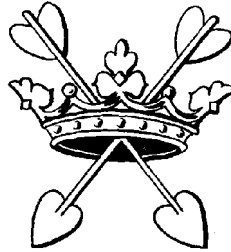


The Parish of St. Edmund, King and Martyr

(Waterloo, Ontario)



The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada
(A member of the worldwide Traditional Anglican Communion)

UPDATE

February 10, 2006 - **St. Scholastica**

March Schedule

March 1	Wednesday	Ash Wednesday
March 5	Sunday	The First Sunday in Lent
March 12	Sunday	The Second Sunday in Lent
March 19	Sunday	The Third Sunday in Lent
March 25	Saturday	The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
March 26	Sunday	The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Service Times and Location

(1) All Services are held in the Chapel at Luther Village on the Park - 139 Father David Bauer Drive in Waterloo.

(2) On Sundays, **Matins** is sung at **10:00 a.m.** (The **Litany** on the first Sunday of the month), and the **Holy Eucharist** is celebrated (sung) at **10:30 a.m.**

(3) On weekdays - **Major Holy Days** - the **Holy Eucharist** is *usually* celebrated at **7:00 p.m.**, **10:00 a.m.** on Saturday.

Notes and Comments

- 1) Dr. Budziszewski completes his examination of the cultural slide of the mid-90s - **The Revenge of Conscience** - the sixth of six parts - this page.
- 2) For **Robert's Ramblings** - **St Catherine's, Lincoln** - see page 5.
- 3) Dissenting Catholics and orthodox Anglicans - **Time to Go** - see page 7.
- 4) Commentary on - **THE GRADUAL, THE GOSPEL, THE CREED** - from a booklet entitled **The Ceremonial of High Mass** - see page 8.
- 5) **The Seven Ecumenical Councils** - see page 9.
- 6) Pope Benedict XVI - **God sees unborn children as "full and complete" humans** - see page 9.
- 7) Straightforward comments on - **The Offertory** - see page 10.

The Revenge of Conscience - VI

We've seen that although conscience works in everyone, it doesn't restrain everyone. In all of us some of the time, in some of us all of the time, its fearsome energy merely "multiplies transgressions." Bent backwards by denial, it is more likely to catalyze moral collapse than hold it back.

But conscience is not the only expression of the natural law in human nature. Thomas Aquinas defined law as a form of discipline that compels through fear of punishment. In the case of human law, punishment means suffering the civil consequences of violation; in the case of natural law it means suffering the natural consequences of violation. If I cut myself, I bleed. If I get drunk, I have a hangover. If I sleep with many women, I lose the power to care for anyone, and sow pregnancies, pain, and suspicion.

Unfortunately, the disciplinary effect of natural consequences is diminished in at least two ways. These two diminishers are the main reason why the discipline takes so long, so that the best that can be hoped for in most cultures is a pendulum swing between moral laxity and moral strictness.

The first diminisher is a simple time lag: not every consequence of violating the natural law strikes immediately. Some results make themselves felt only after several generations, and by that time people are so deeply sunk in denial that even more pain is necessary to bring them to their senses. A good example of a long-term consequence is the increase of venereal disease. When I was a boy we all knew about syphilis and gonorrhea, but because of penicillin they were supposed to be on the way out. Today the two horrors are becoming antibiotic-resistant, and AIDS, herpes, chlamydia, genital warts, human papilloma virus, and more than a dozen other sexually transmitted diseases, most of them formerly rare, are ravaging the population. Other long-term consequences of violating the laws of sex are poverty, because single women have no one to help them raise their children; crime, because boys grow into adolescence without a father's influence; and child abuse, because although spouses tend to greet babies with joy, live-ins tend to greet them with jealousy and resentment. Each generation is less able to maintain families than the one before. Truly the iniquities of the fathers - and mothers - are visited upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.

