

CONSCIENCE

THE NEWSJOURNAL OF CATHOLIC OPINION

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The Bishops' Sexual Problems

JON O'BRIEN AND SARA MORELLO

Hierarchy, Sex and Power

A Primer on
Educating Bishops

DANIEL C. MAGUIRE

Living a Catholic Life

ANKA GRZYWACZ

TERRENCE MCNALLY

MOLLY O'GORMAN

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Behind Bars

When Abortion Is Illegal
Some Women Die,
Others Go to Prison

BETH FREDRICK

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THE NEWSJOURNAL OF CATHOLIC OPINION

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CATHOLICS
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EDITOR'S NOTE

SEX IS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER—WHETHER YOU ARE CATHOLIC or not. It is (or can be and certainly should be) a lot of fun. But it often makes the headlines for other reasons. This is especially the case when it comes to the Vatican, which is only too willing to pontificate on sex and sexuality, painting them in a negative light at every opportunity. In this issue, we seek to examine why the Vatican is so caught up on sex and how Catholics deal with it. Given the recent coverage, we should note that the clerical sex abuse scandal is one sex-related subject about which the Vatican is notoriously reticent. If you haven't read it already, Eamonn McCann's article in our last issue, "A Catholic Archipelago of Evil," is a must read.

In our lead article, Jon O'Brien and Sara Morello examine how bishops around the world intervene in political battles over reproductive health and rights, and the impact that has, especially on poor people. While that story might sound depressing—and parts of it certainly are—we end on a positive note, explaining how the vast majority of Catholics successfully reconcile their faith with healthy sex lives, despite the dictates of the Vatican.

As part of our investigation, we asked Catholic theologian Dan Maguire to reflect on why the Catholic hierarchy is so obsessed with sex. His answer may surprise many of you, but he did provide us with a solution: education. We need our bishops to be educated so that, he argues, they can distinguish between Catholic theology, which takes into account people's lived experiences, and Vatican theology, which is more rigid and can be harmful to so many.

As we note in our lead article, Catholics are constantly working out how to live their lives while remaining true to themselves and their faith. Many, many manage it successfully and for this issue, we asked half a dozen to tell us how. Playwright Terrence McNally is among our contributors, reflecting on the role his Catholic education played in revealing his homosexuality. Others report on their experiences with the hierarchy's approach to marriage and divorce, abortion, sexuality education, those living with HIV and those who simply want to maintain a healthy sex life.

We also have an important story from El Salvador where Beth Fredrick reports on the story of Karina Herrera Climaco, who spent time in prison as a direct result of the country's ban on abortion. It's a harrowing tale of what happens when the Catholic hierarchy's influence over public policy is unchecked. Finally, two reproductive rights advocates consider the pressure that many women are under to have children; Linda Pinto compares the CycleBeads approach to natural family planning with rosary beads—suggesting both are equally useless in preventing unplanned pregnancy; and Fr. Emmett Coyne decries the hierarchy's "serious violations of charity and justice" in seeking to sanction those who dissent on abortion.



DAVID J. NOLAN
Editor

Do you know somebody who should be reading Conscience? Send us their name and address and we will mail them a sample copy, with an offer to subscribe.

“Catholics use their consciences every day when they decide to use a condom, to provide an abortion, to prescribe birth control, to use IVF to conceive, or even just decide to have sex for pleasure alone... It’s not Catholics who have a problem with sex—it’s the bishops.”

— JON O’BRIEN AND SARA MORELLO, p12

Conscience offers in-depth, cutting-edge coverage of vital contemporary issues, including reproductive rights, sexuality and gender, feminism, the religious right, church and state issues and US politics. Our readership includes national and international opinion leaders and policymakers, members of the press and leaders in the fields of theology, ethics and women’s studies.

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FR. EMMETT COYNE

Shaken Faith

MY FAITH HAS BEEN shaken in the last six months. It began with a new pastor who told his parishioners only what to fight against—gay marriage, birth control, abortion, in-vitro fertilization—and continued with our bishop's very public threat to discontinue the work of Catholic Charities in Washington, DC, if the city government passed a gay marriage law. I expected widespread outrage from my fellow Catholics. What I saw instead were mostly shrugs and an uncomfortable acceptance of the status quo.

And then I read your ad in the *Washington Post*, a full page spread that went after the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and their calls to ban in-vitro fertilization, contraception, embryonic stem-cell research, abortion and advance directives. It was heartening to see other Catholics taking a stand, both in the ad and other publications. Your organization and its fight for basic social justice is an inspiration for the many Catholics (myself included) who find ourselves struggling to reconcile the values inherent in our faith and what seem to be contradictory positions from our bishops.

So thank you for your work, your fortitude and

Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

your courage. You are appreciated and admired for it.

K. O'KEEFE
Kensington, MD

Don't Forget About Drug Users

I WANT TO CONGRATULATE you on your recent articles on HIV/AIDS. The issues you highlight—related to stigma and sexuality—are important in understanding the global AIDS epidemic. However, the link between HIV and illicit drug use must be examined as well.

Outside of sub-Saharan Africa, nearly one in three new HIV infections occurs among injection drug users. According to UNAIDS, the use of contaminated injection equipment during drug use accounts for more than 80 percent of all HIV infections in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and is a major entry point for HIV epidemics elsewhere.

Yet we know that clean needles and syringes, education and substitution therapy can prevent HIV infection. The use of these approaches, commonly called "harm reduction," has in some countries virtually eliminated new HIV transmission due to drug use. The reason they are not more widely adopted? Politics, including by the Catholic hierarchy.

In March 2009 the Holy See issued a statement opposing harm reduction during meetings of the United

Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The Holy See's opposition was based on its belief that harm reduction is "anti-life" and leads to "liberalization of the use of drugs." As with sex education, the Holy See is substituting its moral position for evidenced-based measures proven to save lives. While the Holy See warns that it is not possible to "combat drugs with drugs," they ignore the fact that methadone is medicine, recognized by the World Health Organization and demonstrated to be effective in treating drug dependency and preventing HIV infection.

As early as 1989, the Catholic bishops of the United States argued against harm reduction in a pastoral letter on AIDS, opposing needle exchange because it "would send the message that intravenous drug use can be made safe" and encourage drug use. Overwhelming evidence has shown that needle exchange programs do not lead to increased drug use, and some church leaders have since spoken out in their favor. Support from the church hierarchy for methadone is needed too.

Drug users around the world often face desperate and destructive cycles of drug use and abstinence, ill health and abuse—sometimes as a result of the drugs they consume, sometimes at the hands of authorities who deny them their rights and their dignity. In opposing harm reduction, the Holy See is impeding global HIV-prevention efforts, ignoring

scientific evidence and contributing to that abuse.

JOE AMON
Director of the Health and Human Rights Division
Human Rights Watch

Healthcare, Healthcare and More Healthcare

I AM WRITING TO APPLAUD "We Believe in Healthcare Reform."

In these times of economic crisis, affordable contraception is free contraception. When people have to choose between feeding their family and going to a doctor to get birth control pills, they will choose their family. My gynecologist friend told me she has noticed a decline in women scheduling their annual gynecological exams because of the economy. If women aren't coming in to prevent cancer, they are even less likely to come in to prevent pregnancy.

As a pediatrician who specializes in adolescents, I wanted to offer a perspective as to how cost may drive people to use less effective forms of birth control. In California we have free birth control for those under 200 percent of the federal poverty level (which has resulted in California being a leader in decreasing our teenage pregnancy rate), but as soon as someone makes more than that, they go onto private insurance or no insurance. So, when an adolescent turns 19 and works at Starbucks or her parents make enough to get off MediCal, that young adult has to pay \$35 per month for her contraceptive patch or ring because it is "name brand" but only \$5 per month for the birth con-

trol pill because it is generic. This has pushed a lot of people to choose the pill over the patch or ring. However, the patch or ring has greater efficacy because it does not require daily compliance. Thus, we need to at least make the co-pay for all birth control the same.

As your statement rightly said, birth control should be free. It is cost-effective, saving \$4 in federal aid funds for every \$1 spent on birth control. And it would be fair to make it free. Otherwise, birth control is for only those who can afford it.

Also, as a woman, I say, "It is time for free birth control!" Why should women have to shoulder the burden of the cost? Men and women have sex. Why should women be the ones to pay for the birth control?

Women already have to take the medication, deal with the side effects and worry about being pregnant. Having birth control free through the government or through insurance makes the burden of contraceptive cost fair amongst the sexes.

Thank you for your great piece on healthcare reform and taking the leadership on campaigning for free birth control. It will save us money in the long run, prevent abortion and it is the right thing to do.

SOPHIA YEN, MD MPH
Mountain View, Calif.

AMID THE CACOPHONY OF noise, misinformation and rhetoric that seems to permeate the debate about healthcare reform in congress, I found Jon O'Brien and Sara

Morello's article in your latest issue to be a voice of reason and wisdom. When the loudest opposition to comprehensive healthcare that would include reproductive care is coming from the US Catholic bishops, one would assume that all Catholics are in lock-step with that irrational opinion. Reading this wonderful article and examining the supportive polling data, I was wonderfully surprised to find that my fears were unfounded.

Somewhere lost in the debate about healthcare reform is the forgotten principle that people genuinely want to see themselves and others receiving quality healthcare. When elected officials and officials of the Catholic church attempt to block any reform that would include abortion care, they place personal conviction over the people's well-being.

When I read that fully three quarters of Catholics support a plan that would make health insurance available to those who do not already have it, I was encouraged to understand that the basic message of faith we know to be true rises above the pontifications of church leaders who underestimate those who sit in our pews and take the message of the church to heart. This article, and in truth, the entire issue of *Conscience* has raised up in me a new feeling of hope that ultimately the voice of reason will rise to the top, and true reform will be the outcome.

Though I know that there are those whose religious fervor drives them to behavior that would deprive others of healthcare they need and

deserve, I am reminded of the words of the philosopher who said, "May God protect us from the things men do in the Name of God."

THE REV. VINCENT LACHINA
*Washington State Chaplain
Planned Parenthood*

THE ARTICLE, "WHAT Catholics Want in Healthcare Reform" by Jon O'Brien and Sara Morello was a breath of fresh air compared to all the hot air coming from antichoice activists and their allies in Congress over the past several months. They would have us believe that placing special restrictions on abortion coverage in the new healthcare plan is simply "preserving the status quo." We know better and it's clear from your poll that many Catholic Americans don't support the restrictions no matter what the Catholic bishops claim.

At the National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF), we know too well the impact that restrictions on abortion coverage already have on the most marginalized people in our communities. Each day, the 105 members of NNAF receive hundreds of calls from women who cannot afford to pay for an abortion—and together we help more than 21,000 women with over \$3 million in assistance.

Like the Catholics included in your poll, we know that creating a world "where women and men are trusted to make important, moral decisions about their lives" requires ensuring access to reproductive healthcare including abortion.

Unfortunately, 32 years ago, those who do not share our vision began walling off abortion access with the Hyde Amendment, which banned federal Medicaid coverage for abortion. Three decades later, poor women are still forced to scrimp on food and other necessities to pay for an abortion.

Today, it looks clear that restrictions in healthcare reform will build the next layer of bricks on the wall that stands between women and the promise of *Roe v. Wade*.

Representative Henry Hyde—and the Catholic bishops who were as influential then as now—never intended to prevent only poor women from getting abortions. Representative Hyde made this clear long ago during the Congressional debate on the Hyde Amendment: "I would certainly like to prevent, if I could legally, anybody having an abortion, a rich woman, a middle class woman, or a poor woman. Unfortunately, the only vehicle available is the [Medicaid] bill."

In 2010, through healthcare reform, the devastating reach of the Hyde Amendment will be extended even further—to millions more women and families.

Let's be clear: if you don't have the means to pay, abortion may as well be illegal.

We must band together to repeal all abortion coverage restrictions—Catholics and non-Catholics alike—everyone who believes in social and reproductive justice.

MEGAN PETERSON
*Deputy Director
National Network of
Abortion Funds*

The Church and Abortion

Abortion in Colombia, A Grey Area

SINCE A 2006 CONSTITUTIONAL Court ruling, abortion in Colombia has been legal in the case of rape, incest, severe fetal malformation or when the woman's health is at risk. If a doctor is unwilling to perform an abortion in these circumstances, he or she is required to provide a referral for the patient.

The ruling stated that women "enjoy a right to decide, free from any pressure, coercion, urging, manipulation and ... any sort of inadmissible intervention, to terminate a pregnancy."

On October 22, 2009, Colombian Attorney General Alejandro Ordoñez applied to the Council of the State to

overturn the 2006 ruling and stop an education plan ordered by the Court that would require all schools, Catholic and not, to teach comprehensive sexuality education, which would include information on abortion.

In response, the Council suspended the ruling, saying that the plan and the definition of abortion needed to be reviewed.

Until the Council reviews the case, medical providers are unclear on how to act. Mónica Roa, director of the Gender Justice Program at Women's Link Worldwide stated, "The Supreme Court ruling is clear, but in practice it's unclear for women and for the EPS [Colombia's health insurance providers]



A prochoice activist holds a sign that reads, "I had an abortion," during a march in Lima, Peru.

whether clinics are obligated to provide service while the law is suspended."

Experts are expecting it to take between seven and nine years for a decision to be reached.

Spaniards Support a Woman's Right to Choose

ON DECEMBER 17, 2009, the Congress of Deputies in the Spanish Parliament

approved legislation which would expand access to abortion through the fourteenth week of pregnancy for any reason and 22 weeks in some cases.

