

The Parish of St. Edmund, King and Martyr

Waterloo, Ontario
www.stedmund.ca

UPDATE



The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada / The Traditional Anglican Communion

May 14, 2011 - **St. Boniface**

June Schedule

June 2	Thursday	Ascension Day
June 5	Sunday	The Sunday after Ascension Day
June 12	Sunday	The Day of Pentecost / Whitsunday
June 19	Sunday	Trinity Sunday
June 23	Thursday	Corpus Christi
June 24	Friday	The Nativity of St. John the Baptist
June 26	Sunday	The First Sunday after Trinity
June 29	Wednesday	St. Peter and St. Paul, the Apostles

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

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2) **LETTER TO MARGARET - AN EVANGELICAL ANGLICAN FRIEND** - page 5.

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ROBERT'S RAMBLINGS

A sermon preached on the Isle of Wight: Easter II

Why do we read the Old Testament? In order to know and understand our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of today's epistle and gospel the second Sunday after Easter is nicknamed Good Shepherd Sunday. From childhood we have been familiar with the idea of Jesus the Good Shepherd. We've had sentimental pictures on our walls; gentle Jesus, with a sort of pink haze around Him and a cuddly little lamb in His arms. We've sentimentalized many a hymn, The King of love my Shepherd is, Loving Shepherd of Thy sheep, The Lord my pasture shall prepare, Crimmond, Brother James' air. We have associated such hymns with Christopher Robin saying his prayers.

We've been so busy being mawkish that we've failed to notice that our Lord is paying us a back handed compliment. Sheep are not noted for courage, initiative, intelligence or independence of thought. For safety's sake or for inertia's sake, we unthinkingly follow current opinion or practice. We allow the media or politicians to lead us astray.

Not only is our Lord implying something about us, He's also implying two things about Himself.

1. He is claiming kingship. We fail to notice this because of our ignorance of the Old Testament. Jewish kings were thought of as shepherds of God's people. God complains that these servants of His have been unsatisfactory. *Isaiah* 56,11. "These are shepherds that can not understand; they have all turned to their own way, each one to his own gain". *Jeremiah* 23,1. "Woe to the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture". *Ezekiel* 34,2. "Woe to the shepherds of Israel that feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?" God the Father then decides to do the herding himself. *Ezekiel* 34,11 and 15. "Behold I myself, even I, will search for My sheep. I Myself will feed My sheep and will cause them to lie down. I will seek that which is lost". Now Jesus asserts, "I am the good shepherd". We think, Oh how sweet! The Jews of Jesus' day might have thought, How

presumptuous. Alternatively, the Jews of Jesus' day might have thought, Ah, a claim to be Messiah, King David's descendant and successor, a royal liberator.

2. Jesus is claiming divinity. Whatever the faults of their human kings, the Jewish people were clear that in the end God the Father was their ultimate Shepherd. *Psalms* 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd". *Psalms* 80, "Hear, O Thou Shepherd of Israel: Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock". *Psalms* 95. "For He is the Lord our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand". Now Jesus asserts, "I am the good Shepherd". We think, Oh, how sweet! The Jews of Jesus' day might well have thought, How blasphemous! Some people allege that Jesus never claimed to be God. Actually he did, in many different ways. Here is one such claim.

Sheep are farmed by different methods. In this country they are mostly left to their own devices, though the farmer and his dog will occasionally look in on them. In the Middle East where water and grazing are scarce, shepherds lived with their sheep, partly to lead them from the front to pasture, and partly to protect them from predators. *Luke* 2,8. "There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch by night over their flock". Jesus' human ancestor King David had been a shepherd in his youth. He said of himself, *1 Samuel* 17,34, "When there came a lion or a bear I caught it by its beard and slew it". In the Middle East shepherding was not a cushy job.

Now Jesus asserts, "I am the good Shepherd". We think, Oh, how sweet! The Jews of Jesus' day might well have thought, How dangerous.