The second diminisher comes from us: "Dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to be good," we exert our ingenuity to escape from the natural consequences of breaking the natural law. Not all social practices have this effect. For instance, threatening drunk drivers with legal penalties supplements the discipline of natural consequences rather than undermining it. Nor is the effect always intended. We don't devise social insurance programs in order to encourage

improvidence, though they do have this result. It isn't even always wrong. It would be abominable to refuse treatment to a lifelong smoker with emphysema, even though he may have been buoyed in his habit by the confidence that the doctors would save him. But to act with the *purpose* of compensating for immorality is always wrong, as when we set up secondary school clinics to dispense pills and condoms to teenagers.

Here is an axiom: We cannot alter human nature, physical, emotional, or spiritual. A corollary is that no matter how cleverly devised, our contrivances never do succeed in canceling out the natural consequences of breaking the natural law. At best they delay them, and for several reasons they can even make them worse. In the first place they alter incentives: People with ready access to pills and condoms see less reason to be abstinent. In the second place they encourage wishful thinking: Most people grossly exaggerate their effectiveness in preventing disease and pregnancy and completely ignore the risks. In the third place they reverse the force of example: Before long the practice of abstinence erodes even among people who don't take precautions. Finally they transform thought: Members of the contraceptive culture think liberty from the natural consequences of their decisions is somehow owed to them.

There comes a time when even the law shares their view. In *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which reauthorized the private use of lethal violence against life in the womb, the Supreme Court admitted that its original abortion ruling might have been wrong, but upheld it anyway. As it explained, "For two decades of economic and social developments, people have organized their intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society in reliance on the availability of abortion in the event that contraception should fail. . . . An entire generation has come of age free to assume [this] concept of liberty." To put the thought more simply, what we

did has separated sex from responsibility for resulting life for so long that to change the rules on people now would be unfair.

Naught avails; our efforts to thwart the law of natural consequences merely make the penalty more crushing when it comes. The only question is whether our culture will be able to survive the return stroke of the piston.

To survive what is bearing down on us, we must learn four hard lessons: to acknowledge the natural law as a true and universal morality; to be on guard against our own attempts to overwrite it with new laws that are really rationalizations for wrong; to fear the natural consequences of its violation, recognizing their inexorability; and to forbear from all further attempts to compensate for immorality, returning on the path that brought us to this place.

Unfortunately, the condition of human beings since before recorded history is that we don't want to learn hard lessons. We would rather remain in denial. What power can break through such a barrier?

The only Power that ever has. Thomas Aquinas writes that when a nation suffers tyranny, those who enthroned the tyrant may first try to remove him, then call upon the emperor for help. When these human means fail, they should consider their sins and pray. We are now so thoroughly under the tyranny of our vices that it would be difficult for us to recognize an external tyrant at all. By our own hands we enthroned them: our strength no longer suffices for their removal: they have suspended the senate of right reason and the assembly of the virtues: the emperor, our will, is held hostage: and it is time to pray.

Nothing new can be written on the heart, but nothing needs to be; all we need is the grace of God to see what is already there. We don't want to read the letters, because they burn; but they do burn, so at last we must read them. This is why the nation can repent. This is why the plague can be

arrested. This is why the culture of death can be redeemed. "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before thee . . . a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

By **J. Budziszewski**, Associate Professor of Government and Philosophy at the University of Texas - this article appeared in the June/July 1998 issue of *First Things* - the sixth of six parts

From here and there

1) The use of the Church's **ancient music**, or 'plainsong' as it is called, is a custom which is often unpopular at first. This music is in unison, so choirs are apt to find it dull, but carefully rendered it can be very beautiful, and it conveys a suggestion of unworldliness, which modern music rarely attains. Moreover, 'Gregorian' music, as it is familiarly known, can fit the words, instead of requiring the words to be fitted to it, as in the Anglican chant. The proof that this defect in Anglican chanting has been realized is the number of 'free rhythm' experiments which have appeared in recent years. Many of these are attractive but all suffer from the defect that they are uncongregational: only those specially trained can sing them. So the ancient music of the Church has been widely revived and has proved that it is equally suited to a small church or a cathedral, and can be sung acceptably by a small body of voices where large choirs are not available. In this, as in other matters, it takes time to get used to the method, but few who have adopted it and given it a fair chance ever want to revert to a more worldly type of music. **The Rev. Marcus Donovan** in *Positive Teaching* - first published in 1940

2) This 'issue' of **UPDATE** contains the **92nd piece** contributed by our former Leader, The Right Reverend Robert W.S. Mercer CR, now retired(?) to England. The first was in July of 1998 and he hasn't missed an issue since!