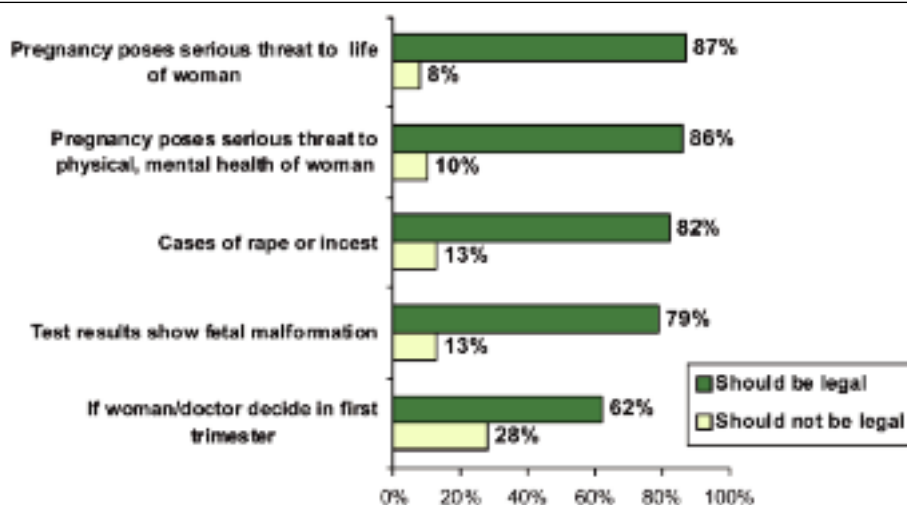
The bishops and conservative Catholics in Spain have been major opponents to this legislation, holding marches, petition drives and declaring that politicians who vote in favor of the measure are prohibited from taking Communion.

In the lead up to the vote, Catholics for Choice and Belden Russonello and Stewart carried out a nationwide public opinion survey to discover Spaniards' views on abortion. The poll shows that the Spanish public, which is at least three-quarters Catholic, largely rejects the position of the Catholic bishops on abortion.

Two-thirds of Spaniards (68 percent) disagree with the bishops' opposition to abortion, while fewer than two in ten (19 percent) say they stand on the side of the bishops. For more results, see box at left.

In late February, the Senate passed this legislation.

Views on Legality of Abortion in Various Circumstances in Spain



Now I would like your views on abortion. Please tell me if you believe abortion should or should not be legal in Spain under each of the following situations: Q1. When a pregnancy poses a serious threat to the life of a woman. Q2. When a pregnancy poses a serious threat to the physical or mental health of a woman. Q3. In cases of rape and incest. Q4. When test results show a fetus has a malformation. Q5. In the first trimester, if a woman or her doctor decide.

Peru Comes Closer to Liberalizing Abortion Laws

THE LAW ON ABORTION WAS last updated in Peru in 1924. The law allows abortion only in cases when the woman's health is in danger.

Last October, however, new legislation was sent to the Peruvian Congress for debate which would expand the law to include cases of rape and fetal deformity.

The bill has been met with strong opposition from the church hierarchy in Peru. The bishops, led by Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani who once said that "human rights are bullshit," have been actively lobbying members of Congress and holding protests.

Eliana Cano, coordinator of Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir Peru, applauded the legislation, stating, "As women who believe in God, we believe in a just and understanding God who lets us exert our autonomy in our process of making decisions."

The Church and Healthcare

The US Bishops' Healthcare Showdown

FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, Washington, DC, has been consumed with the healthcare debate. At the outset, it appeared that the bill would say nothing on abortion, with both anti- and prochoice proponents agreeing to this neutrality.

During negotiations to finalize the bill's language, the leadership of the Democratic Party made a tacit directive that no amendments would be allowed to

the bill once floor debate began. Yet, hours before the House of Representatives voted on the bill, Representative Bart Stupak, a Catholic Democrat of Michigan, was allowed to add an antiabortion amendment to the bill.

Lobbyists representing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops were invited into closed-door negotiations with Democratic leadership the day before the vote. According to the Associated Press, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick also spoke with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi from Rome to urge further restrictions on abortion.

Other bishops also called representatives, sent out action alerts to local

dioceses and, on two occasions, distributed inserts on healthcare reform and abortion for parish bulletins.

In the end, the Stupak Amendment passed.

The bishops urged Democratic Senator from Nebraska, Ben Nelson, to introduce an amendment restricting access to abortion in the Senate bill. The senator held his amendment so the bishops had more time to review the language severely restricting the access for abortion coverage.

The bishops' efforts behind the Nelson amendment ultimately failed. Though the amendment was defeated, similar provisions were included and the bill passed in the Senate.

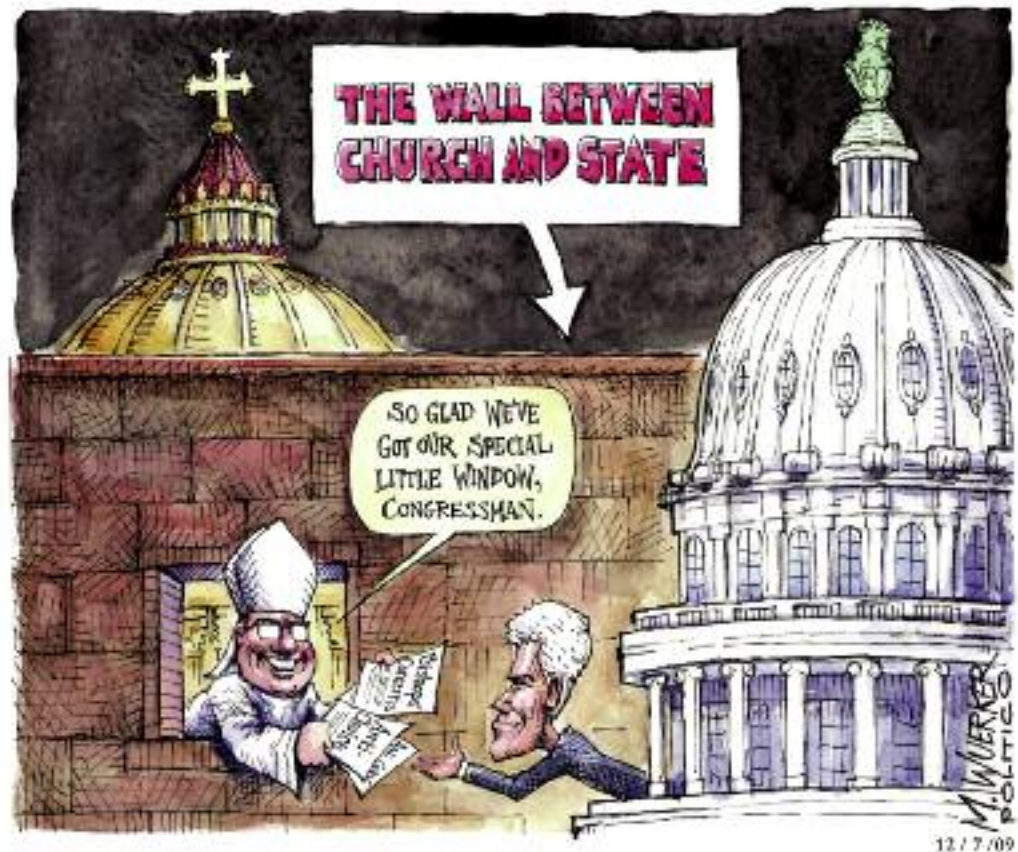
In February, President Barack Obama released his

plan for healthcare reform and encouraged legislators to pass the bill through reconciliation. And on March 21, 2010, after striking a deal with Stupak in which the president agreed to sign an executive order restating the ban on federal funding for abortion, the House passed the Senate version of the bill. The president signed this bill into law the following Tuesday.

The Church and Contraception

Faculty at Catholic College Seek Coverage for Contraception

IN 2007, THE ADMINISTRATION of Belmont Abbey College, a conservative Catholic college in Belmont,



NC, dropped abortion, contraception and other reproductive healthcare services from their employees' insurance coverage.

Eight faculty members filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) claiming that the exclusion of prescription contraception from insurance coverage was discriminatory towards women.

On August 5, 2009, schools officials received a letter from the EEOC, which found the complaint of the faculty members to be valid. Reuben Daniels Jr., the EEOC Charlotte District Office Director, wrote, "By denying prescription contraception drugs, Respondent [the college] is discriminating based on gender because only females take oral prescription contraceptives. By denying coverage, men are not affected, only women." The EEOC letter directed the college to reach an agreement with the faculty.

Outraged by the finding, Dr. William Thierfelder, president of the college, stated, "To try to make us change [our beliefs], there's something very wrong with that ... what they are basically saying is, if you're Catholic, or if you are of any faith, it doesn't mean anything. You're going to do what the government tells you to do."

In September, school officials retained the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, an ultraconservative Catholic legal outfit, to appeal the EEOC's decision.

CFC Speaks Out for EC in Wisconsin

LAST DECEMBER, CATHOLICS for Choice (CFC) joined with Family Planning Health Services of Wisconsin in a public education effort about emergency contraception, highlighting Catholic support for its availability and use.

CFC and Family Planning Health Services of Wisconsin developed TV and radio ads that highlighted the voices of young prochoice Catholics. These women, part of young Catholics for Choice (YCFC), a new initiative of CFC for young people, promoted a positive message about EC.

The ads, which aired throughout Wisconsin, stressed the need for women to have EC on hand to prevent a pregnancy. In addition to the members of YCFC, staff of FPHS traveled the state to promote the messages.

To listen to the ads, visit www.ezec.org.

To join the YCFC listserv, send an email to YCFC@CatholicsForChoice.org.

Catholic Health Association Examines EC

THE JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010 issue of *Health Progress*, the journal of the Catholic Health Association—the national leadership organization of Catholic-sponsored healthcare institutions in the United States—featured three articles that looked at the science, ethics and practical applications of emergency contraception (EC).

In all three instances, Catholic healthcare professionals asserted that emer-

gency contraception is a safe and appropriate contraceptive measure for many women; it is not an abortifacient as some bishops claim. In addition, for women who have been raped, it is a compassionate and sometimes vital treatment.

The first article outlines how Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore, MD, responds to victims of sexual assault. Stemming from its commitment to care for the sick, the Sexual Assault Examiners Program at Mercy offers emergency contraception as it is "highly effective in preventing a woman from becoming pregnant from the violent crime of rape," according to Debra Holbrook, the article's author and the coordinator of forensic nursing at Mercy.

The second article looks at the science behind EC. The article's subhead states plainly: "Science shows it is not an abortifacient," thus denying the claims of many bishops and conservative Catholics who claim that it is. Dr. Sandra Reznik of St. John's University in New York writes that EC "acts to prevent pregnancy before, and only before, fertilization occurs."

Finally, Ron Hamel, the senior director of ethics at CHA, looks at the ethics around EC. In this article, he suggests that absolute certitude about the potential abortifacient effects of EC is not needed, because enough moral certitude exists to make a sound moral decision. He concludes that "given what is currently known about Plan B from

scientific research, Catholic hospitals can respond with sensitivity, compassion and assistance to women who have been raped and are in need of care, while being confident that they are also remaining true to Catholicism's fundamental commitment to respect for human life."

The *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, written by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, supports the provision of EC in the cases of rape if it can be proved that pregnancy has not occurred. At the same time, some bishops have lobbied against laws that would mandate the provision of EC for sexual assault victims.

To read the articles, visit www.chausa.org.

The Church and State

Catholic Answers Loses Lawsuit against IRS

IN 2004, CATHOLICS FOR Choice filed a complaint with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) against Catholic Answers, an organization that engaged in impermissible partisan political activity while maintaining a tax-exempt status.

Rather than defend its activities, Catholic Answers sought to restructure its activities so as to allow it to intervene in political activity. Ultimately, the IRS found that Catholic Answers had indeed violated the law, and required it to pay taxes on the expenditure on the illegal political activities, confirming CFC's

© REUTERS, 2005.



Representative Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) stood his ground on healthcare reform, despite vocal opposition from his local bishop, Thomas Tobin.

assertion that the organization had engaged in “acts of political intervention.”

In response, Catholic Answers filed a lawsuit against the IRS, claiming that the agency has a habit of intimidating nonprofit organizations that speak out on moral issues.

In October, a federal judge threw out the lawsuit. Chief US District Judge Irma E. Gonzalez stated, “IRS’s decision to assess the taxes was based on a combination of the content of the specific E-Letters mentioning Senator Kerry, along with the online publishing of the [Voter’s Guide] in the context of an election year.”

Kennedy Stands Firm on Healthcare

IN THE MIDST OF THE debate on healthcare reform, a very personal debate heated up between Representative Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and

Bishop Thomas Tobin of Providence, Rhode Island.

In an interview with Catholic News Service, Kennedy questioned the US bishops’ opposition to the healthcare reform bill. The congressman stated, “I can’t understand for the life of me how the Catholic Church could be against the biggest social justice issue of our time, where the very dignity of the human person is being respected by the fact that we’re caring and giving health care to the human person—that right now we have 50 million people who are uninsured.”

Bishop Tobin responded to Kennedy, calling him a “disappointment” and asking for a meeting which was planned and then canceled by Kennedy after the spat became public.

Tobin then wrote a scathing letter published in a local newspaper rebuking

Kennedy. In the letter, he called Kennedy’s support of choice “a deliberate and obstinate act of the will” that was “unacceptable to the Church and scandalous to many of our members.”