Jesus goes on, "I lay down My life for the sheep". The Jews of Jesus' day might well have thought, How extreme.

Human beings want to know what God is like. Humans want to know if God loves them. If we want to know what God the Trinity is like, we look at the human life of Jesus. *John* 14,9. "He that hath seen

Me hath seen the Father. I am in the Father and the Father in Me". What is God like? I lay down My life for the sheep. That is what God's like. Does God love us? I lay down My life for the sheep?

Why do we read the Old Testament? In order to know and understand the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of its Old Testament background and

history, we can tell that the gospel for today is not an expression of sentimentality. The gospel tells us that Jesus is God the Son, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Yes, but what kind of King and God is He?

I lay down My life for the sheep.

+Robert Mercer CR

FROM HERE AND THERE

1) Pope Benedict speeding in a limo . . .

After getting all of Pope Benedict's luggage loaded into the limo (and he doesn't travel lightly), the limo driver notices that the Pope is still standing on the curb.

"Excuse me, Your Holiness," says the driver, "but would you please take your seat so we may leave?" "Well, to tell you the truth," says the Pope, "they never let me drive at the Vatican, so I'd like to do the driving today."

"I'm sorry, but I cannot let you do that - I'd lose my job! And what if something should happen?" protests the driver, wishing he'd never come in to work that morning. "There might be something extra in it for you," says the Pope.

Reluctantly, the driver gets in the back as the Pope climbs in behind the wheel. The driver quickly regrets his decision when, after exiting the airport, the Supreme Pontiff floors it, accelerating the limo to 105 MPH.

"Please slow down, Your Holiness!!!" pleads the worried driver, but the Pope keeps the pedal to the metal until they hear sirens. "Oh, dear God, I'm gonna lose my license," moans the limo driver.

The Pope pulls over and rolls down the window as the cop approaches. The cop takes one look at him, goes back to his motorcycle, and gets on his radio.

"I need to talk to the Chief," he says to the dispatcher. The Chief gets on the radio and the cop tells him that he's stopped a limo going a hundred and five. "So bust him!" said the Chief.

"I don't think we want to do that; he's really important," said the cop. The Chief exclaimed, "All the more reason!"

"No, I mean REALLY important!" said the cop.

The Chief then asked, "Who ya got there, the

Mayor?"

Cop: "Bigger."

Chief: "Governor?"

Cop: "Bigger."

"Well," says the Chief, "then who is it?"

Cop: "I think it's God!"

Chief: "Now what makes you think it's God Himself?"

Cop: "He's got the Pope for a limo driver."

2) 'Bless me father, for I have sinned . . .'

A grade school chaplain once heard the confessions of eight-year old pupils. Many of the boys had very minor and almost inconsequential misdeeds so the priest was rather happy. One group of youngsters though confessed similar sin. One said, "Father forgive me, I threw peanuts into the river." Another admitted, "Father forgive me, I threw peanuts into the river." The third and the fourth also confessed, "Father forgive me, I threw peanuts into the river."

The priest was intrigued but a little alarmed so he cautioned the boys not to be too hard on themselves. "Throwing peanuts into the river is not really a sin." He would have asked one of the nuns in charge of the catechism to find out how they teach the doctrine of venial and mortal sins to these young kids when a sulking and chubby kid approached him. The priest warned him, "Don't tell me you also threw peanuts into the river?"

The kid was surprised and looked up at him and said, "Father, I'm Peanuts!"

3) The Most Rev. Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop of Springfield, has authorized for use the old **St. Michael the Archangel Prayer** composed by Pope Leo XIII in 1886 for recitation after Mass. He wrote:

One of Satan's greatest assets is his camouflage, the belief that he doesn't exist. Disbelief in Satan and the forces of evil leave us unable to resist them. That is why it is good to remember the Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel. We need to remember that each time we pray we work to defeat our real enemies, not each other, but rather the devil and his evil spirits . . .

