the councils is so profound that, even after the break between East and West which rendered impossible the holding of ecumenical councils in the strict sense of the term, both Churches continued to hold councils whenever serious crises arose. These councils gathered together the bishops of local Churches in communion with the See of Rome or, although understood in a different way, with the See of Constantinople, respectively. In the Roman Catholic Church, some of these councils held in the West were regarded as ecumenical. This situation, which obliged both sides of Christendom to convoke councils proper to each of them, favoured dissensions which contributed to mutual estrangement. The means which will allow the re-establishment of ecumenical consensus must be sought out.

40. During the first millennium, the universal communion of the Churches in the ordinary course of events was maintained through fraternal relations between the bishops. These relations, among the bishops themselves, between the bishops and their respective protoi, and also among the protoi themselves in the canonical order (taxis) witnessed by the ancient Church, nourished and consolidated ecclesial communion. History records the consultations, letters and appeals to major sees, especially to that of Rome, which vividly express the solidarity that koinônia creates. Canonical provisions such as the inclusion of the names of the bishops of the principal sees in the diptychs and the communication of the profession of faith to the other patriarchs on the occasion of elections, are concrete expressions of koinônia.

41. Both sides agree that this canonical taxis was recognised by all in the era of the undivided Church. Further, they agree that Rome, as the Church that "presides in love" according to the

(Continued NATURE on page 24)

(Continued **NATURE** from page 23)

phrase of St Ignatius of Antioch (To the Romans, Prologue), occupied the first place in the taxis, and that the bishop of Rome was therefore the protos among the patriarchs. They disagree, however, on the interpretation of the historical evidence from this era regarding the prerogatives of the bishop of Rome as protos, a matter that was already understood in different ways in the first millennium.

42. Conciliarity at the universal level, exercised in the ecumenical councils, implies an active role of the bishop of Rome, as protos of the bishops of the major sees, in the consensus of the assembled bishops. Although the bishop of Rome did not convene the ecumenical councils of the early centuries and never personally presided over them, he nevertheless was closely involved in the process of decision-making by the councils.

43. Primacy and conciliarity are mutually interdependent. That is why primacy at the different levels of the life of the Church, local, regional and universal, must always be considered in the context of conciliarity, and conciliarity likewise in the context of primacy.

Concerning primacy at the different levels, we wish to affirm the following points:

1. Primacy at all levels is a practice firmly grounded in the canonical tradition of the Church.

2. While the fact of primacy at the universal level is accepted by both East and West, there are differences of understanding with regard to the manner in which it is to be exercised, and also with regard to its scriptural and theological foundations.

44. In the history of the East and of the West, at least until the ninth century, a series of prerogatives was recognised, always in the context of conciliarity, according to the conditions of the times, for the protos or kephale at each of the

established ecclesiastical levels: locally, for the bishop as protos of his diocese with regard to his presbyters and people; regionally, for the protos of each metropolis with regard to the bishops of his province, and for the protos of each of the five patriarchates, with regard to the metropolitans of each circumscription; and universally, for the bishop of Rome as protos among the patriarchs. This distinction of levels does not diminish the sacramental equality of every bishop or the catholicity of each local Church.

45. It remains for the question of the role of the bishop of Rome in the communion of all the Churches to be studied in greater depth. What is the specific function of the bishop of the "first see" in an ecclesiology of *koinônia* and in view of what we have said on conciliarity and authority in the present text? How should the teaching of the first and second Vatican councils on the universal primacy be understood and lived in the light of the ecclesial practice of the first millennium? These are crucial questions for our dialogue and for our hopes of restoring full communion between us.

46. We, the members of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, are convinced that the above statement on ecclesial communion, conciliarity and authority represents positive and significant progress in our dialogue, and that it provides a firm basis for future discussion of the question of primacy at the universal level in the Church. We are conscious that many difficult questions remain to be clarified, but we hope that, sustained by the prayer of Jesus "That they may all be one ... so that the world may believe" (Jn 17, 21), and in obedience to the Holy Spirit, we can build upon the agreement already reached. Reaffirming and confessing "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph 4, 5), we give glory to God the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who has gathered us together.

N.B.: This is the first document adopted by the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in the absence of the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. Representatives of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria were also absent from the Ravenna meeting, while representatives of the various Orthodox Churches in America and Japan were never invited to take part in the work of the Commission. The document includes statements (in particular, in paragraph 39) that were criticized by the Moscow Patriarchate's delegation in 2006 in Belgrade.