Representative Patrick Murphy, a Catholic Democrat of Pennsylvania, defended Kennedy, stating, “We don’t legislate at the order of the Vatican, we legislate what is in our conscience and what we think is good for our country.”

Kennedy has maintained his prochoice voting record, voting in favor of healthcare reform and against the Stupak-Pitts Amendment that was attached to the healthcare bill in the US House of Representatives.

Rules around German Church Tax Called Into Question

THE CHURCH TAX IN Germany requires members

of the Catholic church in the country to pay 8 to 9 percent of their income tax to the Catholic church. The funds are used for schools, hospitals and other social services delivered by the church, the preservation of church buildings and, in some cases, the salaries of bishops, priests and deacons. Germans who are baptized Catholics can avoid paying the tax only by formally leaving the church and reporting that disassociation to the state.

In July 2007, Dr. Hartmut Zapp, a canon lawyer, signed the requisite form declaring his intention to leave the “public body of the church.” He wanted to avoid paying the tax while remaining in “the church as the communion of the faithful.” In July 2009, the Freiburg administrative court ruled in Zapp’s favor.

The Freiburg archdiocese appealed his declaration to the administrative court, questioning its validity, and has said it will appeal again, given the ruling of the court. As the church in Germany earns approximately €5 billion a year from the church tax, the archdiocese stands to lose a great deal if Zapp’s case sets precedent for other Catholics who may wish to stop paying the church tax, while still maintaining their identity as Catholic.

The number of Germans filing to leave the church has risen significantly in the past four years. In 2006, 84,389 left; in 2007, 93,667 left; and in 2008, 121,155 left, making a 40.4 percent increase from 2006.

DC Council Stands Firm despite Archdiocesan Threats

IN DECEMBER, THE DC Council voted on the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Equality Amendment Act of 2009 (18-482), which would allow same-sex marriages within the District. The measure passed by an overwhelming margin, with the Council voting 11-2 on two separate occasions.

Leading up to the vote, the Archdiocese of Washington was among the most vocal opponents of the legislation. The month before the vote, the archdiocese released a statement in which it threatened to pull Catholic social service programs from the District if the city passed the law, saying that it would infringe upon religious freedom to require Catholic employers to provide benefits to same-sex partners and adoption services to same-sex couples.

A spokesperson for the diocese stated, "All of those services will be adversely impacted if the exemption language remains so narrow."

Councilmember David Catania responded, "If they find living under our laws so oppressive that they can no longer take city resources, the city will have to find an alternative partner to step in to fill the shoes."

Catholic Charities has received over \$8 million in city contracts in the past two years.

The bill is expected to take effect in early March, following a required 30-day Congressional review period.



In a meeting at the Vatican, Pope Benedict XVI speaks to Irish bishops about the sex abuse scandal.

In mid-February, the archdiocese transferred its entire foster-care program to the National Center for Children and Families. Catholic Charities also revised its healthcare benefits program so that no new employees or newly married employees can get coverage for their partners—gay or straight.

The Church and the Sex Abuse Crisis

Another Report Reveals Gravity of Irish Sex Abuse Scandal

THE REPORT OF THE Commission of Investigation in the Dublin archdiocese, led by Judge Yvonne Murphy, was released in November 26, 2009.

The Murphy Report, as it is commonly known, showed how "the Dublin

Archdiocese's pre-occupations in dealing with cases of child sexual abuse, at least until the mid 1990s, were the maintenance of secrecy, the avoidance of scandal, the protection of the reputation of the Church, and the preservation of its assets. All other considerations, including the welfare of children and justice for victims, were subordinated to these priorities."

The report implicated the involvement of bishops who are currently serving or had served in the Dublin archdiocese. Four of these bishops have submitted their resignations since the report's publication. Other prelates invoked the concept of "mental reservation" to justify the abuse cover-up. They say that their lies to cover up the sexual abuse were justified in order to protect themselves.

Despite the well-publicized cases of sex abuse and

cover-ups by the hierarchy in the Dublin archdiocese for several decades, Pope Benedict XVI stated that he was "shocked and anguished" by the content of the report.

Bridgeport, Conn., Faces New Information on the Sex Abuse Scandal

THE SEX ABUSE SCANDAL continues in the United States. In October 2009, the Bridgeport diocese lost a bid to delay the court-ordered release of thousands of legal documents from lawsuits filed against priests accused of sexually abusing children. The records were originally obtained by 23 plaintiffs in the 1990s, but were sealed in 2001 after settlements were reached.

The depositions of Cardinal Edward Egan, who was the bishop of Bridgeport during the time of the settlements, were among the documents released. In these depositions, Egan

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acknowledged his involvement in keeping abuse allegations secret from the police and parishioners.

In one deposition, when the cardinal was asked if he considered the 19 individuals who made claims of abuse to be a significant number, he replied, "I do not consider that a significant segment or factor."

At another point, the cardinal refused to admit that any abuse had occurred, stating, "Incidentally these things don't happen, and we are talking about ifs." "Forgive me, Father—Bishop," replied his questioner, "but these things do happen because that's the reason why we're seated here today."

This was not an isolated incident. Another time, he dismissed the abuse, stating, "Claims are claims. Allegations are allegations." He continued, "These things [sexual abuse complaints] happen in such small numbers. It's marvelous when you think of the hundreds and hundreds of priests and how very few have ever been accused, and how very few have even come close to having anyone prove anything."

Vatican Seeks to Deflect Attention in Sex Abuse Scandal

DURING A MEETING OF THE UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Vatican's permanent observer to the UN, read a statement on the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic church in response to an intervention by the International Humanist and Ethical

Union (IHEU). The IHEU accused the Holy See of covering up child abuse and being in breach of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the Vatican is a signatory.

In his statement, Tomasi quoted statistics to show that sex abuse within the Protestant and Jewish communities is common. Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, head of the New York Board of Rabbis, responded, "Comparative tragedy is a dangerous path on which to travel. All of us need to look within our own communities. Child abuse is sinful and shameful and we must expel it immediately from our midst."

Endnotes

USCCB Committees to Determine Legitimacy of Catholic Organizations

AT THE BISHOPS' MEETING last November, Cardinal Francis George of Chicago confirmed the establishment of three committees of bishops to create guidelines for determining what is a "legitimate" Catholic entity.

In his opening remarks, the cardinal stated, "The purpose of our reflections, therefore, is to clarify questions of truth or faith and of accountability or community among all those who claim to be part of Catholic communion."

Entities whose legitimacy will be examined will include Catholic universities, Catholic media and organizations that "direct various works under Catholic auspices," according to George.

Not all bishops are in support of the formation of these committees, especially given the ambiguity about how the committees will establish criteria for what is considered a truly Catholic university, organization or media publication. One doubtful bishop stated, "Are you going to baptize a Catholic organization? The name 'Catholic' isn't trademarked. So how is it going to work?"

Catholic Sisters Push Back on Vatican Investigation

IN JANUARY 2009, THE Vatican announced the apostolic visitation of congregations of women religious in the US. Many are questioning the motives of Vatican officials, who have not publicly stated the reasons for the investigation.

The visitation has three parts. The first, meeting with congregational leaders of each of the order, has been completed. The second phase required completion of lengthy questionnaires by each congregation, and was to be completed by last

November. The third phase will consist of on-site visits to select congregations, and will commence in April 2010.

Leaders of several congregations reportedly did not fully complete the questionnaires, with some saying they declined to answer questions they deemed inappropriate.

Polish Parliament Protects IVF

DESPITE INTENSE PRESSURE from conservative Catholics and the church hierarchy, a proposal to criminalize in vitro fertilization (IVF) in Poland was defeated in parliament. Under the proposal "all people whose actions lead to in vitro fertilization" would be subject to a penalty of up to three years in prison.

One group, "Contra in vitro" was able to collect the required 160,000 signatures to bring the proposed legislation to parliament, with the support of Polish bishops who have called IVF "a sophisticated form of abortion." The legislation was rejected, 244 to 162 with 10 abstentions. ■

Henry P. David

A dear friend and ally of Catholics for Choice passed away in December. Dr. Henry David, a longtime advocate for reproductive rights, spent more than 40 years promoting women's rights and researching reproductive behavior. His studies looked at trends in family planning and abortion, most notably in Czechoslovakia where he studied the psychological impact on women who had been denied access to abortion. His work, along with that of others in the field, helped pave the path to the liberalization of abortion laws around the world.

We lost a giant, but Henry's legacy to the sexual and reproductive rights movement will live on. We are grateful for his contribution and extend our sympathies to his family.

The Bishops' Sexual Problems

By Jon O'Brien and Sara Morello



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IT'S AMAZING HOW A TREMENDOUSLY powerful organization with more than a billion adherents around the world and unmatched access to money, decision makers and the

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media, decides to use its muscle. Look at your television sets. Read the papers. Listen to the radio. What is the Catholic hierarchy talking about? Economic injustice? World hunger? Peace in the Middle East? How about caring for orphans, the elderly or the poor? These

are, after all, just a few of the social justice issues that keep untold numbers of good Catholics awake at night. But, no, the hierarchy is generally not talking about these concerns. When the Vatican and the bishops speak, it's more often than not about one thing: sex.



It's incredible. No matter where you look or what you read, sex and the "rules" that surround it are what bishops talk about. In Brazil, when the family of a nine-year-old rape victim sought an abortion, the voice of compassion, of social justice, did not come from the bishops, who demanded

she continue the pregnancy. In Costa Rica, where families desperately want to have children, but need IVF to conceive, who led the charge to outlaw assisted reproductive technologies in that country? It was the bishops, trying to claim theirs was the prolife position. In Spain, the bishops fought hard, though unsuccessfully, against the government's legal recognition of marriages of same-sex couples. Civil rights seem to have selective application in the Vatican's worldview.

Do you need someone to make sure we don't achieve the Millennium Development Goals on reducing maternal mortality? Do you want that voice to say that providing comprehensive sexuality education is somehow a plot to undermine the relationship between parents and their children? Would you like them to condemn as immoral medical interventions that save women's lives, like family planning and safe abortion, as well? Our church is the only religion whose leaders have an official seat in the United Nations—and they'll help you out. They'll do it from a place they call the "Holy See."

In the Philippines, compassionate Catholic policymakers want to help the economic plight of millions by making it possible for couples to get free family planning. But the bishops will use any threat, big or small, in their campaign against these legislators. If you say yes to birth control or condom distribution the bishops will say no to you at the Communion rail—and they'll tell your constituents to vote you out of office.

In Mexico and Kenya, the bishops don't make headlines for their corporal or spiritual works of mercy. Instead, they're working to change the constitution to ensure that women cannot get safe abortions when they need them. And, if women don't already have the message that they are second-class citizens in the institutional church, now the bishops are making sure embryos have more rights.

On his way to Cameroon, the pope outright lied about condoms, claiming that rather than providing a means to prevent the spread of HIV, they "increase the problem." Leaving social justice aside,

that breaks the ninth commandment. Was there nothing else the pope had to say to the people of Africa on his first visit to the continent? The most important message was not to use a condom? Even if you're married and your spouse has HIV? This is what he's worried about?

We don't have to look so far afield, however, to get a lesson about the bishops' obsession with sex. Our office is a mile and a half from the US Capitol, where we recently witnessed another spectacle of episcopal intervention. The bishops' message during the healthcare debate was loud and clear. If the choice were theirs, they would sacrifice the chance to improve the healthcare of more than 30 million un- and underinsured Americans if they couldn't tighten restrictions on one, and only one, safe and legal medical procedure: abortion. And no, their position isn't right, or just or fair—but it is, once again, about sex. And it's also about control.

The story of the bishops' preoccupation with sex isn't new, but its startling application around the globe and their willingness to make it the sine qua non of nearly every policy debate, public proclamation or homily has reached, for many, the tipping point. It really is enough to make people ask why Catholics have such a problem with sex. And sometimes, it's enough to make one wonder the same thing.

We decided to ask Catholics what they thought about sex, about the bishops' party line and about how they reconciled, if they could, what they hear from the church's leaders with their own experiences. We also asked how we got here, to a place where there is such a chasm between bishops and the Catholics they are ordained to teach and care for. We received, as you would imagine, a range of responses, some of which are included in these pages. Others provide us still more food for thought and continued conversation.

We found a common thread in many stories. It is that Catholics try every day to reconcile their faith with the totality of their lives, including their sexual lives. They try less often to reconcile the

Vatican's pronouncements on sex with anything. This hasn't escaped the bishops' attention. So, failing to convince Catholics that they must adhere to a narrow, often negative view of sex and sexuality, the bishops have sought to legislate Catholics into submission. And they're interested in much more than merely canon law—the church's internal laws. They have national and international codes in their sights.

It is worth noting at this point that the church's internal laws on sex haven't had the intended result. Straight Catholics have sex without the benefit of marriage, as the saying goes. Gay and lesbian Catholics have sex, though sacramental marriage is not a benefit available to them. Priests have sex. Nuns have sex. Bishops have sex. Catholics use contraception.

The bishops block consensus at the United Nations, based on a tenuous claim to a voice in that assembly. They issue last-minute ultimatums to leaders in the US Congress and engineer backroom deals to get their way. In countries across Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia, as well as in states across the map, they threaten politicians if they don't vote as commanded. Power that surely is, but it is not based on any legitimate spiritual argument or pastoral advice. It's just politics and intimidation.

It's difficult to give a definitive answer as to why the Catholic hierarchy is so sex-obsessed. In truth, perhaps there are many reasons. For some it may be ignorance—these men do not have the experience to understand the economic, emotional or

macy if he accepted changes in the church's teachings on artificial birth control, the bishops fear that if they admit that they are wrong about anything, their legitimacy and control over everything will disappear.