3) **Athabasca Glacier**

Our snowmobile rolls steeply down the grade,
Moraine left by receding glacier's tide;
The ice now crunches beneath caterpillar track
And our buggy rolls over almost on its side.

We stop! A crevasse of twenty feet or more!
Backtrack, then rumble on to where
The mill-well pours down in sucking whirlpool depth
Way, way below, to some dark, murky lair.

The ice with blinding whiteness glistens in the sun;
And overhead, a silhouette against the blue,
A hanging glacier droops and sags - its weight
Threatening to drop, and wipe us from its view.

By **Helen E. Glover**

4) For the information of **Windows** users - The Gates Foundation (Bill Gates is the founder of Microsoft) donated \$3.5 million in 2005 to *Planned Parenthood*, the largest abortion business in the US; and \$400,000 in 2005 to the *Yes on Proposition 71* campaign in California to help persuade voters to fund embryonic stem cell research! Perhaps an appropriate time to switch to **Linux** as your operating system!

5) **Some [CofE] bishops** . . . think they can reinvent the Christian faith by tearing difficult pages out of the Bible in the name of political correctness. **The Rev. Richard Coekin**

6) To the Editor:

Those readers not entirely familiar with the literature of The English Restoration period might welcome some clarification concerning a work cited by Bishop Mercer in January's UPDATE: Aidan Nichols' *The Panther and the Hind*.

Actually, this "inverted" title betrays the Dominican author's indebtedness to John

Dryden's religio-polemic *The Hind and the Panther* written in 1687.

Dryden, who at various stages espoused both Puritanism and Anglicanism as shifting ecclesiastical winds prevailed, ended his life as a Roman Catholic. (Those who question the poet's sincerity should remember that this was an age in which most authors relied on noble patronage for their very survival.)

In this, his last major poetical work (he also wrote for the stage), Dryden allegorically identifies the principal contemporary sectarian groups with appropriate symbolic animals.

Thus, *H&P* revolves mainly around a lengthy theological debate between the milk-white Hind, representing the Roman Church, and the spotted Panther of Anglicanism.

Ideologically, the poet sought to defend both papist doctrine and the questionable policies of James II, England's last "Catholicke" monarch.

Alas, Dryden enjoys little popularity among 21st - century literary audiences.

From **The Rev. Dr. Henry J. Stauffenberg, OSG**, Cathedral of the Annunciation, Ottawa

NOTE: In time's deep recesses, I produced an essay, "The Religious Metamorphosis of John Dryden," now blissfully lost to posterity in the pages of a long-defunct academic journal. HJS

Robert's Ramblings

St Catherine's, Lincoln

There are several ways of spelling Katharine. There are also variations, endearments and nicknames, such as Katrina and Katie. But this is the spelling used by our folk in Lincoln. There are Saints Catherine of dei Ricci, of Genoa, of

Siena and of Sweden, but our Lincolnshire folk commemorate St Catherine of Alexandria who, though much loved in the Middle Ages, has little if anything known about her for certain. Allegedly martyred on a wheel in the 4th century, her logo is of course the Catherine wheel. Two ancient and famous churches dedicated to her are in Bethlehem and Sinai.

The last ordination of a deacon to be held in St Catherine's, Lincoln, was in 1538 - until August 2005 when our Primate, Archbishop John Helpworth, in the course of yet another frenetic world tour, ordained a deacon.