Also, it will be interesting to observe Rome's justification for its conduct in light of paragraphs number 14 and 33.

(Source: Orthodox Europe: Russian Orthodox Church Representation to the European Institutions)

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IMITATION OF CHRIST

By Thomas a Kempis

BOOK THREE

The Fifty-Fourth Chapter

The Different Motions of Nature and Grace

The Voice of Christ

My child, pay careful attention to the movements of nature and of grace, for they move in very contrary and subtle ways, and can scarcely be distinguished by anyone except a man who is spiritual and inwardly enlightened. All men, indeed, desire what is good, and strive for what is good in their words and deeds. For this reason the appearance of good deceives many.

Nature is crafty and attracts many, ensnaring and deceiving them while ever seeking itself. But grace walks in simplicity, turns away from all appearance of evil, offers no deceits, and does all purely for God in whom she rests as her last end.

Nature is not willing to die, or to be kept down, or to be overcome. Nor will it subdue itself or be made subject. Grace, on the contrary, strives for mortification of self. She resists sensuality, seeks to be in subjection, longs to be conquered, has no wish to use her own liberty, loves to be held under discipline, and does not desire to rule over anyone, but wishes rather to live, to stand, and to be always under God for Whose sake she is willing to bow humbly to every human creature.

Nature works for its own interest and looks to the profit it can reap from another. Grace does not consider what is useful and advantageous to herself, but rather what is profitable to many. Nature likes to receive honor and reverence, but grace faithfully attributes all honor and glory to God. Nature fears shame and contempt, but grace is happy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.

Nature loves ease and physical rest. Grace, however, cannot bear to be idle and embraces labor willingly. Nature seeks to possess what is rare and beautiful, abhorring things that are cheap and coarse. Grace, on the contrary, delights in simple, humble things, not despising those that are rough, nor refusing to be clothed in old garments.

Nature has regard for temporal wealth and rejoices in earthly gains. It is sad over a loss and irritated by a slight, injurious word. But grace looks to eternal things and does not cling to those which are temporal, being neither disturbed at loss nor angered by hard words, because she has placed her treasure and joy in heaven where nothing is lost.

Nature is covetous, and receives more willingly than it gives. It loves to have its own private possessions. Grace, however, is kind and openhearted. Grace shuns private interest, is contented with little, and judges it more blessed to give than to receive.

Nature is inclined toward creatures, toward its own flesh, toward vanities, and toward running about. But grace draws near to God and to virtue, renounces creatures, hates the desires of the flesh, restrains her wanderings and blushes at being seen in public.

Nature likes to have some external comfort in which it can take sensual delight, but grace seeks consolation only in God, to find her delight in the highest Good, above all visible things.

Nature does everything for its own gain and interest. It can do nothing without pay and hopes for its good deeds to receive their equal or better, or else praise and favor. It is very desirous of having its deeds and gifts highly regarded. Grace, however, seeks nothing temporal, nor does she ask any recompense but God alone. Of temporal necessities she asks no more than will serve to obtain eternity.

Nature rejoices in many friends and kinsfolk, glories in noble position and

birth, fawns on the powerful, flatters the rich, and applauds those who are like itself. But grace loves even her enemies and is not puffed up at having many friends. She does not think highly of either position or birth unless there is also virtue there. She favors the poor in preference to the rich. She sympathizes with the innocent rather than with the powerful. She rejoices with the true man rather than with the deceitful, and is always exhorting the good to strive for better gifts, to become like the Son of God by practicing the virtues.

Nature is quick to complain of need and trouble; grace is stanch in suffering want. Nature turns all things back to self. It fights and argues for self. Grace brings all things back to God in Whom they have their source. To herself she ascribes no good, nor is she arrogant or presumptuous. She is not contentious. She does not prefer her own opinion to the opinion of others, but in every matter of sense and thought submits herself to eternal wisdom and the divine judgment.

Nature has a relish for knowing secrets and hearing news. It wishes to appear abroad and to have many sense experiences. It wishes to be known and to do things for which it will be praised and admired. But grace does not care to hear news or curious matters, because all this arises from the old corruption of man, since there is nothing new, nothing lasting on earth. Grace teaches, therefore, restraint of the senses, avoidance of vain self-satisfaction and show, the humble hiding of deeds worthy of praise and admiration, and the seeking in every thing and in every knowledge the fruit of usefulness, the praise and honor of God. She will not have herself or hers exalted, but desires that God Who bestows all simply out of love should be blessed in His gifts.