Sadly, it is the bishops lack of faith in the ability of Catholics to embrace freedom, their inability to acknowledge that it is better admit error and move closer to truth, that has diminished their legitimacy. Catholics the world over would be delighted to hear the following from their bishops: "This really doesn't work any more. We know times change. We asked you, we listened to what you had to say, and we think that we need to find a better way to preach the gospel message in a way that responds to your life."

Creating a climate where people have to live in secrecy and shame may work for a while—until there's full-scale rebellion.

Catholics have abortions. Catholic doctors prescribe contraception, provide abortions, and use the best of science to help couples conceive in ways that don't require "performance of the conjugal act." Despite all this activity, there aren't really long lines at the confessional.

Catholics get remarried after divorce and have sex with their new spouses. And they go to Communion with an untroubled conscience. The number of and grounds for annulments cause complaint, but how many people when they take marriage vows, (a) understand what the church teaches about marriage, and (b) unreservedly commit themselves to it? Some do, certainly. But is good Catholic sex only for them? And only when they follow the rules—rules made by a group of men who are not supposed to have any firsthand knowledge of the topic?

Nevertheless, having failed to convince the church (and it is all of us, mostly unconvinced Catholics who are the church) of the correctness of their teachings or of the validity of their laws, the bishops took to the halls of secular power.

physical burdens that beset so many people. For others—the more career-minded churchmen—agreeing with the men in power is a surer way to the top in what looks more and more like a corporate institution than a prophetic society. It is possible that for some the need to publicly disavow the sexual part of their own lives leads to a desire to restrict the sexual lives of the people who look to them for moral and spiritual guidance. Undoubtedly, some recognize that to control people's fertility is to hold a powerful influence over their lives. Creating a climate where people have to live in secrecy and shame may work for a while—until there's full-scale rebellion.

Maybe it's all of these things, and maybe it's none of them. Whatever the case, these stories rarely end well for the people who try to rule with an iron fist.

Another possibility is that the bishops' refusal to change their teachings on sex are driven by fear. This happened in 1968, when Pope Paul VI rejected the majority report of the Birth Control Commission. Just as Pope Paul feared a loss of legiti-

While we're waiting for that message from the Vatican, we think that the hierarchy and its misinformation need to be challenged in a constructive way. The articles here are part of that challenge. Our work, and the work and lives of Catholics around the world who believe in what we do are other parts. We believe there is a lot to be optimistic about. Catholics are trying to figure out how they can live good, responsible, healthy, caring sexual lives despite the messages coming from Rome. And they are doing it in ways that embrace, not reject, their faith.

We take great comfort and strength in the knowledge that Catholics recognize conscience as the final arbiter for each and every important, moral decision they make. Catholics use their consciences every day when they decide to use a condom, to provide an abortion, to prescribe birth control, to use IVF to conceive, or even just decide to have sex for pleasure alone. We submit that they are better Catholics for it, despite what the bishops say. It's not Catholics who have a problem with sex—it's the bishops. ■

Misplaced Priorities

In 1995, the Pontifical Council for the Family released “The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality—Guidelines for Education within the Family.” This document, basically a summary of Vatican teachings on sex, contains a few worthwhile sections. However, the vast majority of it denigrates us as sexual beings.

We agree, for example, that parents should be the principle educators of their children when it come to giving them “an adequate preparation for adult life, particularly with regard to education in the true meaning of sexuality.” Its admonition that “Giving too many details to children is counterproductive. But delaying the first information for too long is imprudent,” also rings true.

The document’s restatement of Vatican II’s teachings on conscience is also welcome. “‘Moral conscience, present at the heart of the person’—which is ‘man’s most secret core and sanctuary,’ as the Second Vatican Council affirms, ‘enjoins him at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil.... In fact, ‘conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed’.”

We couldn’t agree more.

However, many sections of this document highlight the hierarchy’s regressive views on sex and the Vatican’s unwillingness to embrace the fullness of human sexuality. These are reprinted without comment but with text added to provide context.

- The decline of traditional models, including respect for fundamental values that served to protect and maintain the general culture, leads to “an eclipse of the truth about man which, among other things, exerts pressure to reduce sex to something commonplace.”
- Sexuality education “is influenced by a distorted individualistic concept of freedom, in an ambience lacking the basic values of life, human love and the family.”
- “A Christian education for chastity within the family cannot remain silent about the moral gravity involved in separating the unitive dimension from the procreative dimension within married life. This happens above all in contraception and artificial procreation. In the first case, one intends to seek sexual pleasure, intervening in the conjugal act to avoid conception; in the second case conception is sought by substituting the conjugal act with a technique. These are actions contrary to the truth of married love and contrary to full communion between husband and wife.”
- “It is also necessary to put before young people the consequences, which are always very serious, of separating sexuality from procreation when someone reaches the stage of practising sterilization and abortion or pursuing sexual activity dissociated from married love, before and outside of marriage.”
- “From the earliest age, parents may observe the beginning of instinctive genital activity in their child. It should not be considered repressive to correct such habits gently that could become sinful later, and, when necessary, to teach modesty as the child grows.”
- “During [the years of innocence], girls will generally be developing a maternal interest in babies, motherhood and homemaking. By constantly taking the Motherhood of the most holy Virgin Mary as a model, they should be encouraged to value their femininity.”
- “Masturbation particularly constitutes a very serious disorder that is illicit in itself and cannot be morally justified... .”
- “Today parents should be attentive to ways in which an immoral education can be passed on to their children through various methods promoted by groups with positions and interests contrary to Christian morality.”
- “In the first place, parents must reject secularized and anti-natalist sex education....”
- “Before adolescence, the immoral nature of abortion, surgical or chemical, can be gradually explained in terms of Catholic morality and reverence for human life.”
- “As regards sterilization and contraception, these should not be discussed before adolescence and only in conformity with the teaching of the Catholic Church.”
- “In some societies professional associations of sex-educators, sex-counsellors and sex-therapists are operating. Because their work is often based on unsound theories, lacking scientific value and closed to an authentic anthropology, and theories that do not recognize the true value of chastity, parents should regard such associations with great caution, no matter what official recognition they may have received.”
- “Parents must also reject the promotion of so-called ‘safe sex’ or ‘safer sex,’ a dangerous and immoral policy based on the deluded theory that the condom can provide adequate protection against AIDS. Parents must insist on continence outside marriage and fidelity in marriage as the only true and secure education for the prevention of this contagious disease.”
- “A particular problem that can appear during the process of sexual maturation is homosexuality, which is also spreading more and more in urbanized societies.... A distinction must be made between a tendency that can be innate and acts of homosexuality that ‘are intrinsically disordered’ and contrary to Natural Law.”
- “Especially when the practice of homosexual acts has not become a habit, many cases can benefit from appropriate therapy.”
- “For most homosexual persons, this condition constitutes a trial.”
- “Homosexual persons are called to chastity.”



A 15th century German woodcut that depicts a bishop blessing the marriage of Reymont of Poitou and his wife, Melusina.

Hierarchy, Sex and Power

A PRIMER ON EDUCATING BISHOPS

By Daniel C. Maguire

HERE IS THE SURPRISING news. The Catholic bishops are not all that interested in sex. As far as I have been able to discover, bishops do not walk around all day lasciviously savoring sexual images. Some of them may do that, and perhaps it would be better if more of them did that, as long as they found nonviolent ways of expressing their obsession. They might then have less time to investigate nuns and harass politicians and pretend in the press that they are theologians although most could not pass a graduate (undergraduate?) exam in theology.

I will grant that the bishops do talk a lot about sexual matters but mainly to say how awful it all is. They have a plausible claim to being the leaders in the “Just Say No To Sex Movement.” They say *no* to stem cell research, *no* to contraception, *no* to abortions, *no* to same-sex marriage. They even say *no* to masturbation, a topic that does not much concern the rest of the Christian Right. That is carrying the *no-to-sex* thing a bit too far. Masturbation, after all, has a claim to innocence. No one gets pregnant; no one gets a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and someone has a wonderful time. You would think they would have spared that one. But no. Our

bishops are nothing but thorough in their war against sex.

What then is the agenda of these bishops in their crusade against sexual joy? Here I turn to Thomas Aquinas for help. Poor Thomas had a lot of trouble with bishops who were always condemning him—I know the feeling—and I’m sure he would be happy to help us. Thomas said that every negation is based on an affirmation. Stretching that a bit, if people are obsessed with denouncing something they are usually up to something else. What the bishops are up to is *power*. The bishops want power. They want control. They want to influence political elections, and do so from “tax exempt” properties. The bishops want to exercise thought control in universities and the press; they want to control all Catholic pulpits lest prophetic freedom find a home there. And they want to control the sexual and reproductive lives of people, Catholic or not. All of that is a tad arrogant.

EDUCATING BISHOPS

Here is the good news. The bishops have a problem, but there is a cure. Education. It won’t be easy. Students who think they are divinely inspired are a challenge to any teacher. Still, it is worth trying and here’s why. For better or for worse, bishops have more clout in society than most other religious leaders. When they use it well, it is lovely. When Congress was moving toward a particularly vicious piece of anti-

immigrant legislation, Cardinal Roger Mahoney of Los Angeles spoke out against it saying he would tell his priests to disobey that law if it passed. Congress blinked and returned to its inhospitable ruminations. There is a reason for that social power. Compare the arrival of a bishop to a Catholic diocese with the arrival of a new Presbyterian church leader. I love Presbyterians but their inauguration liturgies are just plain dull. When a bishop comes to take over a diocese the event is operatic. He arrives dressed in medieval garb with a gilded crown and a large glistening staff in hand. The doors of the cathedral are barred to him. He knocks and knocks again and then with the blare of trumpets the doors open, he is received into the church, and the medieval pageantry unfolds. Presbyterians, eat your heart out.

People notice things like that. Theater speaks with a booming voice where feeble texts and iconoclastic ceremonies wither into boredom. We are liturgical animals and Catholicism is liturgically rich. Hence my controversial conclusion: bishops are worth educating.

Since bishops like to listen to bishops, we can work with that. It will seem less presumptuous. We don’t want to be presumptuous; we want to be nice and we want to help them. The old canon law spoke the obvious when it said that “the bishops, whether teaching individually or gathered in particular councils, are not

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endowed with infallibility” (Canon 1326, CIC 1917). It’s good to know that. The Second Vatican Council echoed that wisdom. There the bishops spoke (at times) with a noble humility. In *The Church in the Modern World* they write: “Let the laity not imagine that pastors are always such experts, that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give a concrete solution, or even that such is their mission.” That is a refreshingly beautiful statement.

Moral matters are complicated. As Thomas Aquinas said moral matters involve “an infinity of diverse circumstances” (*quasi infinitae diversitates*). Take abortion, for example. Now there is a complicated issue full of “diverse circumstances” and it is wise as the bishops say not to imagine that bishops are experts on all such matters or “even that it is their

An abortion is arranged.

Case 5: A case was once brought to the attention of Fr. Bernard Haring, the distinguished Redemptorist moral theologian. After removing a tumor from the uterus of a pregnant woman, a surgeon in Germany could not stop the bleeding. He removed the non-viable fetus so that the uterus would contract. It did and the woman survived and a Catholic surgeon had performed a direct abortion. A priest told the surgeon he had acted wrongly. The surgeon appealed to Fr. Haring. Fr. Haring disagreed, saying the surgeon acted morally and properly. He had saved as much life as was possible. Fr. Haring asked: by what thinking could the fetus have such a right to life that it could kill both itself and the woman by exercising it? Such rights, he said, do not exist.

Case 6. Alicja Tysiac, in 2000, was

SHOULD WE SILENCE THE BISHOPS?

Of course not. They have freedom of speech and like all of us they have an obligation to use it well and to display an appropriate modesty when addressing truly complicated moral issues on which good and wise people can and do disagree. Where do we go for an example of that?

Back to the bishops.

In November of 1966, the American bishops spoke out on the morality of the American war in Vietnam. They spoke with modesty and sincerity, which is good, since they were dead wrong. Still, their manner of teaching was exemplary and could provide them now with a paradigm for addressing other complicated issues. Here is the admirable way they began:

We realize that citizens of all faiths and of differing political loyalties honestly

The bishops have a problem, but there is a cure. Education. It won’t be easy.

mission.” Playing at being infallible is not in the bishops’ job description.

Just take these cases from real, complicated life, and see how wise it would be not to pretend to be infallible.

Case 1: A woman is happily pregnant, two months pregnant. She is diagnosed with cancer requiring immediate chemotherapy treatment which also attacks the fetus. She aborts.

Case 2: In spite of her best contraceptive efforts a woman gets pregnant. She has a heart condition which would put her at high risk of dying if she stayed pregnant. She aborts.

Case 3: A young woman is bi-polar, manic depressive and her psychotic condition is managed by lithium. She becomes pregnant in spite of her best efforts. Lithium would devastate the cardiovascular system of the fetus and probably already has. She aborts.

Case 4: A nine-year-old Nicaraguan girl is raped and impregnated. She cannot bear a child at her age without disastrous effects on her body as well as on her mind.

advised that her pregnancy, if carried to term, would cause blindness. She was forbidden to abort and lost nearly all her eyesight. The European Court of Human Rights ruled in her favor saying she should have been allowed to abort.

Case 7: In 2005, the UN Human Rights Committee ruled that Peru violated the rights of a 17-year-old girl who was forced to carry to term an anencephalic fetus, missing most of its forebrain and unable to survive outside the womb. The International Covenant on Civil and Political rights ordered Peru to pay reparations and establish a framework for women to access therapeutic abortions.