Much happened in Lincoln before 1538 and much has happened since. From the Roman occupation of Britain onwards, Lincoln has been a city set on a hill (*Matthew* 4,14). Roman roads, still in use, reach out over surrounding plains, one of these roads going straight down to Devon in the South West. Lincoln also boasts two Roman canals, still in use, which were linked to rivers, for the export of grain to Europe. There may have been a British hill fort in Lincoln before the Romans arrived. After the legions departed, there was much anarchy and chaos, but eventually a Saxon church was built on Lincoln's hill.

William the Conqueror saw the strategic importance of the site, and therefore ordered a castle, walls, a cathedral complete with its Norman bishop. This new diocese was and long remained the largest in England. In Sempringham, a village of the same diocese, the local rector, St Gilbert, founded a religious community which was unique to England. (The English tend to practise oddities, of which they say, "But it works"). The Gilbertines were a double order of women and men, living in double monasteries, without so much as hint of scandal, the ladies following a Benedictine type rule, the men following an Augustinian rule. The ladies were enclosed contemplatives, the men did pastoral and scholarly work. In 1148 the Pope formally approved the arrangement.

In Lincoln the Gilbertines established a priory, "without the city wall" (blue hymnal 545, green 106) and at the bottom of the hill. They dedicated it to St Catherine of Alexandria. The most famous Bishop of Lincoln was St Hugh, a Carthusian monk who nevertheless made an efficient and hard working pastor of his mostly rural flock. Before his enthronement in the cathedral in 1186, he kept vigil throughout the night in St Catherine's down below, and then processed next day up the hill. When he died he was buried in the cathedral, but before his entombment his body lay in state in St Catherine's, watched over jointly by a King of Scotland and a King of England.

King Edward I waged war on the Scots and the Welsh, who still abhor his memory. His redeeming feature was his love for his wife, Queen Eleanor from Spain. She accompanied him on one of his aggressions and died there from natural causes. The grieving King brought her body back for burial in Westminster Abbey. Wherever the cortege stopped on its long journey South, the King erected a stone cross. The procession stopped at St Catherine's, where the Gilbertine nuns embalmed the Queen's body. Inevitably therefore the priory garden received its stone cross. Other places in England have Cross in their names, such as Charing Cross, Kings Cross and Waltham Cross, but whether because of Queen Eleanor, or because preaching friars of the Dominican and Franciscan orders set up preaching stations there, I do not know.

In the 16th century the evil Henry VIII wrecked the monasteries, stealing their possessions for himself or else awarding them to cronies. Gilbertines were abolished and St Catherine's in Lincoln was given to the Grantham family, who built themselves a manor house on the site. (A steel town in Lincolnshire is called Grantham and is famous as the birthplace of Lady Thatcher. Her father was a grocer and a Methodist layreader there.) Down the centuries the Granthams gradually traded away their land, which in 1870 the Methodist church acquired for the building

of an inner city church in the neo Gothic style. A hundred years later that particular congregation had few adherents left, who sold their church to a building merchant for use as a warehouse. His widow, though a Turkish Muslim, gave it to our folk. Its yellow bricks remind me of London in Ontario.

Fr Ian Gray, our imaginative and energetic rector, and his small handful of parishioners have been restoring St Catherine's, thanks to funding from charities and from English Heritage. First they created the Centre, a complex of hall, kitchen, refectory, loos, reception office, and a variety of rooms, all for the use of locals and others in a down-market neighbourhood. The Centre is used by an Afro-Caribbean group, Chinese Christians, Japanese, toddlers and their mums, teenagers, students doing degrees or courses with universities or colleges long distance by means of email. One of the rooms is filled with formidable computers. We Continuers puzzle over how best to make contact with unchurched unbelievers. St Catherine's Centre is the method attempted by our Lincoln congregation. Five employees work there full time plus four volunteers.