The Prayer:

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray: and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen

4) More Adult Truths:

I'm always slightly terrified when I exit out of **Word** and it asks me if I want to save any changes to my ten-page technical report that I swear I did not make any changes to.

I wish **Google Maps** had an 'Avoid Ghetto' routing option.

I love the sense of camaraderie when an entire line of cars team up to prevent a jerk from cutting in at the front.

Sometimes I look down at my watch 3 consecutive times and still not know what time it is.

The first testicular guard, the 'cup' was used in hockey in **1874**, and the first helmet was used in **1974!** What does that tell you?

5) It's a short journey from 'pro-choice' to infanticide.

6) Easter apophatically

The most stupendous event in the history of the cosmos - the most terrible wonder in the elapse of time between the initial and final big bangs - is never

actually described. The Lord's Resurrection is, as it were, wrapped in veils. Jesus' burial may be described; lightning and earthquakes may be mentioned; women and men meet the mysterious stranger in the garden or on the road to Emmaus; but no television camera, no recording historical pen, no purported eyewitness, intrudes into the darkness and mystery of that cave-tomb. No Gospel writer claims to discern a tremor beneath the winding-cloth, no chronicler pretends to be able to describe the awful countenance of the One who was dead and *en atomo*, in a moment, is alive. It is as if to do so would mar the unimaginable wonder and terror of such a . . . did I call it an 'event'? I think that was a category error: what we are talking about is not in any cataphatic word-bag. No, for the Gospel writers it is as if even to try to imagine it is an unspeakable vulgarity. And the Church's liturgy is marked by the same awed reticence: in the Song of the Candle which we heard last night, the deacon exclaimed with fearful wonder: 'O Night truly blessed, who alone wast worthy to know the time and the hour'.

The greater the miracle and the greater the wonder, then the more need for a veil to shield our eyes. S Thomas Aquinas, perhaps the greatest Christian thinker since S Paul, described what Christ did at the Last Supper as 'the mightiest miracle that he ever worked during his life on earth'. That same miracle is repeated every time that Mass is offered; at every Eucharist the stone is rolled from the darkness of the tomb; when the words of consecration 'This is my Body' are uttered, the Easter Lord who was dead and is alive emerges from eternity and comes among us; and the veil which prevents us from being consumed by such a wonder in the forms of bread and wine. The naked brightness of the divine reality would be too much for such as now we are. But as we kneel at the altar, every Eucharist is Easter and the Lord is the risen and invincible one and he whispers to each of us, as he whispered to Mary in the garden, the Name he has given us; and for a moment the veils become very thin, and he walks through every locked door into the upper room of each one of us.

Fr John Hunwicke - April 24, 2011

LETTER TO MARGARET - AN EVANGELICAL ANGLICAN FRIEND

This is an attempt to answer a question put to me by a long-time Anglican with an evangelical background. I believe her question reflects the feelings of many with personal faith who seek to relate to the Church as the Body of Christ but do not

fully comprehend the essentially corporate nature of the one Church Catholic.

Margaret wrote the following to me after reading an article about the Ordinariate which attempted to

express how ordinariates are open to all baptized Christians who are not already in full communion with the Holy See:

. . . the comments [made on the teaching of the Catholic Church] are far from supportive, they raise many obvious questions for which there seem to be no convincing answers . . . Jesus is my answer, He is my Saviour, my King of Kings and Lord of Lords, His Holy Spirit is ever present, He is my friend . . . what more could I ever need; is it too simple?

God bless,

Margaret

My response was as follows:

Dear Margaret,

Of course, I couldn't agree more with you that Jesus, the risen Lord, is the answer to the human dilemma. My pressing question is: What vehicle, what group will insure that his message and the communion which Jesus offers us will be carried forward for others?

I certainly cannot do it on my own and I am r

required by his express command to share his story, his message and his good news. It is not just for me.

Following are some thoughts I have been working on . . .

None of us came to an understanding of Jesus on our own. Someone - many people - translated the scriptures, printed them, taught us the principles of Christ and their meaning as young people in a community of prayer (a church) and provided us with an understanding of Jesus, his mission and the way in which it can be carried to others.