Case 8: In 2006 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights made Mexico pay a 13-year-old rape victim who was forced to give birth \$40,000, plus a stipend for her son’s education.

Few ethicists in any of the world’s religions would argue that abortion is immoral in those cases. Recognizing complexity is the beginning of wisdom on abortion or any other moral issue.

differ among themselves over the moral issues involved in this tragic conflict.

While we do not claim to be able to resolve these issues authoritatively, in the light of the facts as they are known to us, it is reasonable to argue....

What a marvelous way to teach. What a model that offers today’s bishops when they move into those pelvic zone issues that so consume them. Using their own example, here is how bishops should teach on same-sex marriages.

We realize that citizens of all faiths and of differing political loyalties honestly differ among themselves over the moral issues involved in same-sex marriages. While we do not claim to be able to resolve those issues authoritatively, in the light of the facts as they are known to us, it is reasonable to argue....

Who could object to that, even if we judge them wrong, as they were in defending the Vietnam War?

We don't want the bishops to be accused of a double standard: total rigor and absoluteness on sexual and reproductive matters, modesty on little things like state-sponsored slaughter, that is, war. That's not what we want from the bishops. That would make them look silly and lopsided in their moral judgment, and we don't want that. We don't want them

Over the pope as the expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority there still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, *if necessary even against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority*. This emphasis on the individual, whose conscience confronts him with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and *one which in the last*

of Cardinal John Henry Newman when he famously said he would toast the pope, only after toasting his own conscience. Only in cults are religious leaders taken to be a substitute for conscience.

My next cardinal in this primer for educating bishops is Cardinal Avery Dulles, of somewhat happy memory. Though theologian Dulles, like theologian



German bishops await the start of their annual conference.

squandering their moral authority on issues where they have no privileged expertise. That hamstringing any good they might do in advocating prophetically on basic issues of justice and peace.

IN PRAISE OF CARDINAL RATZINGER

Keeping to our theme of “bishops educating bishops,” I turn next to the words of Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, in his younger and saner period. In his commentary on the Second Vatican Council, he said:

*resort is beyond the claim of external social groups, even of the official Church, also establishes a principle in opposition to increasing totalitarianism. (Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*. Vol. 5, 1976.)*

What the cardinal, some day to be pope, was saying is that bishops and popes who try to usurp the sacred prerogatives of conscience are totalitarian and need lessons from Jesus who was seen as “meek and humble of heart.” This reflects the wisdom

Ratzinger, did not age well he spoke with brilliance in his presidential address to the Catholic Theological Society of America. He was addressing the question of hierarchical authority over conscience and the proper response to hierarchical teaching. He said that the Second Vatican Council “implicitly taught the legitimacy and even the value of dissent.” The Council, Dulles said, conceded “that the ordinary magisterium of the Roman Pontiff had fallen into error, and had unjustly harmed the careers of loyal and able theologians.”

He mentioned John Courtney Murray, Teilhard de Chardin, Henri de Lubac and Yves Congar. Dulles said that certain teachings of the hierarchy “seem to evade in a calculated way the findings of modern scholarship. They are drawn up without broad consultation with the theological community. Instead, a few carefully selected theologians are asked to defend a pre-established position....”

He concludes: “We shall insist on the right, where we think it important for the good of the Church, to urge positions at variance with those that are presently official.” Office holders who are being harassed by conservative bishops, the likes of Burke, Tobin and Morlino, take heart and stand your ground. You can disagree with these fellows; and when they are wrong, it is a good idea to do so.

should and who should not receive sacramental Communion. Sacramental sanctions are out of order. There may be, I concede, a certain attractiveness to the idea of denying Communion to those of another political hue, but even that would be wrong. An informed conscience is the only guide to the Communion rail. No bishop has a right to block the aisle. It is interesting in a pathetic sort of way that the bishops who use the sacrament as weapon do not use it on poverty mongers, war makers and earth wreckers, but only on those who support sexual and reproductive rights. It is here they try to marshal their power and impose their will. It is not for me but for their therapists to help them understand this preferential option for pelvic zone issues as the expression of episcopal power.

While in a prayerful mood, the bishops should then pray to Saint Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence, canonized in 1523, and the premier theologian of marriage in his day. Regarding abortion, this saintly bishop was prochoice for early abortions when necessary to save the woman’s life, a large category involving many abortions in the medical conditions of that day. A prayer to this saintly prochoice fellow-bishop could help to illuminate the minds of theologically challenged bishops.

HEROIC BISHOPS

My plan to educate bishops would seem zany and hopeless were there not examples of bishops behaving wonderfully. The current bishop of Killaloe in Ireland spoke recently with Dublin journalists, including the BBC. Bishop Willie Walsh

An informed conscience is the only guide to the Communion rail. No bishop has a right to block the aisle.

On another occasion, speaking at the Catholic University of America, Dulles wondered whether Thomas Aquinas “if he were alive today...would be welcome at the Catholic University of America.” Dulles did not limit the term “magisterium” to the bishops and popes and he insisted that the “magisterium of the professors” relies “not on formal authority but rather on the force of reason.” He aligned himself with St. Thomas Aquinas’ view that “with the growth of the great universities the bishops could no longer exercise direct control over the content of theological teaching.” Their role, Dulles insisted, “was primarily pastoral, rather than academic.”

To assume power you do not have is the very definition of despotism. This is the kind of power the bishops use when they plow into debatable issues of morality and politics and use every weapon in their power to impose their control, including sacramental sanctions. And they don’t do this consistently.

They assume the authority to say who

A PRAYERFUL TIMEOUT FOR BISHOPS

We should build prayer into our reeducation project for the bishops. Praying to saints is a very Catholic thing. The bishops may already do that but it seems they leave out some of the greatest saints in Christian history. My suggestion, humbly proffered, is this: The bishops should stop their lobbying in congressional offices and kneel for a moment to say a prayer to Saints Sergius and Bacchus, fourth-century male saints, whose marriage to one another is depicted in a seventh-century icon housed in the Kiev Museum of Eastern and Western Art. Jesus is in the picture as the *pronubus*, or “best man,” the official witness of the same-sex union. For a long time in Christian early history, same-sex unions were liturgically performed as John Boswell pointed out in his book *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*. Perhaps in the illumination that prayer to these two gay saints may provide, the bishops would realize that marriage is not an award for being heterosexual. It is a human good and an epic of interpersonal love and commitment.

said he wanted to see “another Pope John XXIII.” (That was hardly a compliment to the current papal incumbent.) Such a new pope, said Bishop Walsh, would open up discussion about critical issues in the church, particularly the exclusion of women from the priesthood as well as optional celibacy. Bishop Walsh also expressed sadness about the Catholic hierarchy’s attitudes to homosexuality and its policy of refusing the Eucharist to couples who have remarried. He also challenged Vatican skittishness about Protestant Christians receiving the Eucharist, saying that he never suggested to Church of Ireland members that they were not welcome to receive the sacrament in his churches in the Diocese of Killaloe. Now that is an educated bishop. The United States has no comparably educated bishops but that could happen if our plan to educate them succeeds.

A few years ago, the bishop of Maputo, Mozambique, came to say Mass at one of his parishes. Afterwards he took ques-

tion from the congregation. The first question was, “What is the church’s position on condom use?” The question, posed from an AIDS-ravaged continent related to the Vatican’s weird and lethal teaching that condoms cannot be used even if one’s partner is HIV positive.

“God clearly tells us that we must protect life at all costs. Not to do so is a serious sin against God,” the bishop replied. He continued, using the ABC rule:

suicide.” He concluded: “So, my children, wearing a condom is not a sin...not wearing one is.”

The congregation took this advice and ran with it. According to the witness of this liturgy, “Sunday church services will never be the same, as now, every Sunday, part of the celebration is *the blessing of the condoms*.” Now there is a blessing you can believe in. The South African Catholic bishop Kevin Dowling gives the



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Pope Benedict XVI, who was—in his younger days—a champion for freedom of conscience.

“What does this mean to you and to me? It means that A is for abstinence and looking around at all of you today, many of you cannot live by this advice. Let us be realistic; few if any of you can abstain. Which brings us to B, be faithful. Some of you are faithful...many of you are not. So that leaves us with C, condoms. Now many of you believe that condoms are a crime against God, that wasted semen is a sin, but I am here today to tell you otherwise. You see, if you are HIV positive and you have unprotected sex and infect someone, you have, in the eyes of God committed murder. Or if you are HIV negative and you have unprotected sex with someone who is infected, you have in the eyes of God, committed

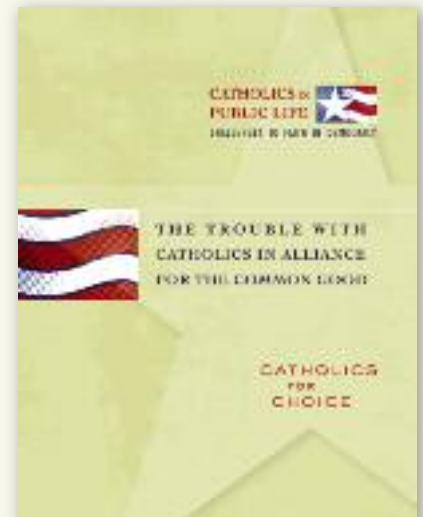
same message and no thunderbolts from the Vatican have struck him. In 2005, 47 percent of pregnant women in his diocese tested positive for HIV. “The only solution we have at the moment is condoms,” said Bishop Dowling.

In the final exam that we give to the bishops they must be able to distinguish between Catholic theology and Vatican theology. Catholic theology is broader, more ecumenical, more professional, more scholarly and better informed by real life experience than Vatican theology.

Once they learn that they will be better Catholics and they will be better prepared to use what power they have to bring “good news to the poor” and peace to this battered earth. ■

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK.

Send in your letter to the editor and receive a free copy of Catholic for Choice’s recent investigative report on Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, a young but vehemently antichoice organization.



Please e-mail letters to:

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Living a Catholic Life

AS WE REGULARLY POINT OUT IN THESE PAGES, THE OPINIONS OF CATHOLICS on the issues that concern us are very much in line with those of non-Catholics. However, the manner in which the Catholic hierarchy interprets the church's teachings can have a significant impact on the lives of individual Catholics. Here we begin an occasional series examining how individual Catholics are working through what it means to be a Catholic today while maintaining a healthy sex life, being respectful of others, acting in good faith and in good conscience.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

HOW THE HIERARCHY'S APPROACH TO SEX EDUCATION LEADS TO DIFFICULT CHOICES

By Anka Grzywacz

IT'S FUNNY HOW THESE MESSAGES of traditional Catholic morality get stuck in your head one way or another. I remember a time when I was a child and read about masturbation. Straight away, I started to believe that masturbation was a sin and something one was not supposed to practice. I don't know how it happened. While my parents were too shy to talk to me about sex, they never taught me that it was something

evil. They were typical Polish Catholics: churchgoing—but not every Sunday; never (or rarely) went to confession and generally did not take their faith very deeply or seriously.

Then, my elementary school friend got pregnant at the age of 16 and had to marry early. Watching this situation somehow shaped me into who I am today—a sex educator. My personal experience of living in a country where abortion is practically illegal and unplanned pregnancy is greatly feared took me on a path of self-education. I realized that to avoid the hell of a backstreet abortion, I needed to know everything possible about contraception. I also

understood that I wanted to help other young women and men become better informed about sexuality. Immediately after I came to Warsaw to study I became involved in the prochoice movement and co-organized the pioneer peer sex educators' group, Ponton.

As my feminist and prochoice views were taking shape, I had the increasing realization that I could no longer be a part of the institutional Roman Catholic church. Not only did I support abortion rights and contraception, I was also very much in favor of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights. How could I not have been? My best friend was gay. I stopped going to Mass,

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taking communion, only occasionally did I stop by the church to pray. I continued to volunteer as a sex educator and advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights in Poland.

When I first met Catholics for Choice, the idea that you could actually be a good Catholic and have progressive views was immediately appealing. It wasn't the bishops with their never-ending criticism and sexist comments about feminists and the "civilization of life" that brought me back to the pews but the brave and open-minded Catholics supporting a woman's right to choose. Since then, I became more interested in how (and if at all) the teenagers that I work with could reconcile their Catholic faith with their sexuality.

In more than seven years of work in peer education, I have rarely encountered a question regarding the moral aspects of sex. Teenagers want to know whether you can get pregnant the first time you have sex. They don't really care if it is acceptable to be Catholic and have premarital sex. And I assume most of these teens are Catholic, since the majority of Polish population is. Once in a while somebody raises doubts whether masturbation is a sin. Even then, they are usually just worried about whether masturbation will make them infertile.

The church, however, does interfere in the work done by Ponton. We are not invited or welcome in Catholic schools. In small towns and villages, the situation is even more difficult. There, the role of a priest who teaches religious education (which is practically obligatory in Poland) enjoys a respect equal to that of the school principal. We were invited once or twice to give a class on contraception and HIV prevention in a small village, which is difficult for us as it requires more time and energy (and some funding from the host school) to travel any distance out of Warsaw. Nevertheless, we decided to give a class, but the project never happened because the local priest interfered. I hate it when that happens because I know that it might have been the only chance for

those kids to learn anything about sex and protection. It makes me even more furious when I realize that soon enough that same priest will be blessing the wedding of an underage pregnant girl whose chance of receiving a good education ended the moment she didn't ask her boyfriend to use a condom.