This grace is a supernatural light, a certain special gift of God, the proper mark of the elect and the pledge of everlasting salvation. It raises man up from earthly things to love the things of

(Continued KEMPIS on page 26)

(Continued **KEMPIS** from page 25)

heaven. It makes a spiritual man of a carnal one. The more, then, nature is held in check and conquered, the more grace is given. Every day the interior man is reformed by new visitations according to the image of God.

The Fifty-Fifth Chapter

The Corruption of Nature and the Efficacy of Divine Grace

The Disciple

O Lord, my God, Who created me to Your own image and likeness, grant me this grace which You have shown to be so great and necessary for salvation, that I may overcome my very evil nature that is drawing me to sin and perdition. For I feel in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind and leading me captive to serve sensuality in many things. I cannot resist the passions thereof unless Your most holy grace warmly infused into my heart assist me.

There is need of Your grace, and of great grace, in order to overcome a nature prone to evil from youth. For through the first man, Adam, nature is fallen and weakened by sin, and the punishment of that stain has fallen upon all mankind. Thus nature itself, which You created good and right, is considered a symbol of vice and the weakness of corrupted nature, because when left to itself it tends toward evil and to baser things. The little strength remaining in it is like a spark hidden in ashes. That strength is natural reason which, surrounded by thick darkness, still has the power of judging good and evil, of seeing the difference between true and false, though it is not able to fulfill all that it approves and does not enjoy the full light of truth or soundness of affection.

Hence it is, my God, that according to the inward man I delight in Your law, knowing that Your command is good, just, and holy, and that it proves the necessity of shunning all evil and sin. But

in the flesh I keep the law of sin, obeying sensuality rather than reason. Hence, also, it is that the will to good is present in me, but how to accomplish it I know not. Hence, too, I often propose many good things, but because the grace to help my weakness is lacking, I recoil and give up at the slightest resistance. Thus it is that I know the way of perfection and see clearly enough how I ought to act, but because I am pressed down by the weight of my own corruption I do not rise to more perfect things.

How extremely necessary to me, O Lord, Your grace is to begin any good deed, to carry it on and bring it to completion! For without grace I can do nothing, but with its strength I can do all things in You. O Grace truly heavenly, without which our merits are nothing and no gifts of nature are to be esteemed!

Before You, O Lord, no arts or riches, no beauty or strength, no wit or intelligence avail without grace. For the gifts of nature are common to good and bad alike, but the peculiar gift of Your elect is grace or love, and those who are signed with it are held worthy of everlasting life. So excellent is this grace that without it no gift of prophecy or of miracles, no meditation be it ever so exalted, can be considered anything. Not even faith or hope or other virtues are acceptable to You without charity and grace.

O most blessed grace, which makes the poor in spirit rich in virtues, which renders him who is rich in many good things humble of heart, come, descend upon me, fill me quickly with your consolation lest my soul faint with weariness and dryness of mind.

Let me find grace in Your sight, I beg, Lord, for Your grace is enough for me, even though I obtain none of the things which nature desires. If I am tempted and afflicted with many tribulations, I will fear no evils while Your grace is with me. This is my strength. This will give me counsel and help. This is more powerful than all my enemies and wiser

than all the wise. This is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the consoler in anguish, the banisher of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nourisher of devotion, the producer of tears. What am I without grace, but dead wood, a useless branch, fit only to be cast away?

Let Your grace, therefore, go before me and follow me, O Lord, and make me always intent upon good works, through Jesus Christ, Your Son.

The Fifty-Sixth Chapter

We Ought to Deny Ourselves and Imitate Christ Through Bearing the Cross

The Voice of Christ

My child, the more you depart from yourself, the more you will be able to enter into Me. As the giving up of exterior things brings interior peace, so the forsaking of self unites you to God. I will have you learn perfect surrender to My will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow Me. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Without the Way, there is no going. Without the Truth, there is no knowing. Without the Life, there is no living. I am the Way which you must follow, the Truth which you must believe, the Life for which you must hope. I am the inviolable Way, the infallible Truth, the unending Life. I am the Way that is straight, the supreme Truth, the Life that is true, the blessed, the uncreated Life. If you abide in My Way you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free, and you shall attain life everlasting.

If you wish to enter into life, keep My commandments. If you will know the truth, believe in Me. If you will be perfect, sell all. If you will be My disciple, deny yourself. If you will possess the blessed life, despise this present life. If you will be exalted in heaven, humble yourself on earth. If you wish to reign

(Continued **KEMPIS** on page 27)

(Continued **KEMPIS** from page 26)

with Me, carry the Cross with Me. For only the servants of the Cross find the life of blessedness and of true light.