Maintaining and passing on the message of Jesus implies the need for some organization. To those who say that they do not like organized religion, Christianity or the Catholic Church, I can only say that they must then engage in some kind of unorganized religion (there are plenty of those . . . not to mention New Age and the occult) which attract many naive young people.

The other alternative is to have your own private faith. As someone put it: people who don't want

the Catholic faith must want to be their own pope i.e. decide matters of faith on their own. That may seem to serve the individual's perceived personal needs but their faith and understanding are still based upon what they have received from others. How will an individual pass the content of Christian faith on to children and others without sharing the duty and responsibility with others of like mind in some organized way?

No matter how you look at it, some group or individual must interpret the Scripture and make decisions for the ordering of a community which celebrates, preserves and passes faith on to others.

Either of these two alternatives noted above is a recipe for disunity at least and probably will lead to disorder and the loss of any coherent message or vestige of Christian faith. Such approaches certainly cannot maintain a Christian witness or community to carry Christ to the world, to pass on the moral and ethical message of Jesus, or nurture the personal faith of people. All of this requires an ordered community with worldwide authority in this global era.

It is not enough to say that I hold the Christian faith myself. We are required by Jesus and by the very faith we profess in him to share our faith in communion with others (The Great Commission - Matthew 28). That sharing implies a specific organization which Jesus commissioned and appointed his Apostles to oversee.

This is the Christian faith, it cannot be possessed by any individual alone and is only really maintained by sharing it in a thoughtful and systematic (sacramental) way with the oversight of those who are ordained by the power of the Holy Spirit in a community. This has to involve co-operation with others. And so the question is: What group of people is it our call and duty as Christians to work with in the mission to which Jesus calls us?

As John Donne, the great poet and dean of St. Paul's, London, put it in his Meditation XVII on 'The Church Catholic':

"No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in

Mankind; And therefore never send to know
for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee."

The toll of the church bell was for Donne, as it is for us, a symbol of our unity in the Body of Christ which is made up of individuals who need one another and have a spiritual responsibility for one another and for future generations. Such a responsibility to children and the future can only be worked out in a communion, in a body of people organized in some way. Every baptized person is a member of Christ's body and so has a responsibility to be in communion (imperfect as we all are) with one another in the communion of Christ which is only found in his Church because faith cannot be maintained and passed on by islands of humanity. Individual faith apart from a community means that the mission of Jesus ends with the individual and that is directly contrary to the purpose set forth by Jesus which is to share his life with everyone.

We need a community to interpret and sustain us and the message and mission of Jesus; to stand up to the demands of a secular world which does not want the message of Jesus (or thinks it knows better). Which group of people, then, is best carrying forward that truth and which group does so in real communion with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a worldwide fellowship which Jesus instituted, commanded and sustains?

Which group of people systematically educates children in this truth and provides for its transmission into the future? Which community of people is divinely commissioned and graced by the Holy Spirit to do this around the world and which group has formulated in council and sustained the scriptures, teaching and sacraments through the centuries despite human error and folly? Which group is on every continent and island offering self-sacrificing love for the orphans and the dispossessed as consecrated sisters and brothers, ministers of God's love?

I truly wish I could say that the Anglican Communion was, is, and will be part of that community. I believe that it certainly was. Is it now? Will it be in the future?

It seems clear to me that with the decision-making of the past thirty years, many of the synods of the Anglican Communion have largely abandoned the understanding of Jesus that I was raised with and still believe. "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church" - The Apostles Creed.