The lack of progressive Catholic thought and discussion in Poland forces people to lie. I know personally and have heard or read about many couples who practice their faith but manage to recon-

and Catholicism has started after Ksawery Knotz, a Capuchin monk, wrote a book about sexuality in a Catholic marriage. Everyone praises him for being so open and progressive—which only shows that people don't read the books they are so keen to discuss. I wish Father Knotz limited himself to writing about the spiritual aspects of sexuality in a Catholic marriage—an interesting and valuable topic. The remaining "sex education" part is just sad. Instead of explaining why the official teachings condemn the use of



Father Ksawery Knotz reassuring a crowd that "Sex is ok," as long as it is in accord with the teachings of the hierarchy.

cile this with the use of contraceptives. When these people decide to get married in the church, a moral dilemma occurs—they know that to obtain permission and have all papers signed they need to participate in a series of lectures for engaged couples and openly express their opposition to contraception and abortion in all circumstances. Most choose to lie and go to the altar with a heavy conscience. I know a woman in the prochoice movement who was getting married in her home village. She agreed to play this game and solemnly swear she was completely against abortion.

Recently, public discussion about sex

condoms, he makes a failed attempt to illustrate what's wrong with condom use, for example by saying that the latex barrier is bad because male sperm is good for a woman's skin and makes the wife less stressed.

Here is my mantra: Do not mix up the two subjects. Let religious education refer to religion, with some place for discussion on the moral aspects of sexuality. Let sex education cover the scientific basics. We must trust that young people, having this knowledge, will be able to choose wisely. And if they choose sex, they will know how to protect their life and well-being. ■

Perpetual Thoughts of Impurity

By Terrence McNally

THIS IS GOING TO BE ABOUT sexuality, not morality. Sexuality is neither good nor bad. It simply is. That doesn't mean everyone doesn't have opinions about it. The church decided centuries ago that homosexuality, my sexuality, was wrong. I wasn't wrong, mind you, just the part of me that was sexual was wrong. The church's attitude of acceptance has expanded in my lifetime to say it was all right to think homosexual thoughts as long as I didn't actually act on them.

I was born in 1938 and taught to confess to "impure" thoughts. I suppose I'm glad to be allowed to have them now, though at my age they aren't really the issue they were when I was 15 and having them all the time. At that age, I lived in a state of perpetual impure thought, better known as an erection.

I've never considered myself much a free thinker or cutting-edge kind of guy, but when it came to sex I cut myself some slack. I went to parochial school from the beginning and knew my Catechism better than the boy at the next desk who I was already feeling erotic longings for.

Wrestling took care of those longings. I don't remember if I confessed them. Erotic wrestling? I don't think there was such a designation in Dante's *Inferno* or Pope Pius' latest encyclical on sin.

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Like many, McNally's formative moments—in terms of sexuality—happened at school.

This was my own version of "Don't ask, don't tell."

When we weren't wrestling, my friend Claude and I improvised our own brand of devout Catholicism. We skipped school on two consecutive Good Fridays and listened to recordings of Richard Strauss' opera "Salome" the one year and Camille Saint-Saens' "Samson et Dalilah" the next. We also wrestled and smoked unfiltered Lucky Strikes. We were good Catholic boys who believed that God wouldn't disapprove of our wrestling, music and tobacco—only Father Reilly, Mother Mary Margaret and our parents would.

Of course, we soon grew out of wrestling and spontaneous ejaculations and realized that we were beginning to have actual sex with another member of the same sex, we could no longer pretend there was any other word for it and what we were doing was a sin. We couldn't talk to Mother Mary Margaret about erections and desire. Our parents sent us to Father Reilly who reiterated the terrible wrongness of it all and told us to say 20 "Hail Marys" and six "Our Fathers," which I always thought was an incredibly light penance for the enormous amount of sin I had just confessed to. I never

felt his penances were severe enough to make me reconsider not committing the same sin later the same evening when my friend and I were having passionate sex again but this time in a state of grace, which ended, promptly, I guess, at the moment of orgasm. The church was never clear about these details. Even now, is kissing my husband a sin? Is our physical affection for each other only wrong when erections and coming are the climax? Father Reilly, God bless him, was very good at persuading us that we had a vocation for the priesthood but hopeless when it came to explaining sex to the horny adolescents in his charge. He never molested me. I almost wish he had. Then we would have had something to talk about. His policy about sex was “Don’t ask, and I won’t tell.”

By the time we had moved to a neighborhood too far across town to realistically attend the Jesuit high school, I was positive and confident in my sexuality. I didn’t think Jesus cared who I had sex with. I think he cared that when I did have sex with someone it was someone I cared about. I don’t mean in love with, I mean had affection for and that the sex was a joyful, important expression of that affection.

I always believed Jesus was a young man like me and that sex was just as important to him as it now was to me. He just didn’t talk about it much, especially for publication. He was sort of like my parents and Father Reilly that way. Jesus had the common sense to understand that we figure out our sexuality for ourselves, we don’t need anyone’s help to tell us who we’re attracted to. What he had a lot to say about was love, compassion and the need for us to love and respect and helping one another. I turned to Jesus for advice for just about everything—everything but sex. What would he think about abortion? Racism? Republicans? The war? My latest play? I learned from Jesus what to look for in another man: trustworthiness, humor, keen intelligence and, again that word, compassion. Jesus wisely stayed out of the business of sermonizing about physical attraction, which is an

unknowable thing anyway. He was smart that way, too.

If I had a physical attraction for an inappropriate male, it was Jesus himself—at least as he was depicted on the crucifix that hung over Mother Mary Margaret’s desk. This Jesus was muscular, scantily clad (we would look up to see if we could see anything under his loin cloth) and there was definitely a bulge against his loincloth from within. Modern gay parlance would call that a basket. What adolescent boy wouldn’t want to have a body like that when he grew up? None of the other crucifixes in Christ the King School were sex objects like Mother Mary Margaret’s. He actually looked unattractive in the big one over the high altar. Even then, I thought the Church was unwise to flaunt this semi-nude icon of its founder in front of so many impressionable boys. If they wanted me to grow up straight, they should have let me be educated looking at a representation of St. Teresa in her ecstasy or Catherine on her wheel.

But no, I spent the formative years of my adolescence staring at Mother Mary Margaret’s (to me) very sexual Jesus. Occasionally, I masturbated to it (probably not a good idea for a million reasons) but quickly found like-minded adolescent boys who believed that sex was important, necessary and good. Icons of lithe, seminaked young men nailed to a cross are unhealthy; the real thing in the back seat of your parents’ car or a hotel room when you’re out of town with the Speech Club is not.

Claude and I are the only members of that class who grew up to be homosexual men. That crucifix did not change the sexuality of other boys in the classroom. And Claude himself much preferred the looks and body of the Jesus in our school cafeteria. I thought he was effeminate.

Our sexuality was already present before priests and nuns and the church started telling us it was wrong.

I don’t believe Christ or the Life Force or Whatever You Want To Call It would have given us a sexual drive that was inherently bad or wrong. Yes, it can be twisted

but the initial attraction is a pure, spontaneous, natural expression of who I am. I figured this out for myself at an early age. I never bought the church telling me my sexuality was wrong. The Jesus I grew up loving never said that. He had nothing to do with my sexuality. His father didn’t “make me” gay either. Our sexuality is a part of us, although as we grow older it will be a much more important part of who we are than the color of our eyes or our baldness pattern.

Jesus loves me as I am. The church doesn’t. The Jesus I love, respect and try to emulate I wrote about in my play, “Corpus Christi.” I, the playwright, made him gay to express my belief that he represents the very best that any of us can be: man, woman; gay, straight. The Jesus I don’t love or admire is “his views” as interpreted and taught by the church. The majority of contemporary gay men and women accept who they are. When the church returns the favor, maybe a dialogue can begin.

Frankly, I’m embarrassed I even have to write a sentence like that. We all should be. Homosexuals aren’t sinners because they’re homosexuals. They’re sinners when they’re unkind, uncaring or uncommitted to the world around them. Fortunately, despite the church’s feelings about us, most of the gay men and women I know spend a fair amount of time in something very close to a state of grace.

I have Mother Mary Margaret and Father Reilly to thank for teaching me about Jesus. I have Jesus to thank for showing me a model life. I have myself to thank for figuring out that the church and what it has to say about sexuality is not the word of Jesus. I hope that doesn’t sound arrogant. I think it’s common sense.

We are all sexual human beings. Jesus taught us how to be good human beings. The church screws up big time when it tries to take our sexuality away from us. Jesus didn’t. He knew that sexuality is natural. It is part of who we are as we struggle to be moral human beings. He died for his sins. I’ve only been called some names. ■

Growing Up Catholic

By Molly O’Gorman

AS A YOUNG WOMAN at an all-girls Catholic school, I knew what was expected of me. I was to guard my chastity and virginity (no matter what any boy told me). I was to “save myself” for my husband. I was to be pure and overcome any sexual desires I might have, all in service of God’s greater plan. That plan, from the earliest lessons, wasn’t just married sex, but specifically procreation and child-bearing.

What I didn’t know was why my body developed so early, why my sexual self pushed so forcefully into my consciousness, why I menstruated years before I’d ever be married and had sexual dreams and suddenly found boys intriguing in a way that previously seemed impossible. I knew I wasn’t supposed to try to find the answers to those questions, but they were so persistent and all-consuming that I simply could not ignore them.

What is sinful quickly becomes shameful. To be trapped in a body that is rebelling against you, that feels acutely sexual despite your best efforts not to, that gives away your physical desires in the most embarrassing and confusing of ways and to experience it all as sinful ... well, no wonder teenage girls are so miserable.

The joyous exploration of my young woman’s body—the innocent desire to



Kissing leads towards sin, according to the Catholic hierarchy.

understand why things felt good, or simply to know that they did and to do them—became something secret, something that was wrong, that was against God’s plan for me. The amazing vessel He had given me was to be strictly controlled, not enjoyed with abandon. My body’s amazing sexual responses and processes were created with only one purpose in mind: procreation.

Kissing, which led to touching, which led to my first sexual experience, was initially accompanied by excitement, anticipation and a sense of fulfillment. Those feelings gave way, though—first to a sense of shame for having been weak, then to feelings of guilt and fear that the only great gift I had was gone.

My intellect, my ability to make anyone laugh, my love for books and music and art, my devoted friendship—none of these made up for the loss of my virginity. Why would anyone love a slut, a fallen girl, damaged goods? Why did I ever think

that I, Molly, without the greatest gift God gave me, my virginity, could be a complete, desirable woman?

I spent years in that limbo—wanting the love, the passion and the joy of an intimate physical relationship with my partners, but knowing that the church I call home found only sin and a departure from God’s plan in each caress. When I met my husband and got married, I thought my sexual self and

spiritual self would finally be able to live in peace.

And yet, even as a newlywed, I am not allowed the freedom of sexual expression advertised by the church as part of a monogamous, heterosexual marriage. Neither my husband nor I is ready to be a parent, but we are not allowed to practice safe sex. Condoms and contraceptives are forbidden and neither of us trusts the rhythm method. Are we meant to be celibate until we decide to have a child? That the joy and love my husband and I feel for one another must be tempered by guilt and worry over our church’s expectations for our relationship seems so contrary to the very idea of family and a lasting, loving union.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve wandered freely, unashamed of their bodies, their nakedness or their desires. But my church was created long after that innocent beginning and is determined not to let me—or any other woman—forget it. ■

MOLLY O’GORMAN is a former staff member of *Catholics for Choice*.

Catholic, HIV-positive and One of God's Children

By Vincent Chippriott

WAS BORN ON MARCH 5, 1950, IN a small market town in Pembrokeshire, South West Wales called Haverfordwest. Both my parents were devout Roman Catholics, my mother being French and my father Maltese. From the age of four I attended the Mary Immaculate Catholic Convent School where I was well educated by a small community of Sisters of Mercy who, though very strict, were also very kind. At the age of 11 I transferred to a secondary school and then to university where I obtained a degree in travel and tourism.

It was during my time at university I first realized my sexual identity as being that of a gay man. I attended Mass regularly and received the Holy Sacrament each Sunday. Knowing the church's teaching on homosexuality, my dilemma was whether to abstain from receiving communion and going to confession or to seek advice outside of the confessional. I decided on the latter: big mistake.

I was 18 years old. The priest to whom I went for counseling was horrified and said my feelings were both unnatural, immoral and a mortal sin. I was told that on no account was I to receive the Holy Sacraments, my soul was doomed for eternal damnation if I continued with my lifestyle and because of my age it was his duty to inform my parents of the situation.

When I left this meeting, I was in a terrible state of mind. I remember

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As an HIV-positive Catholic, Chippriott works to fight stigma around the epidemic, especially within faith communities.

running blindly through the streets of London. I found my way to the entrance of Westminster Cathedral. I went to the chapel of the Sacred Heart and knelt crying, trying to pray for forgiveness and guidance. I lost all sense of time; I only remember arriving back at my student accommodation, unable to sleep with feelings of guilt, sadness and of rejection by our Holy Mother and the church. Worried with thoughts of shame and the reaction I would receive from my loving parents, I contemplated committing suicide. I realized that whatever I did, I seemed to be doomed.

The following morning I was sum-

moned to my tutor's study. He said that he had received a phone call from my father. I was told I had to take the first train to Haverfordwest that afternoon without returning to my student accommodation. For the first time, there was no one to meet me at the train station. When I entered my parents' home, I was not greeted with affection, only grief. My father told me I had brought shame on the family name and that my mother was too upset to see me. I was told to go to my bedroom and wait as the local parish priest and my parents' doctor were coming to see me.