The Disciple

Lord Jesus, because Your way is narrow and despised by the world, grant that I may despise the world and imitate You. For the servant is not greater than his Lord, nor the disciple above the Master. Let Your servant be trained in Your life, for there is my salvation and true holiness. Whatever else I read or hear does not fully refresh or delight me.

The Voice of Christ

My child, now that you know these things and have read them all, happy will you be if you do them. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me. And I will love him and will show Myself to him, and will bring it about that he will sit down with Me in My Father's Kingdom.

The Disciple

Lord Jesus, as You have said, so be it, and what You have promised, let it be my lot to win. I have received the cross, from Your hand I have received it. I will carry it, carry it even unto death as You have laid it upon me. Truly, the life of a good religious man is a cross, but it leads to paradise. We have begun -- we may not go back, nor may we leave off.

Take courage, brethren, let us go forward together and Jesus will be with us. For Jesus' sake we have taken this cross. For Jesus' sake let us persevere with it. He will be our help as He is also our leader and guide. Behold, our King goes before us and will fight for us. Let us follow like men. Let no man fear any terrors. Let us be prepared to meet death valiantly in battle. Let us not suffer our glory to be blemished by fleeing from the Cross.

The Fifty-Seventh Chapter

A Man Should Not Be Too Downcast
When He Falls Into Defects

The Voice of Christ

My child, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to Me than much consolation and devotion when things are going well.

Why are you saddened by some little thing said against you? Even if it had been more you ought not to have been affected. But now let it pass. It is not the first, nor is it anything new, and if you live long it will not be the last.

You are manly enough so long as you meet no opposition. You give good advice to others, and you know how to strengthen them with words, but when unexpected tribulation comes to your door, you fail both in counsel and in strength. Consider your great weakness, then, which you experience so often in small matters. Yet when these and like trials happen, they happen for your good.

Put it out of your heart as best you know how, and if it has touched you, still do not let it cast you down or confuse you for long. Bear it patiently at least, if you cannot bear it cheerfully. Even though you bear it unwillingly, and are indignant at it, restrain yourself and let no ill-ordered words pass your lips at which the weak might be scandalized. The storm that is now aroused will soon be quieted and your inward grief will be sweetened by returning grace. "I yet live," says the Lord, "ready to help you and to console you more and more, if you trust in Me and call devoutly upon Me."

Remain tranquil and prepare to bear still greater trials. All is not lost even though you be troubled oftener or tempted more grievously. You are a man, not God. You are flesh, not an angel. How can you possibly expect to remain always in the same state of virtue when the angels in heaven and the first man in paradise failed to do so? I am He Who rescues the afflicted and brings to

My divinity those who know their own weakness.

The Disciple

Blessed be Your words, O Lord, sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honeycomb. What would I do in such great trials and anxieties, if You did not strengthen me with Your holy words? If I may but attain to the haven of salvation, what does it matter what or how much I suffer? Grant me a good end. Grant me a happy passage out of this world. Remember me, my God, and lead me by the right way into Your kingdom.

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THE CONFESSIONS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

CHAPTER XIV (cont'd)

25. But now I earnestly bent my mind to require if there was possible any way to prove the Manicheans guilty of falsehood. If I could have conceived of a spiritual substance, all their strongholds would have collapsed and been cast out of my mind. But I could not. Still, concerning the body of this world, nature as a whole -- now that I was able to consider and compare such things more and more -- I now decided that the majority of the philosophers held the more probable views. So, in what I thought was the method of the Academics -- doubting everything and fluctuating between all the options -- I came to the conclusion that the Manicheans were to be abandoned. For I judged, even in that period of doubt, that I could not remain in a sect to which I preferred some of the philosophers. But I refused to commit the cure of my fainting soul to the philosophers, because they were without the saving name of Christ. I resolved, therefore, to become a catechumen in the Catholic Church -- which my parents had so much urged upon me -- until something certain shone forth by which I might guide my course.

BOOK SIX

Turmoil in the twenties. Monica follows Augustine to Milan and finds him a catechumen in the Catholic Church. Both admire Ambrose but Augustine gets no help from him on his personal problems. Ambition spurs and Alypius and Nebridius join him in a confused quest for the happy life. Augustine becomes engaged, dismisses his first mistress, takes another, and continues his fruitless search for truth.