Attached to the Centre is the church, still a wreck, but if the Centre is anything to go by, the restored church will be glorious. The Methodist stone font, stone pulpit and stained glass windows are still intact. An organ once owned by the composer S. S. Wesley (1810 - 1876), grandson of Charles and great nephew of John, will be installed in the gallery at the back. There will be a Lady chapel, a chapel of St Gilbert, a library and a chapter house. St Catherine's is planned as the cathedral of our English diocese. A cross in honour of Queen Eleanor will be erected in the garden. It's hoped that a VIP from Spain will unveil it.

Lincolnshire enjoyed a Methodist revival in the 18th and 19th centuries. The other great saint of the county is Bishop Edward King (1829 - 1910). Definite anglo catholic though he was, all men loved him, not least

Methodists. In 1983 there were great celebrations in Oxford to mark the 150th anniversary of the Oxford Movement (which I attended on behalf of Matabeleland). Good biographical pamphlets were written about *inter alia* Keble, Newman, Pusey and Mother Kate of Haggerston. The man who wrote the pamphlet about Bishop King was a Methodist minister. So St Catherine's has other happy links also.

In August St Catherine's folk hosted a mini synod plus the ordination of that deacon. Two of their clergy drive down from Hull in North Yorkshire while another drives across from Sheffield in South Yorkshire. Their rector lives in a village outside Lincoln. Thou shalt not covet, but I do covet the get-up-and-go of St Catherine's priests and people.

+Robert Mercer CR

By The retired, Third Bishop of The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada

Time to Go

There's an old trick that seems to be hardwired into the brain of every child: When he doesn't get his way about this or that, he threatens to leave home. Possibly for the circus. I did this myself, once actually packing a bag before I was lured back by the irresistible draw of cookies and cartoons.

But when we become adults, as Paul wrote, we leave behind our childish ways. Or at least that's how it should be. Unfortunately, there are those who seem never to have grown out of the "It's my way or I'm hitting the road" trick. I refer, of course, to dissenting Catholics.

There seems to be no end to the "injustices" that will - they say - lead to their departure from the Church. And yet, it never actually happens. Here they are, year after year, with the same complaints and the same threats. Indeed, it's a pretty fair rule that the more vocal and virulent the dissenter, the closer they are to the parish office. Heavens, in many places, they are the

parish office.

So why do they stay? It's a good question. After all, there's an Episcopal church out there just waiting for them. It has everything they're agitating for: women priests; contraception; abortion; same-sex marriage; divorce; open communion; a social-justice commitment; inclusive language; few strictly held doctrinal requirements; and a pleasing, smells-and-bells liturgy (with quite good music, to boot).

Even Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson - the actively gay cleric whose ordination almost ripped his church in half - seems to agree. In the midst of condemning the Catholic Church's position on homosexuality as "vile" and "an act of violence that needs to be confronted," he also noted that Benedict XVI may turn out to be quite a boon for Episcopalians. "We are seeing so many Roman Catholics joining the church," he said.

Oh Gene, may it be so. (And by the way, mind your own business.)

Don't misunderstand me. I hate to see anyone leave the Catholic Church. I do, after all, believe this is the Church Christ founded at Pentecost. Nevertheless, heterodox Catholics have *already* abandoned the Church in all respects save formal membership. Now all that's left is to make the obvious official.

The truth is, a dissenting Catholic is little different from a liberal Protestant. They largely believe the same things, advocate the same causes, and worship in similar ways. Of course, at least the Protestants are honest in rejecting papal authority - not so for our wayward coreligionists who pay it lip service while ignoring its every exercise.

So let them have the integrity of their own convictions and head for the door. If they will not return to the Catholic Faith, if they will not relent in opposing it at every turn, let them go. May the lavender gates of the Episcopal church be flush with every

bleating, complaining, rebellious, dissident Catholic who has ever taken over a parish, or ruined a seminary, or corrupted a once-proud religious order. Those who refuse to build can only destroy, and they have destroyed quite enough.

But I have another wish as well: May all of the faithful, struggling, orthodox Anglicans and Episcopalians, caught in a church that has abandoned historic Christianity - and them along with it - find their way to the ancient Church. There are many of them, and they are our true brothers and sisters.