Father Paul Satori came to me first; his attitude was totally different from the

priest who I had first gone for counseling. He was very understanding and gentle; his concern was that homosexuality was still a criminal offense in the United Kingdom. He reassured me that my parents loved me and cared for me and that they were more concerned about my safety. We prayed together. He informed me that the Holy Spirit and the Sacred Heart of Jesus would guide me through this troubled period. And that no matter what, I was still a child of God and would always remain so. We agreed that he would discuss the situation with my parents once the doctor had seen me and would help me with my predicament.

The meeting with my parent's local doctor lasted for about an hour, I was told a lot of young men went through a period

have remained friends to this very day.

Not long after I met a partner and entered into a monogamous relationship. Though I remained a practicing Catholic, I abstained from taking the Holy Sacraments. Regrettably, after 17 years, my partner and I broke up over a conflict with our careers.

In 2004, I had a fall, fracturing my back and shattering my left patella. I was airlifted to a hospital in Sydney and underwent surgery on my leg. During the operation, I developed a high fever and was transferred to an intensive care unit while the cause of the fever was investigated. It turned out that I was HIV positive.

I was immediately put onto antiretroviral therapy and responded positively. While in intensive care, I woke up one

cism are failing members of their congregations who are living with HIV and others affected by the virus. This leaves people vulnerable, ostracized by and community that is otherwise a safe haven and source of strength. HIV-related stigma is an impediment to the well-being of individuals, families and communities and discourages people from going for HIV testing and disclosing their status.

In extreme cases, faith leaders have preached against the use of condoms and the use of life-saving HIV treatments, promising that God will heal those diagnosed with HIV and claiming that prayer alone can offer a cure. Prevention, namely through the use of condoms, is an important feature of stopping the spread of

Many faith communities including Roman Catholicism are failing members of their congregations who are living with HIV and others affected by the virus.

in their teenage years of confusion about sexuality and, with the right treatment, I would soon be a normal heterosexual man.

Two days later, against my will and to my horror, I was sectioned in a psychiatric hospital and forced to undergo electric shock treatment. I was kept in a private ward in the psychiatric hospital for three months while I underwent a series of shock treatments. After leaving the hospital, feeling very confused and lonely, Father Satori arranged for me to go on retreat for two weeks at the Caldey Island monastery before returning to university.

After returning to London and university I continued with my degree and remained a celibate and practicing Roman Catholic until I was 22. I even dated girls and got engaged to a delightful young woman. However, I soon realized that the sexual feelings I had for men were still present and to continue with the engagement would have been unfair and a lie. I broke it off. I was honest with my fiancée who, though shocked, respected my honesty and appreciated that it would only have led to problems in later life. We

afternoon to find a set of rosary beads had been placed in my hands. One of the nurses had noticed a crucifix around my neck and kindly arranged for a priest to visit me. Being diagnosed with HIV on top of surviving a fall proved that my God is not homophobic but an all-accepting and loving.

Fast forward five years, I am now living in Scotland, fast approaching my sixtieth birthday. My T-cell count is a healthy 700+. Since early June 2009, I have been actively involved with the Stigma Index Project for the International Planned Parenthood Federation. As part of this work, I have interviewed a wide diversity of people living with HIV and feel privileged, humbled and empowered after listening to the many brave people tell me horrific stories of stigma relating to religious faith in their lives, especially Roman Catholics.

Faith communities bring people of the same values and beliefs together, offering support and community structure, providing spiritual guidance for well-being. Alarming, though, many faith communities including Roman Catholi-

the HIV virus. And although spiritual healing may be an important characteristic of dealing with one's HIV diagnosis, prayer and healing should never undermine treatment, instead it should form part of an holistic approach to living well with HIV.

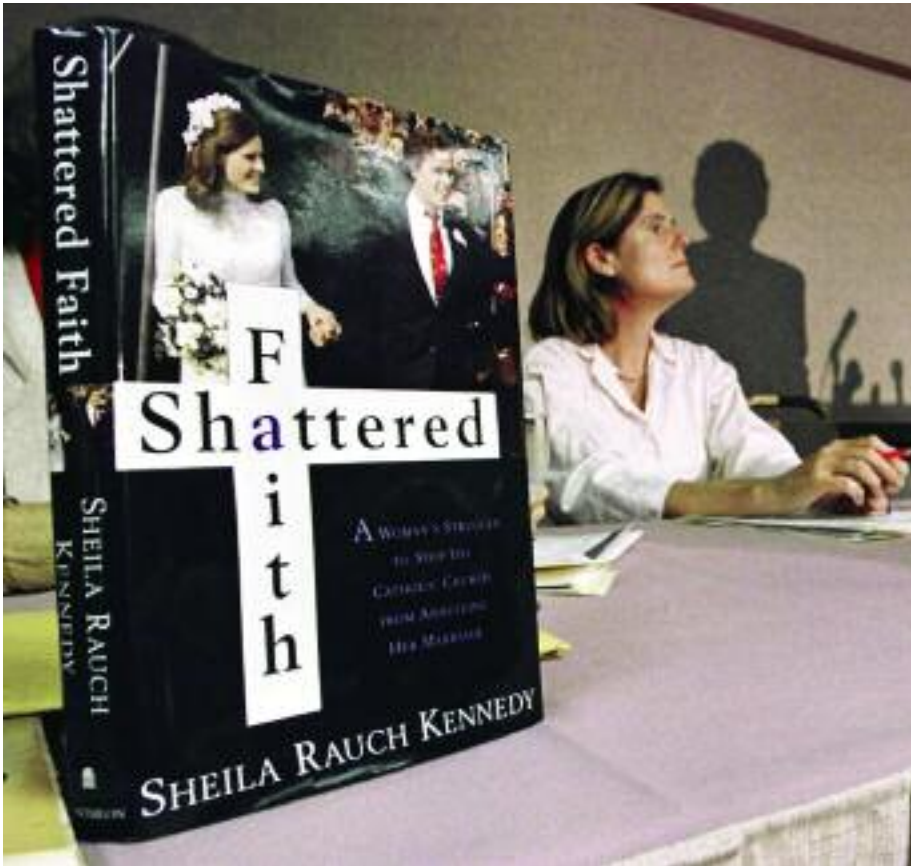
A person who is stigmatized is seen as having less value or worth to other people. This devaluation affects how people are viewed or even view themselves. People living with HIV often internalize or assume that stigma should be an inevitable part of their journey. This feeling of being less worthy is often deep rooted and may take many years to be acknowledged (if it can be at all).

If I had a vision for the future of faith communities and HIV, it would be that all spiritual leaders and communities would be able to accurately deal with both the preventative and care components of HIV and that they remain aware and updated with all the most important developments in the epidemic. We all must perfect the science of acting without discrimination. After all, we are all God's children. ■

Dishonest and Delusional

THE CATHOLIC APPROACH TO DIVORCE

By Charlie Davis



© REUTERS/JIM BOURG, 1997.

In “Shattered Faith” Sheila Rauch Kennedy wrote about her marriage to US Congressman Joe Kennedy (D-MA) and his attempt to procure an annulment. She subsequently joined two dozen Catholic groups appealing for an end to annulments and an acceptance of divorce by the church.

FOR MOST PEOPLE, DIVORCE IS deeply unsettling. It is the realization that a dream has failed. There is concern for the upbringing of children; the bitterness of blame for your former spouse as well as self-blame; a drop in the standard of living to support two households. In America, this happens to 50 percent of us, including Catholics.

But for us Catholics who look forward to continuing our vocation of marriage with another created in God’s image and

likeness—there is an extra burden. We have to prove to a church marriage tribunal that our first marriage was not sacramental—that it was not valid in God’s eyes—even though it was valid in the eyes of the state.

Just as we thought we were putting the trauma of our divorce behind us, we must revisit our marriage to respond in great depth to detailed, highly personal questions about our upbringing, our parents’ emotional states, as well as the emotional states of our former spouse and his/her parents. This is the re-opening of old wounds on a path that is fraught with peril.

Why?

For the celibate males who make up the rules of the tribunal process, annulments are granted because of incompatibility, desertion, cruelty, indifference, adultery or even brutality. Marriages are made in Heaven and cannot be dissolved on Earth—except by death, or the pope.

The main criterion that makes a couple eligible for an annulment, according to the tribunal, is proof that you or your former spouse had an impediment, that is, some prior circumstance that barred you from marrying. The Code of Canon Law spells out these impediments.

In my mind, there are valid impediments, and there are specious impediments. Valid impediments include being a bigamist, or being mentally or physically incapacitated. Specious impediments include reasons drawn from “psychological immaturity.” Was there something flawed in your family or in your spouse’s family that made either of you incapable of making a mature commitment?

If such an impediment can be found, then you might have grounds for an annulment.

But wait. What if your new fiancé/e is also divorced? Even if he/she is Protestant, they must go through the same intrusive, highly personal questions to prove they were originally unable to have made a mature commitment. Most Protestants have too much integrity to demean themselves that way. That is one of the reasons Protestants are Protestants.

And there is no guarantee that after jumping through all these hoops your annulment will be granted. After responding to all the questions in writing, your testimony is forwarded to the

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tribunal which, if there are no complications and the tribunal is efficient (not always the case) your application or your fiancé/e's application could be denied. You can appeal. Or your former spouse could appeal the process.

Meanwhile, you and your future spouse are growing older—and of course you are not living together as doing so without being married would bar you from Communion. Moreover, your children and/or your fiancé/e's children are being brought up in a single parent household.

The complications don't stop there.

The main one is integrity. My first wife and I were married 17 years and had four children. There were some good times and some not-so-good ones. But I would never say the marriage was not blessed, that it was "not sacramental."

The second one is a simple question from one of my children: "Dad, if you get an annulment, that means you and Mom were not married in God's eyes, right? Well, does that not also mean that I am a bastard in God's eyes?" I have never heard a priest or canon lawyer give a convincing response to that question. (Their explanations are about as convincing as the pope telling us that it is alright to prevent conception through "natural family planning" but not through contraception.)

For these reasons alone I would never recommend an annulment.

Well, then, what can you do to remarry, to keep your integrity and to receive the sacraments?

Option 1: Search for a Catholic church that doesn't know you and don't tell the priest that you are remarried without an annulment—the Catholic version of "don't ask, don't tell."

Option 2: Some priests recommend the "internal forum." This forum occurs when the official annulment process would prove too excruciating, but there is personal realization that your first marriage was not sacramental.

Many priests recognize this, others don't. You could be eligible for Communion with one and not eligible with another. Moreover, you could be

barred from being a Communion minister or a religious education teacher. You could be fired from a teaching position in a Catholic school.

All the while, in the back of your mind—even if you receive an annulment—you know that your original marriage was indeed sacramental but simply failed. The annulment process is a charade to allow those who are male and celibate to put in place a process that appears to be compassionate but makes you a co-conspirator in hypocrisy.

These are some of the factors that have caused 30 million Catholics to walk out of the church in recent years.

There are more honorable alternatives.

The Catholic church has a 12-century tradition of allowing divorce and remarriage, during the time when priests, bishops and popes were themselves married and prior to the imposition of

mandatory celibacy. Today, Catholic priests who have left the clerical state to marry, Catholic priests who have joined (or have been ordained in) the Ecumenical Catholic Communion, Roman Catholic Women Priests and the Orthodox Church all have valid ordinations and apostolic succession—and all welcome the remarried to Communion—as do Protestant churches that serve Communion.

If you read books on the annulment process by priests, bishops and canon lawyers, they continually make the point that the institutional church is compassionate and the annulment process is helpful to the laity. Do not be caught up in this delusional, self-congratulatory rhetoric.

The only long-range solution to the problem is for the institutional church to listen to the needs of the laity. When this happens, divorce and remarriage will be accepted again. ■

Fear of the Unknown

MY ABORTION STORY

By Julie Davidson-Gómez

RECENTLY STUMBLED UPON A tattered, spiral-bound notebook full of journal entries, gossip and other musings from my junior high school days. Its contents revealed a young woman who truly believed she had it all figured out. In my notebook, I could pontificate, pass judgment and play with

ideas that I dared not share with my family or friends.

A few of these entries have found their way to a so-called "cringe reading" in Seattle, where I bare my adolescent soul for others' amusement. Many more have stayed private, informing the adult I am becoming by providing glimpses of my experiences and perspectives while growing up. One such entry included a two-column list of the world's blessings and evils. It all seemed so simple back then—fresh snow was definitely good, while nuclear war was undoubt-

JULIE DAVIDSON-GÓMEZ is a lifelong Catholic, small business owner and board member of *Exhale*, the organization that runs the nation's first and only non-politically or -religiously motivated pro-voice post-abortion talkline.

edly bad. And though I knew nothing about the subject, except what may have been overheard in whispered conversations between adults, abortion was placed right at the top of my list of evils. I suppose I was antichoice by default. Looking back at this list, what strikes me is that all of the blessings were “known entities” in my 12-year-old world: I had experienced the joy of the first snowfall of winter, and the taste of homemade vanilla ice cream. In contrast, all of the so-called evils were unknowns, with mythical and downright scary overtones. I didn’t have to know squat about them, I just knew they were wrong.

Inevitably, my world expanded and grew more complex as I navigated adoles-

preferential option for the poor. I dodged conversations that would necessitate my taking a stand in one camp or another. Disheartened and disillusioned with church leadership, I couldn’t see a way out of the straddling stance I’d adopted—the dual life I led as a progressive political activist, championing women’s reproductive rights and the sheepish Catholic I’d become.