CHAPTER I

1. O Hope from my youth,[149] where wast thou to me and where hadst thou gone away?[150] For hadst thou not created me and differentiated me

from the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, making me wiser than they? And yet I was wandering about in a dark and slippery way, seeking thee outside myself and thus not finding the God of my heart. I had gone down into the depths of the sea and had lost faith, and had despaired of ever finding the truth.

By this time my mother had come to me, having mustered the courage of piety, following over sea and land, secure in thee through all the perils of the journey. For in the dangers of the voyage she comforted the sailors -- to whom the inexperienced voyagers, when alarmed, were accustomed to go for comfort -- and assured them of a safe arrival because she had been so assured by thee in a vision.

She found me in deadly peril through my despair of ever finding the truth. But when I told her that I was now no longer a Manichean, though not yet a Catholic Christian, she did not leap for joy as if this were unexpected; for she had already been reassured about that part of my misery for which she had mourned me as one dead, but also as one who would be raised to thee. She had carried me out on the bier of her thoughts, that thou mightest say to the widow's son, "Young man, I say unto you, arise!"[151] and then he would revive and begin to speak, and thou wouldst deliver him to his mother. Therefore, her heart was not agitated with any violent exultation when she heard that so great a part of what she daily entreated thee to do had actually already been done -- that, though I had not yet grasped the truth, I was rescued from falsehood. Instead, she was fully confident that thou who hadst promised the whole would give her the rest, and thus most calmly, and with a fully confident heart, she replied to me that she believed, in Christ, that before she died she would see me a faithful Catholic. And she said no more than this to me. But to thee, O Fountain of mercy, she poured out still more frequent prayers and tears that thou wouldst hasten thy aid and enlighten my darkness, and she

hurried all the more zealously to the church and hung upon the words of Ambrose, praying for the fountain of water that springs up into everlasting life.[152] For she loved that man as an angel of God, since she knew that it was by him that I had been brought thus far to that wavering state of agitation I was now in, through which she was fully persuaded I should pass from sickness to health, even though it would be after a still sharper convulsion which physicians call "the crisis."

CHAPTER II

2. So also my mother brought to certain oratories, erected in the memory of the saints, offerings of porridge, bread, and wine -- as had been her custom in Africa -- and she was forbidden to do so by the doorkeeper [ostiarus]. And as soon as she learned that it was the bishop who had forbidden it, she acquiesced so devoutly and obediently that I myself marveled how readily she could bring herself to turn critic of her own customs, rather than question his prohibition. For winebibbing had not taken possession of her spirit, nor did the love of wine stimulate her to hate the truth, as it does too many, both male and female, who turn as sick at a hymn to sobriety as drunkards do at a draught of water. When she had brought her basket with the festive gifts, which she would taste first herself and give the rest away, she would never allow herself more than one little cup of wine, diluted according to her own temperate palate, which she would taste out of courtesy. And, if there were many oratories of departed saints that ought to be honored in the same way, she still carried around with her the same little cup, to be used everywhere. This became not only very much watered but also quite tepid with carrying it about. She would distribute it by small sips to those around, for she sought to stimulate their devotion, not pleasure.

But as soon as she found that this custom was forbidden by that famous preacher and most pious prelate, even to

(Continued AUGUSTINE on page 29)

(Continued AUGUSTINE from page 28)

those who would use it in moderation, lest thereby it might be an occasion of gluttony for those who were already drunken (and also because these funeral memorials were very much like some of the superstitious practices of the pagans), she most willingly abstained from it. And, in place of a basket filled with fruits of the earth, she had learned to bring to the oratories of the martyrs a heart full of purer petitions, and to give all that she could to the poor -- so that the Communion of the Lord's body might be rightly celebrated in those places where, after the example of his Passion, the martyrs had been sacrificed and crowned. But yet it seems to me, O Lord my God -- and my heart thinks of it this way in thy sight -- that my mother would probably not have given way so easily to the rejection of this custom if it had been forbidden by another, whom she did not love as she did Ambrose. For, out of her concern for my salvation, she loved him most dearly; and he loved her truly, on account of her faithful religious life, in which she frequented the church with good works, "fervent in spirit." [153] Thus he would, when he saw me, often burst forth into praise of her, congratulating me that I had such a mother -- little knowing what a son she had in me, who was still a skeptic in all these matters and who could not conceive that the way of life could be found out.