The Anglican Church of Canada and the US Episcopal Church and others in the Anglican Communion have said in recent years that they can change what the sacraments and the moral teachings have been since the time of the Apostles. They have said, in effect: "we will change these as we like and we don't care what other Christians do" i.e. they make decisions following the secular spirit of the age which are directly contrary to what the vast majority of Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelical Christians believe (90% of Christians around the world) about family, sexuality and church order. We, they say, can decide whatever we wish by a majority vote in our meeting. It reminds me of the old aphorism quoted by the constitutional scholar Senator Gratton O'Leary "Parliament can make a man a woman." By this he illustrated the constitutional power of Parliament in the British system but also the foolishness of legislating what was contrary to Natural Law. The result - Anglicans have come to different conclusions from country to country on a number of central issues and so now are out of communion even with each other.

Does this matter? Yes, because without communion the message of Jesus is compromised, confused or lost. Children will not hear and respond to the message without a teacher and the teacher needs to be supported by a group, a group which in an organized way produces, teaches and distributes the bible and its moral and ethical code. That is the only way it works in human life. It isn't mine, I must pass it on with others.

Am I part of a community which will carry the mission and truth of Jesus forward? That is the question we all have to ask if we want to serve the person and mission of Jesus. Sadly, I have come to the conclusion that the Anglican Communion as a whole is no longer committed to this and to the unity with others for which Jesus prayed and to which he commands us. At the same time, we have this gracious offer from Pope Benedict (*Anglicanorum coetibus*) to welcome Anglicans into full communion with the universal Church. This has been an answer to my prayer since I was a child. I believe that the Catholic Church is the only body which can carry forward in a consistent and effective way the message that the majority of Christians hold dear.

Is the Church perfect? Do I like what everyone says and does? It is made up of imperfect human beings seeking communion with the Lord. That is the answer for me. It teaches that we are

sinful and need constantly to seek forgiveness. That is the truth. But, the Catholic Church proclaims the same faith that the Apostles handed on. The Catholic Church does all of those good things that I noted above in a greater and more extensive fashion than any group or individual.

We cannot be Christians on our own. We only have faith because of and within a community which exists by Jesus own command and has persisted over time against all odds. This reality can only describe the Catholic Church, the divinely graced bearer of the good news; which isn't to say that sincere Protestants and others are not Christians. However, Jesus prayed and we must take seriously his words: "that they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17: 21). I have to take that seriously and respond to his call and invitation to be one with the universal Church not part of a group which is separated and continues to fragment and compromise the message of Jesus (Anglican or Protestant) or as an individual. I see no alternative if I want to be faithful to the call of Jesus.

. . . I am still working on these thoughts,

Margaret.

It is a simple message as you say and I agree, but someone must deliver it and it can't be done alone. The Ordinariate is a gift from the Lord for people like me. Everyone must make his or her own decision, of course.

I will get you a copy of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* to consider. This is what people in your community and elsewhere are studying and we will be doing so here. It sets out the full Christian Faith in a Catholic perspective. I do not disagree with any of it though, like everyone, I have my questions.

What is the alternative? For me the only way to remain a Christian and an Anglican is in communion with the wider Church. I don't believe I can refuse this invitation and still be true to the Great Commission of Jesus (Matthew 28: 16 - 20).

Much love in Christ,

From *Peregrinations - examining Anglican Catholic issues* - March 22, 2011

TIME TO PROCLAIM THE PRIMACY OF JESUS CHRIST IN CREATION 3 of 7

"The Christian picture of the world is this, that the world in its details is the product of a long process of evolution but that at the most profound level it comes from the Logos. Thus it carries rationality within itself." (Pope Benedict XVI, as Cardinal Ratzinger, God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald. Ignatius 2002 p. 139)

The Perspective of St John

St. John's prologue to his Gospel (John 1:1 -18) clearly presents Christ as the fulfilment of Creation which is the product of the Logos and the Mind of God. We need to return to that important text again in this age. It gives us the deepest vision of the early Christians on the place of Christ in creation. As St. Paul did, so St. John also takes a cosmic perspective on his Lord and Master. He begins by echoing the very first words of the creation narrative from the book of Genesis: "*In the beginning* was the Word . . ." (John 1:1, cf. Gen 1:1). The "Word" (in Greek *Logos*, from which we have the English word logic) means the personified Wisdom and Intelligence of God, the Mind of God, in creating. St. John is quite clear that the *Logos* is divine: ". . . the Word was with God *and the Word was God*. He was with God in the beginning." (1:1-2) Everything is created through him (1:3).