Bishop Robinson is welcome to our dissenters. And we will welcome his.

By **Brian Saint-Paul**, the editor of *crisis* - <www.crisismagazine.com> in the December 2005 issue

The Ceremonial of High Mass

THE GRADUAL

Between the Epistle and the Gospel, the Priest reads the Gradual or other chant sung at High Mass at this place. On ordinary days, the Psalm verses of the Gradual are followed by an Alleluia verse; before Easter, the Alleluia is replaced by a chant sung straight through without responses, called a Tract, which was the chant between the Prophetic lesson and the Epistle at an earlier date. In Eastertide, the Gradual itself is replaced by a special Alleluia chant. On a few feasts (Easter, Whitsunday, Corpus Christi, All Souls' Day, etc.) there is further a metrical hymn, called the Sequence. Before the introduction of other chants, such as the Introit or the Agnus Dei, the Gradual was *the* special chant of the day, and highly regarded as such. To this day it provides for that rhythm of praise alternating with learning, of expression alternating with impression, which adds so much beauty to the service of the altar. Frequently the Gradual repeats the theme of the Introit, recalling us to the central ideas of the occasion celebrated.

THE GOSPEL

After praying for purity of heart and lips, the Priest passes to the north end of the altar to read the Holy Gospel. In announcing the Gospel, the Priest makes the sign of the Cross on brow, lips and breast to show that we believe, proclaim, and love the Gospel of Christ. In the Gospels, we have the inspired record of the deeds and words of the Saviour Himself. It is therefore natural that the Church should treat the Gospel lessons with special honour. In the course of the year they recount to us the story of the earthly life of Our Lord, his death and resurrection, and bring before our minds his teaching, both by word and by his acts of mercy. Although the Gospel reading is one of the earliest elements of the Mass, it was not until the seventh century that the arrangement of the Gospels for each Sunday of the year was completed, and it took even longer for it to become the universal custom. The Gospels for ordinary Sundays were chosen out of a group of suitable passages, and those for special days, such as Easter, were more speedily settled than those for other days. The Sunday Gospel may well furnish us with material for meditation during the following week. It is the ancient custom of the Church that the sermon on Sunday mornings be used for the exposition of the meaning of the Gospel just read.*

THE CREED

After the words of the Prophets or Apostles, the Gospel narrative of Our Lord's own deeds and teaching, and the Priest's exposition of the same*, we profess our faith in the religion they proclaim in the words of the Nicene Creed. (The use of the Creed at Mass is a comparatively late development. It began in the East and spread in the sixth century to Spain, after which the Emperor Charlemagne introduced it in his chapel in 798. Only after another two hundred years was it adopted as the custom in Rome. As the recitation of the Creed was an addition to the Eucharistic rite, it was kept for Sundays and the greater feasts only, and this usage has remained to this day.) This fuller statement of the articles of Faith expressed in the Apostles' Creed was adopted by the great Councils of the

Church at Nicaea (A.D. 325) and Constantinople (A.D. 381), to safeguard the faith from the errors that had been disseminated by heretics.

We say the Creed standing, but kneel at the proclamation of the Lord's Incarnation. In honour of so great a mystery, and in remembrance of the great humility of the Son of God in becoming man, it is fitting that we should kneel in reverence (Philippians 2:5-11). The Incarnation is the central truth of Christianity, on which all depends. It is from it that we have learned of the truths of the Holy Trinity and of the office and work of the Holy Spirit. The very existence of the Church has depended on the authority of the Incarnate Son of God.

The Creed is both an affirmation of faith and an act of worship, for it is made not only before men but also before God. The truths which it enshrines are not merely to be accepted with the mind; they change the whole character of our lives. In the light of them, we worship and live.

From ***The Ceremonial of High Mass*** by Priests of the Society of the Holy Cross, and available from The Convent Society

* The 1962 Canadian Prayer Book has the 'order' slightly different from this booklet - whereas in the booklet the Sermon/Homily follows The Gospel, we have it following The Creed.