CHAPTER III

3. Nor had I come yet to groan in my prayers that thou wouldst help me. My mind was wholly intent on knowledge and eager for disputation. Ambrose himself I esteemed a happy man, as the world counted happiness, because great personages held him in honor. Only his celibacy appeared to me a painful burden. But what hope he cherished, what struggles he had against the temptations that beset his high station, what solace in adversity, and what savory joys thy bread possessed for the hidden mouth of his heart when feeding on it, I could neither conjecture nor experience.

Nor did he know my own frustrations, nor the pit of my danger. For I could not request of him what I wanted as I wanted it, because I was debarred from hearing and speaking to him by crowds of busy people to whose infirmities he devoted himself. And when he was not engaged with them -- which was never for long at a time -- he was either refreshing his body with necessary food or his mind with reading.

Now, as he read, his eyes glanced over the pages and his heart searched out the sense, but his voice and tongue were silent. Often when we came to his room -- for no one was forbidden to enter, nor was it his custom that the arrival of visitors should be announced to him -- we would see him thus reading to himself. After we had sat for a long time in silence -- for who would dare interrupt one so intent? -- we would then depart, realizing that he was unwilling to be distracted in the little time he could gain for the recruiting of his mind, free from the clamor of other men's business. Perhaps he was fearful lest, if the author he was studying should express himself vaguely, some doubtful and attentive hearer would ask him to expound it or discuss some of the more abstruse questions, so that he could not get over as much material as he wished, if his time was occupied with others. And even a truer reason for his reading to himself might have been the care for preserving his voice, which was very easily weakened. Whatever his motive was in so doing, it was doubtless, in such a man, a good one.

4. But actually I could find no opportunity of putting the questions I desired to that holy oracle of thine in his heart, unless it was a matter which could be dealt with briefly. However, those surgings in me required that he should give me his full leisure so that I might pour them out to him; but I never found him so. I heard him, indeed, every Lord's Day, "rightly dividing the word of truth" [154] among the people. And I became all the more convinced that all those knots of crafty calumnies

which those deceivers of ours had knit together against the divine books could be unraveled.

I soon understood that the statement that man was made after the image of Him that created him [155] was not understood by thy spiritual sons -- whom thou hadst regenerated through the Catholic Mother [156] through grace -- as if they believed and imagined that thou wert bounded by a human form, although what was the nature of a spiritual substance I had not the faintest or vaguest notion. Still rejoicing, I blushed that for so many years I had bayed, not against the Catholic faith, but against the fables of fleshly imagination. For I had been both impious and rash in this, that I had condemned by pronouncement what I ought to have learned by inquiry. For thou, O Most High, and most near, most secret, yet most present, who dost not have limbs, some of which are larger and some smaller, but who art wholly everywhere and nowhere in space, and art not shaped by some corporeal form: thou didst create man after thy own image and, see, he dwells in space, both head and feet.

CHAPTER IV

5. Since I could not then understand how this image of thine could subsist, I should have knocked on the door and propounded the doubt as to how it was to be believed, and not have insultingly opposed it as if it were actually believed. Therefore, my anxiety as to what I could retain as certain gnawed all the more sharply into my soul, and I felt quite ashamed because during the long time I had been deluded and deceived by the [Manichean] promises of certainties, I had, with childish petulance, prated of so many uncertainties as if they were certain. That they were falsehoods became apparent to me only afterward. However, I was certain that they were uncertain and since I had held them as certainly uncertain I had accused thy Catholic Church with a blind contentiousness. I had not yet discovered

(Continued AUGUSTINE on page 30)

(Continued AUGUSTINE from page 29)

that it taught the truth, but I now knew that it did not teach what I had so vehemently accused it of. In this respect, at least, I was confounded and converted; and I rejoiced, O my God, that the one Church, the body of thy only Son -- in which the name of Christ had been sealed upon me as an infant -- did not relish these childish trifles and did not maintain in its sound doctrine any tenet that would involve pressing thee, the Creator of all, into space, which, however extended and immense, would still be bounded on all sides -- like the shape of a human body.

6. I was also glad that the old Scriptures of the Law and the Prophets were laid before me to be read, not now with an eye to what had seemed absurd in them when formerly I censured thy holy ones for thinking thus, when they actually did not think in that way. And I listened with delight to Ambrose, in his sermons to the people, often recommending this text most diligently as a rule: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life,"[157] while at the same time he drew aside the mystic veil and opened to view the spiritual meaning of what seemed to teach perverse doctrine if it were taken according to the letter. I found nothing in his teachings that offended me, though I could not yet know for certain whether what he taught was true. For all this time I restrained my heart from assenting to anything, fearing to fall headlong into error. Instead, by this hanging in suspense, I was being strangled.[158] For my desire was to be as certain of invisible things as I was that seven and three are ten. I was not so deranged as to believe that this could not be comprehended, but my desire was to have other things as clear as this, whether they were physical objects, which were not present to my senses, or spiritual objects, which I did not know how to conceive of except in physical terms.