In this vision mankind can only find its light, its true environment, in him: "All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men," (1:4) and again: "The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world." (1:9) St. John acknowledges the effects of sin on this coming of the Word into the world, but the whole tenor of his vision is that sin causes a failure of recognition and acceptance of the Word, not that sin is the reason for his coming. "He was in the world that had its being through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him." (1:10-11)

Then comes the climax of the whole of this vision - the greatest description of who Jesus Christ really is:

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the

only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth." (1:14) him, which alone can satisfy us:

St. John is teaching many things in this simple verse. In the first place, the Word through whom all things were made takes flesh, a full human nature: Jesus Christ is true God and true man. Next, the universe was only created for the Word to become flesh. St. John is surely leading us to this conclusion by his careful interweaving of the themes of the eternal Mind of God, the Word (1:1 and 1:14), his involvement in the work of creation, which is "his own domain", from *the beginning* (1:3 and 1:10), along with several references to the Incarnation itself (1:9, 10, 11, 14).

And there is yet another, deeper meaning to this important text. The Greek word *eskenosen*, usually translated as *lived* or *dwelt*, is translated literally as *tabernacled*.⁵ It means literally that God *pitched his tent* among his people. (The same word is used with the same deep meaning in Rev 21:3, and the idea is prefigured in Sirach 24:3-10.) This unique expression is used in the Old Testament of the *Tent of Meeting* or *Tabernacle* in the desert, where Moses and Aaron went to speak with God, the place where God lived among them and beside them. And the words which follow, "we saw his glory", are also related to the Tent of Meeting: when Moses had finished its construction, "the cloud overshadowed the Tent of Meeting and the *glory* of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Exod 40:34) This in turn alludes to the *overshadowing* of Mary by the Holy Spirit in the conception of Christ (Luke 1:35). So St. John is describing the Incarnation as also the coming of the 'New Temple'. In his own Person Jesus fulfils what was shown symbolically by the Old Testament tabernacle and temple: he is truly the place where God dwells among his people.

Furthermore, St. John describes the great benefits that we receive through the Word made flesh: firstly, grace and truth, which are so much more wonderful than the Mosaic Law (1:14, 16-17); and then, above all, personal knowledge of God, and intimacy with

"No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made him known." (1:18)

As Chapter 6 of John's Gospel goes on to confirm there are intimations here that Christ's very "flesh" (*sarx*), in its very physicality, is our Bread of Life. The Primacy of Christ in the light of modern science vindicates, with a new profundity we believe, the Catholic tradition which has affirmed Tertullian's "the flesh is the hinge of salvation" (see our Editorial for September 07, "Renewing our Vision of the Sacraments", and the lively correspondence that followed in subsequent issues).

This vision of St. John is very old but also very up to date. The idea of creation through the *Logos*, the Word and Wisdom and Intelligence of God, harmonises perfectly with the modern, scientific perspective on the universe as highly intelligent, bursting with wisdom, and full of amazing design. But St. John goes on to show that this scientific knowledge of the universe is inadequate on its own: the universe leads to man - and the meaning of man and of the whole universe is only found in the *Word made flesh*, for whom the universe was made. Moreover this is not just an abstract theory. Through Jesus Christ it gives every single human being a living meaning and a relationship with God. It is a vision *personified* in the Word made flesh. Jesus Christ, for St. John, is therefore, we would argue, the Master-Key to the meaning of the universe, and the Master-Key to our own personal lives. It is a single vision of creation fulfilled in the Incarnation - probably the most profound statement ever made of the true meaning of Christianity.

⁵ Cf. Nestle, *Greek/English Inter-linear Translation*, Bagster, 1979.