The Seven Ecumenical Councils

The Second Ecumenical Council

Held in Constantinople in 381. Under Emperor Theodosius the Great. 150 Bishops were present.

The Council was held to address the Macedonian controversy.

Macedonius, somewhat like Arius, was misinterpreting the Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit. He taught that the Holy Spirit was not a person ("hypostasis"), but simply a power ("dynamic") of God. Therefore the Spirit was inferior to the

Father and the Son. The Council condemned Macedonius' teaching and defined the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Council decreed that there was one God in three persons ("hypostases"): Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The holy fathers of the Council added five articles to the Creed. They read as follows:

"And (We believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father: who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified: who spoke by the prophets. In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."

God sees unborn children as "full and complete" humans

In his weekly address to Catholics, Pope Benedict XVI said on Wednesday that God sees unborn children as "full and complete" humans in the womb. His message strongly underscored the pro-life views the Catholic Church has against abortion.

"The loving eyes of God look on the human being, considered full and complete at its beginning," Benedict said in the address at St. Peter's Square.

According to a Reuters report, the pontiff quoted Psalm 139, in which the author says to God, "Thou didst see my limbs unformed in the womb, and in thy book they are all recorded."

"It is extremely powerful, the idea in this psalm, that in this 'unformed' embryo God already sees the whole future," Benedict said. "In the Lord's book of life, the days that this creature will live and will fill with works during his time on earth are already written."

Earlier this month, the Pope told a conference of presidents of the Episcopal

commissions in Latin America for Family and Life that "children are the greatest wealth and most appreciated good of the family."

"That is why it is necessary to help all persons to become aware of the intrinsic evil of the crime of abortion that, in attempting against a human life in its beginning, is also an aggression against society itself," the pontiff explained. The comments come ahead of key battles both in Italy and elsewhere.

In Italy, the Pope has endorsed a proposal that Health Minister Francesco Storace has put forward allowing government support for groups that help women find alternatives to abortion.

Meanwhile, in the United States, lawmakers in Congress will consider a proposal that would overturn President Bush's limits on taxpayer funding of embryonic stem cell research.

The Catholic Church opposes the practice because obtaining the stem cells involves the destruction of human life. Instead, it supports adult stem cell research, which has already produced treatments for dozens of conditions and diseases.

From **LIFENEWS.COM** - December 28, 2005

The Offertory

The Offertory is one of the most misunderstood elements in the Eucharistic Liturgy. Too often, the Offertory is seen primarily as the time when "the collection is taken up". And what can we possibly offer to God, anyway?

The Church has only one gift to offer our Heavenly Father, that is the perfect sacrifice of Christ, once offered on the Cross of Calvary. We can add nothing to it. Christ's offering is perfect and eternal. What we do offer is ourselves *in union* with Christ. As members of the Church, the

Body of Christ, we are united in His work of redemption. We offer our sacrifices and prayers, our concerns, our work, our joys and our love, imperfect as they are, in Christ, who offers them perfectly to the Father. In love, the Father returns to us the precious life of His Son in his Body and Blood.

At the Offertory, we offer Bread and Wine, symbols of God's creation and human cooperation. Wheat and Grapes, gifts of God's earth, are made into bread and wine with human hands. We offer money, symbol of the fruit of our labour and God's blessing to us. We present these gifts in union with Christ's sacrifice, in thanksgiving for what He has done for us and for the work of His Church.

As the bread, wine and money and other gifts are brought forward to the Altar, think of them as yourself being presented before God's throne. You may want to consider before Mass how God has blessed you. Does my offering reflect the blessings I have received? The great St. Augustine wrote, "What God has not touched, he hasn't redeemed." Am I prepared to trust God with all that I am (both good and bad), to offer my darkness as well as my goodness? If we do this, every Mass becomes an opportunity for renewal, healing and commitment.

By **James C. Millar**

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