If I could have believed, I might have been cured, and, with the sight of my soul cleared up, it might in some way have been directed toward thy

truth, which always abides and fails in nothing. But, just as it happens that a man who has tried a bad physician fears to trust himself with a good one, so it was with the health of my soul, which could not be healed except by believing. But lest it should believe falsehoods, it refused to be cured, resisting thy hand, who hast prepared for us the medicines of faith and applied them to the maladies of the whole world, and endowed them with such great efficacy.

CHAPTER V

7. Still, from this time forward, I began to prefer the Catholic doctrine. I felt that it was with moderation and honesty that it commanded things to be believed that were not demonstrated -- whether they could be demonstrated, but not to everyone, or whether they could not be demonstrated at all. This was far better than the method of the Manicheans, in which our credulity was mocked by an audacious promise of knowledge and then many fabulous and absurd things were forced upon believers because they were incapable of demonstration. After that, O Lord, little by little, with a gentle and most merciful hand, drawing and calming my heart, thou didst persuade me that, if I took into account the multitude of things I had never seen, nor been present when they were enacted -- such as many of the events of secular history; and the numerous reports of places and cities which I had not seen; or such as my relations with many friends, or physicians, or with these men and those -- that unless we should believe, we should do nothing at all in this life.[159] Finally, I was impressed with what an unalterable assurance I believed which two people were my parents, though this was impossible for me to know otherwise than by hearsay. By bringing all this into my consideration, thou didst persuade me that it was not the ones who believed thy books -- which with so great authority thou hast established among nearly all nations -- but those who did not believe them who were to be blamed. Moreover, those men were not to be listened to who

would say to me, "How do you know that those Scriptures were imparted to mankind by the Spirit of the one and most true God?" For this was the point that was most of all to be believed, since no wranglings of blasphemous questions such as I had read in the books of the self-contradicting philosophers could once snatch from me the belief that thou dost exist -- although what thou art I did not know -- and that to thee belongs the governance of human affairs.

8. This much I believed, some times more strongly than other times. But I always believed both that thou art and that thou hast a care for us,[160] although I was ignorant both as to what should be thought about thy substance and as to which way led, or led back, to thee. Thus, since we are too weak by unaided reason to find out truth, and since, because of this, we need the authority of the Holy Writings, I had now begun to believe that thou wouldst not, under any circumstances, have given such eminent authority to those Scriptures throughout all lands if it had not been that through them thy will may be believed in and that thou mightest be sought. For, as to those passages in the Scripture which had heretofore appeared incongruous and offensive to me, now that I had heard several of them expounded reasonably, I could see that they were to be resolved by the mysteries of spiritual interpretation. The authority of Scripture seemed to me all the more revered and worthy of devout belief because, although it was visible for all to read, it reserved the full majesty of its secret wisdom within its spiritual profundity. While it stooped to all in the great plainness of its language and simplicity of style, it yet required the closest attention of the most serious-minded -- so that it might receive all into its common bosom, and direct some few through its narrow passages toward thee, yet many more than would have been the case had there not been in it such a lofty authority, which nevertheless allured multitudes to its bosom by its holy humility. I continued to reflect upon these things, and thou wast with me. I sighed, and thou didst hear me. I vacillated, and thou guidedst me. I roamed the broad way of the world, and thou didst not desert me.

(Continued CONTENTS from page 32)

can lead to eternal life or eternal death; to eternal happiness or eternal horror. Our guide and protector during this journey is the Holy Spirit, specially sent by the Father, and sent in Christ Jesus' name. The Holy Spirit is not like a road map or an atlas to which we can make reference; He is not like the driver of a car in which we are a passenger. He is more like a companion who walks with us on our journey. page 7

THE FAMILY CHURCH Just after he was born, Saint Joseph was presented in the temple and redeemed in accordance with Mosaic Law, and so he learned from his earliest days to follow the Law of God and to love God and be loved by God and be possessed of Charity, of Divine Love, and to possess that same Charity. The Virgin Mary was virtually raised in the Temple, and Loved God and was loved by God and became possessed by Charity and possessed Charity, Divine Love. They were trained in Faith, Religion, and dogma, by their parents, and because of that they did likewise for Jesus, even though He is both the subject and source of Faith, Religion, and dogma. page 8