Editorial **FAITH Magazine** November-December 2009 - www.faith.org.uk

WHY CATHOLICS ARE RIGHT

When I first told friends and colleagues about my new book - *Why Catholics Are Right* - they were intrigued by its proposed content but disturbed by its title. "Sounds a little proud," "Is that sufficiently conciliatory for these progressive and pluralistic days?" and "You ought to be careful because it might offend people." Which is odd in that when I suggested to them titles for other books such as *Why Liberals Are Right*, *Why Conservatives Are*

Right, even *Why Muslims Are Right*, and especially *Why Atheists Are Right*, they thought the suggestions to describe the various subjects entirely reasonable and unlikely to cause any problems at all.

To believe something is, self-evidently, not to believe something that is its contrary. So obvious is this that it is not questioned and seems a self-evident truth in

most areas and about most subjects. It is, after all, just common sense. But to claim that being an authentic Roman Catholic necessitates believing that Roman Catholicism is *correct* positively terrifies many modern men and women, as though a Catholic claiming to be right was some terrible sin - not that many of these people believe in sin, of course.

Having said this, I admit there are degrees of wrongness. Some people are only slightly wrong, others wrong most of the time and to a shocking degree. Non-Catholic Christians and in particular serious evangelicals and Eastern Orthodox believers are examples of the former. Many of them could teach many Catholics a great deal about love, charity and devotion to God. Alleged Christians who want to edit rather than follow Christ, professional atheists who flood the Internet with their obsessions, and part-time Catholic-bashers are the latter.

This brings me to the anti-Catholicism that has become the last acceptable prejudice in what passes for polite society and has become so obvious and so pronounced that to even repeat the fact seems almost banal. We have all heard comments about Catholics that if applied to almost any other group would simply not be tolerated. It's bad enough when this is street conversation and pointless gossip, far worse when it passes for informed comment in allegedly serious newspapers. British historian and biographer Christopher Hibbert put it well when he said that historically the Pope had been thought of as "an un-seen, ghost-like enemy lurking behind clouds of wicked incense in a Satanic southern city called Rome." In much of contemporary Anglo-Saxon culture as well as the greater modern world, this perverse caricature has found a second wind.

The importance of Catholicism is that in a culture where various forms of religious and atheistic fundamentalism, crass materialism and clawing decadence eat away at civility and civilization the only permanent, consistent, and logically complete alternative is the Roman Catholic Church. Which is probably why it seems to so antagonize people who would usually be fair and tolerant toward a faith or ideology they did not completely understand.

I was not born a Catholic and came into the Church only in my mid-twenties. I'd grown up in a secular home in Britain with a Jewish father whose family had fled Poland in the 1890s. He wasn't anti-Catholic but he saw the Church as something foreign and alien, from both a Jewish and a British perspective. While London in the 1960s and 1970s was hardly anti-Semitic to any meaningful degree,

its impossible to have Jewish blood and not experience at least some prejudice and hatred. Even if it isn't direct and personal, it's a ghost that haunts the world, and, with the growth of both the Internet and the nuances of Middle Eastern politics and an increasing distance from the Holocaust, it has been given new life in recent years. So I know what being despised simply for *being* is all about.

Anti-Catholicism is fundamentally different from anti-Semitism. It's not racial or ethnic and, outside of fundamentalist Protestant circles and Islamic extremists, not even especially religious. Very few people dislike Catholicism because of its theology but many oppose it because of the moral and ethical consequences of its teachings. In spite of that, in 2008 the Internet video-sharing website YouTube hosted 40 videos showing the graphic desecration of the consecrated host. They had been posted by an anti-Catholic activist who was seen burning, nailing and stapling the Eucharist and flushing it down a toilet.

This is obviously incredibly offensive to Catholics who, as we shall see, believe the consecrated host to be the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Perhaps so, runs the standard response, but while Catholics are entitled to their opinion, those who disagree with them are allowed theirs and may be as offensive as they like as long as they do not use violence. The problem is that this approach seems to be applied to Christians and Catholics in particular far more than to others. Robert Ritchie was the director of an organization called America Needs Fatima, which compiled petitions to try to have the videos removed. He explained, "As Catholics, we believe the host is the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ. Witnessing the desecration of the host causes anguish to Catholics all over the world. In the past, YouTube has removed videos offensive to Jews and members of other religions, including one showing a teenager urinating on a Holocaust memorial. Why can't Catholics be afforded the same respect for our deeply held beliefs? The argument can be extended to any number of areas where Catholicism is treated differently from other faiths.

But in general, religious anti-Catholicism is fairly unusual. In other words, I've seldom met someone who dislikes me because of my views on saints or the papacy but I have lost jobs in media because of my Catholic belief that, for example, life begins at conception and that marriage can only be between one man and one woman. Being part Jewish, on the other hand, has positively *helped* me in my career, whereas my serious Catholicism has led to at least two firings and many doors in media being closed. So while anti-Semitism is vile and constant, being an

observant Catholic, at least in the Western world, can lead to other different but equally difficult problems.

There is evidently an anti-Catholic prejudice that is built on social and economic grounds. In Britain, for example, Catholics were often Irish immigrants and just as often working class and even poor. Although Roman Catholicism was the faith of the British for a thousand years, by the early 17th century it had been pushed to the fringes of society. In Northern Ireland, there were and to an extent still are Protestants who regard Catholics as morally as well as personally and theologically inferior. In North America, some of that Anglo-Celtic prejudice still exists - the Catholic Church is, in popular and sometimes even cultured circles, regarded as the "denomination of foreigners, immigrants, the poor, and undesirables" - but the bulk of modern contemporary disdain comes more often from the secular liberal who feels intellectually and aesthetically superior but would never dare feel such contempt for a member of a more fashionable minority group.

Catholics also face the problem of dislike from those once their own. The notion of "once a Catholic" is problematic because if someone aggressively rejects Catholicism, they are patently no longer Catholic. A Jew may embrace atheism but still be Jewish. Catholicism is different. A Catholic who becomes, say a Baptist is not a Catholic and it would be insulting to claim otherwise. The problem is that many people raised nominally or even devoutly Catholic who then turn against the Church want the best, or worst, of both worlds and continue to attack the faith while still claiming to be of it. One malicious term "recovering Catholic" - is supposed to equate Catholicism with alcoholism or drug addiction. I

prefer "failed Catholic," which for some reason rather annoys those self-identified "recovering Catholics" who obsess about how difficult their life was until they discovered the liberation of Buddhism, New Age or atheism. My experience has taught me that attacks usually begin with the Church's history, then with a misunderstanding of what the Church believes and teaches, then with angry comments about why the Church is so "obsessed" with the life issue and then a whole bunch of criticisms. These days, tragically the Catholic clergy abuse scandal is thrown in somewhere. It has to be discussed, but it has to be discussed honestly and accurately. The rest of the punches thrown at the Catholic body? The Church was nasty to Galileo, the Church tried to convert Muslims and the Crusades were horrible, Hitler was a Catholic and the Pope was a Nazi, the Inquisition slaughtered millions of people, the Church is rich and does nothing for the poor, children were abused and the Vatican knew about it all and did nothing, celibacy leads to perversion, Catholics worship statues, Catholics believe the Pope is infallible and can never do anything wrong, and so on and so on and so on.

It's all nonsense - yet it's nonsense that is given a veneer of credibility by thinking people who shape opinion, which, again, makes the Church unique in the 21st century as a victim institution. In almost every other area, we've matured as a people and a culture to the point where such crass generalizations and fundamentally flawed opinions would not make it past the alehouse door. Not with Roman Catholicism.

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Gary S. Freeman

102 Frederick Banting Place
Waterloo, Ontario N2T 1C4

519-886-3635 (Home)

519-747-5323 (Fax)

gfreeman@pwi-insurance.ca

800-265-2178 or 519-747-3324 (Office)