IN PURSUING CHRIST WE MAKE THE PATH TO HIM OPEN TO ALL It seems as though every generation thinks its generation is in the most evil of all times. But truly, in our generation, any person who even thinks of trying to be good is a voice in the wilderness crying out: Make straight the way of the Lord. It is not a good thing that our generation is so evil. But it is a good thing that there are many who try to be good. page 9

CHILDREN'S PAGE *The Orthodox - Basilian Catechism Q. 818 - Q. 847* page 10

WHAT ABOUT THE SOPHISTICATED? *"Put ye on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience:"* (Col 3:12) What are the "bowels of . . . humility", of modesty? Perhaps it is being the teach-

ers of an entire nation, the repository of all knowledge of not just an entire nation but of a very strong religion, listening in awe and with respect to a twelve year old Boy explaining that knowledge partially by asking questions and partially by explanations so clear as to leave no doubt those explanations are accurate. There was hope for the learned doctors of the Jewish faith for they listened to and pondered the wisdom of this twelve year old Boy. page 12

PRODUCTS page 13 - 14

CATHOLIC-ORTHODOX DOCUMENT ON THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH Made public today was the final document of the plenary assembly of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. page 18

ECCLESIOLOGICAL AND CANONICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE SACRAMENTAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH. ECCLESIAL COMMUNION, CONCILIARITY AND AUTHORITY Ravenna, 13 October 2007 (text of the final document of the plenary assembly of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.) page 18

IMITATION OF CHRIST By **Thomas a Kempis** BOOK THREE The Fifty-Fourth Chapter - The Fifty-Seventh Chapter page 25

THE CONFESSIONS OF SAINT AUGUSTINE BOOK FIVE CHAPTER XIV (cont'd) - BOOK SIX CHAPTER V page 28

+



CONTENTS

TOPIC/TITLE

Page

~ **THE IMPORTANCE OF EPIPHANY** ~ *From Metropolitan Archbishop Paul, S.S.B. To the flock entrusted into my care:* Christians of the European influence occasionally contemplate Epiphany, and invariably, in that contemplation, experience confusion at the emphasis placed on Epiphany by Christians who live in the area of the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean Sea. page 1

BECOME OUTRAGED AT THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE US BE SINLEPERS We must foment outrage at sin and at those who would lead us into sin. Imagine there was a person who dropped by the house of a female acquaintance. The acquaintance, remember the acquaintance was not a friend but a mere acquaintance, the acquaintance asked the person to kill the stout woman with short blond hair sitting on

the front porch page 1

WHAT DO YOU ANTICIPATE DURING ADVENT SEASON? Did you know Advent is a health indicator? Advent basically means the coming into being. In one sense it also is an anticipatory time page 1

POSTAGE INCREASE WILL RESULT IN FEWER ISSUES REUNION Entering Eighteenth Year of Publication page 1

SELF RESPECT, DEJECTION, AND SIN The “Feedback” Spiritual Pool Ecosystem and, that boredom resolution indicates some potential sources of assistance. The motive for most of an individual’s deeds is the delight obtained or experienced through the deed or in the process of the deed itself. page 1

PUBLICATION NOTICE page 2

LETTERS (none) page 2

WORLD WIDE WEB: The direct connection to the computer which functions as the message, file, and communications center for The Society of Clerks Secular of Saint Basil, is: <http://www.reu.org> telnet://reu.org Issues of REUNION, in color, in Adobe PDF and HTML, are available at:

<http://www.reu.org/public/news.htm> Current Active Mailing Lists page 2

HOLY INNOCENTS ODX. CHURCH BBS Mailing List Support page 3

THE BASILIAN FATHERS (The Society of Clerks Secular of Saint Basil) **PRAYER INTENTIONS DURING DIVING LITURGY, SAINT JAMES** The writer of **Gems, ST. MARY MAGDALENE property for sale** page 4

THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES ALL AND ONLY, THOSE WHO FOLLOW HIM We know the journey of life
(Continued CONTENTS on page 31)

Jesus Christ, God, became human while remaining divine, taught The Way, endured His passion and death, NOT so that you could get a Cadillac, avoid bankruptcy, get a big house, marry a sex-pot, be cured of a physical defect or illness, “get your miracle” or obtain any other gain, advantage, or thing of this material world. He so did that you could get your sorry royal gluteus maximus into heaven in the hope that, that heaviest part of your anatomy would drag the rest of your sorry self into heaven thus making you no longer sorry.

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