My salvation, as it were, came in the form of a secular intervention. About seven years ago, an intriguing grant proposal crossed my desk at the foundation where I directed a women’s reproductive rights fund. A group of women had launched Exhale, a local hotline designed to respond to what they felt

stigma surrounding abortion. I also recognized the tension among my colleagues due to their adamant refusal to align with the prochoice moniker or party line. How could they be trusted? What if they were “antis” posing as women’s advocates? The paranoia and politically charged nature of our deliberation and debate spoke volumes about the hotly contested ground on which women of all stripes found themselves, post-abortion.

In working with these women, I was able to stop straddling what I believed to be two divergent worlds. I finally stood firmly in one world, able to acknowledge its complexity and seeming contradictions. I regained my ability

In the true spirit of the word catholic, this work has provoked a deep reexamination of my faith formation, and beckoned me to cultivate a more inclusive and universal appreciation for church teachings.

cence in a bicultural Latino family. I was active in the church, and on my liberal college campus. Increasingly aware of major world events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Tiananmen Square massacre, each passing year found me straddling an increasingly vast schism between my nascent lefty feminist political identity and the inherited moral teachings of my church. My relationships with parishes read like bad dating stories—I’d stick around just long enough to discover an offensive sermon or announcement in the bulletin, then high-tail it out of there vowing never to return to a church that would so blatantly squash women’s bodily integrity with its politically-charged posturing on reproductive health access, HIV/AIDS prevention or homosexuality.

Like many Catholics, I struggled to discern how to live out my faith in spite of official church positions that felt out of alignment with our long-held teachings on human dignity, social justice and the

was a missing piece of the health-and-wellness continuum: post-abortion emotional support. [See box.]

While I didn’t have a personal abortion story, I immediately connected with the stories of isolation, fear of judgment and leading dual lives due to their abortion experiences. I recognized the power that sharing individual, authentic stories might have in transforming the social

to discern as a member of a vibrant and diverse faith community. In the true spirit of the word catholic, this work has provoked a deep reexamination of my faith formation, and beckoned me to cultivate a more inclusive and universal appreciation for church teachings. The fundamental shift that I seek begins with compassionate hearts and open minds. It begins with me. ■

About Exhale

Exhale offers a free, After-Abortion Talkline that provides emotional support, resources and information. The talkline is available to women and girls who have had abortions and to their partners, friends, allies and family members. All calls are completely confidential and counselors are non-judgmental. What was revolutionary for me, and for the women and men whose lives have been touched by post-abortion support services, trainings, and publications, was the power of a new way: Pro-Voice. Being pro-voice means I honor each woman’s unique abortion experience, and through Exhale, I work to create private and public forums where each woman’s story can be heard with dignity and respect.

For more information, visit www.4exhale.org

— Julie Davidson-Gómez

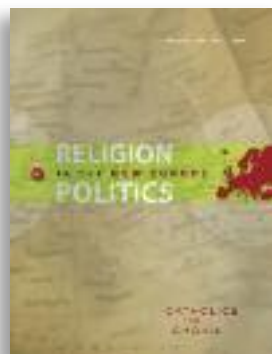
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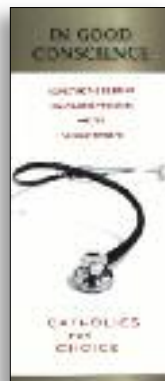
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Behind Bars

WHEN ABORTION IS ILLEGAL SOME WOMEN DIE, OTHERS GO TO PRISON

By Beth Fredrick

S EVEN YEARS AGO IN EL Salvador, a woman named Karina Herrera Clímaco was imprisoned and began serving a 30-year sentence when she was unfairly convicted and sent to prison.

Karina, a young mother of three, some time ago decided she did not want to have

more children. She went to a local clinic and was told she received a surgical sterilization. The surgery was unsuccessful, and Karina became pregnant. She hid the pregnancy from her family. One day her mother, with whom she lived, found Karina hemorrhaging and rushed her to the hospital. The police were called, and when they arrived they assumed that Karina had strangled her child.

Karina is a woman of faith: faith in her doctor, faith in El Salvador's legal system

and faith in God. Accused first of illegal abortion and subsequently of the homicide of her own child, it was hard to keep that faith as she faced a 30-year prison sentence based on presumption of guilt, mishandling of forensic evidence and miscarriage of justice by the medical establishment and the police. Karina was tried and imprisoned, despite the fact that there were other possible causes for the death, and indeed no proof that it was even alive at birth. Regardless, the prejudice against women's

BETH FREDRICK is Deputy Project Director, Advance Family Planning, an initiative of the Gates Institute for Population and Development, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

rights and the fear of retribution for speaking out precluded experts in El Salvador from assisting in Karina's defense.

But, last July, after serving seven years of her sentence, she was set free by El Tribunal Tercero de Sentencia de San Salvador to rejoin her three children. The youngest was two when his mother entered jail. With his sisters, he visited every two to three weeks and on one visit he said to Karina, "Why don't you become a very small *chiquitita* and I will put you in my pocket so that you won't be found."

While in prison, Karina worked in the bakery and began studying; completing the eighth grade in 2004 and high school in 2007. She was always occupied, and as she says, "I knew that God was not going to leave me alone, he was going to get me out. God opens doors and hearts."

Learning of her case in 2006, women (and some men) began to mobilize to her

"To be a 'victim' is to live in the shadow of so many taboos—pregnancy outside of marriage, abortion, violence within the family, sexual orientation," says Herrera. "All of these are used especially to persecute women in El Salvador. However, El Salvador is situated between Mexico and Colombia, where restrictions on abortion, for example, have been lifted [in some circumstances], so we know that it can be done."

In El Salvador, prohibitions on abortion and the subsequent penalization of women and those who help them to end an unwanted pregnancy result from the 1997 reform of the penal code to withdraw all grounds under which abortion was then permitted, including abortion to save the life of the pregnant woman. The penal code went even further to provide for a sentence of up to life imprisonment for anyone, including the woman herself,

to denounce their patients—yet some do. As he says, "This is a door through which we can work." He believes that health professionals also have an obligation to provide women with family planning services and reinforce prevention messages, instead of putting women in jail.

Services in El Salvador are not meeting women's needs. In addition to family planning, providers need to respond to sexual violence, gender differences and integrating services within maternal health programs.

As Maria Angela Elias Marroquin, a nurse and academic, puts it, "There is so much misinformation. Many assume that the Ministry of Health requires that health professionals denounce their patients who present with abortion complications, even though there is no such requirement and there is an emphasis on post-abortion care in the Ministry of Health."

Karina was tried and imprisoned, despite the fact that there were other possible causes for the death, and indeed no proof that it was even alive at birth.

defense led by the efforts of activist Morena Herrera and her organization Colectiva Feminista. They worked tirelessly to build a strong case for her release and went to extraordinary lengths to find the legal and forensics experts who would prove critical to their success. For those committed to securing her release, the cause of Karina's imprisonment was clear—she was young, poor and, most of all, a woman. Moreover, she was born in El Salvador, a country with one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world. Only Chile, Malta, Nicaragua, Honduras, the Dominican Republic and Vatican City are as strict in outlawing abortion in all circumstances. According to a new report by the Guttmacher Institute, the situation of women in El Salvador is typical in the region where an estimated 97 percent of women live in countries where the abortion law is highly restrictive and the procedure is permitted only on relatively narrow grounds.

who induces an abortion. In 1999, El Salvador also amended its Constitution to recognize human life from the moment of conception.

The impact of this law is not only an increasing likelihood of unsafe abortion, but also prosecution and imprisonment. Because of the harsh penalties and lack of clear understanding of the rights of patients to confidentiality, many women who are prosecuted have been turned over to authorities by medical personnel.

According to one high-level government official, public health professionals need to be empowered to take action from a rights perspective and denounce the antiabortion law, showing how the penal code prevents them from following the health code. The latter dictates that health professionals must protect the confidentiality of their patients and could spend up to eight years in prison for not respecting patient confidentiality. The penal code contains no mention of professionals' duty

Just as there is a shortage of health workers, for many reasons there is also a shortage of health advocates. As a result, those who advocate for women's health and rights know that they have to be even more strategic. According to Herrera, "While public education has to be part of our strategy, we also know that we need to sensitize the medical profession as well. We need to build very strong alliances with the women's movement and with women leaders in the church. The foundation of the strategy is to strengthen support for the secular state and to emphasize the spiritual, human rights and scientific dimensions of the issue. We look outside of our country and wonder, 'What happened to the Cairo agenda?' Everyone is fixed on maternal mortality and morbidity and Millennium Development Goal 5, but illegal abortion is always missing."

Advocates and policymakers also see Karina's case as providing an important precedent. "We are waiting for the back-

We look outside of our country and wonder, “What happened to the Cairo agenda?”

Everyone is fixed on the maternal mortality and morbidity and Millennium Development Goal 5, but illegal abortion is always missing.

lash to come against the outcome of Karina’s trial, but it hasn’t yet,” says Herrera. “Perhaps this is because the case is fundamentally about access to justice and Karina’s case is really about injustice all along the way—from her very first pregnancy [at age 15] to the outcome of her trial.” Many are optimistic that the recent change in government will also provide opportunities for progress and collaboration among the women’s movement and government officials.

In early October, for example, the official government agency ISDEMU, (El Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer), the Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos and El Fondo de Población de Naciones Unidas (UNFPA) issued a strong statement upholding women’s rights. As the procurator for human rights, Oscar Humberto Luna was quoted as saying, “It is necessary that the people know about the rights of women. Only in this way are they able to be respected.”

The tribunal that freed Karina is, according to one government official, “very technical and ethical in how it applies the law, which makes this a wonderful precedent. To have the sentence reversed opens doors.”

As a result of Karina’s case, Ministry of

Health personnel are now being trained on the extent of the law and human rights. The case has highlighted the need for doctors and nurses to be better prepared for these kinds of cases and training is needed so that they understand the law and can resist pressure to do things that are against their better judgment.

The need for ongoing advocacy is also clear. One implication of the case is that it tells police and legal experts, including the judiciary, that they have to respect protocols and points to the significance of engaging members of professional associations—especially physicians, nurses, lawyers and educators. Building awareness and support among parliamentarians is key, as most are young and already thinking about issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Ivonne Agueta of Las Dignas, one of the leading El Salvadoran human rights organizations, considers Karina’s case to be especially important because “it makes visible how the justice system administers the law for poor women and explodes myths about women’s lives. If abortion were not criminalized there would not be women in prison. They are put in jail purely on suspicion. The legal system was convinced that Karina had an abortion and instantly it became a baby killing

instead. If abortion were accepted, the story would have been very different.”

Increasingly, advocates are seeing the fight as regional and the human face of restrictions on women’s human rights as a significant tool in gaining support. But, there are obstacles as well. Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir in El Salvador is a young and active organization, but as it is only two years old, is struggling to report the 25 members needed to be an established nongovernmental organization.

As abortion has become the focal point for broader efforts to promote sexual and reproductive rights and women’s rights in general, there is a growing network of advocates across the region. They have issued statements to support women during the recent military takeover in Honduras and to apply pressure on the Dominican Republic during the recent review of its Constitution. As Agueta notes, “No one sees El Salvador as the exception. It’s important to create alliances and [other countries] have many lessons for El Salvador. Success requires a group of committed people who will do the work to persevere.” As Ms. Climaco’s release proves, through collective action progress is possible and the fight for justice must continue. ■

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Contentedly Childless

BUILDING A MOVEMENT THAT EMBRACES ALL CHOICES

By Wyndi Marie Anderson and Crystal Plati

DO YOU WANT TO HAVE CHILDREN? Most women are familiar with this question. And the 80 percent or more who answer in the affirmative rarely face any debate. But most women who have ever answered “no” tell a different story.

Responses vary. Knowing nods that say, “You’ll change your mind when you get older and find the right partner.” Acceptance. Outright disbelief. A challenge. Or even a simple, “That’s too bad. You’re missing out.”

Rarely, though, are the responses positive. In 2010, women still face considerable pressure to have children. But it can be hard to see and understand this pressure unless you’ve ever been a woman who answered, “No.”

The number of women who do not want or are not having children is

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CRYSTAL PLATI is a national leader who has helped give voice to thousands of young people, progressives and women as an executive and leadership consultant. She is the former Executive Director of Choice USA.

People don’t know what to say to women who don’t want children. It goes against everything we have been taught.

growing. A 2003 US Census study found that a record 19 percent of women age 40 to 44 did not have children, compared to 10 percent in 1976. While there has been widespread speculation about the defining features of women in this significant minority, one link consistently crops up: the higher a woman’s level of education, the less likely she is to have children.

People don’t know what to say to women who don’t want children. It goes against everything we have been taught. Even in some of the more liberal places where you think you might get a different reaction or a new voice, it’s oddly quiet.

There are authors and activists who have embraced motherhood as a new place for activism. Some go so far as to criticize previous generations of feminists for not holding motherhood in high enough esteem. We rarely hear women validating the choice not to have children;

and when we do, rarely are these women actually without children.

Where are the voices of women who are not having children? Why are we not speaking out about our experiences? Why are we so silent?

Some of us face judgment from our family and friends:

“A woman isn’t really a woman until she has children.”

“You never know true love or happiness until you have children.”

“The hardest thing I’ve ever done is have children: nothing I’ve ever done in my life compares to that.”

“You’re tired? Why are you tired? You don’t have kids keeping you up all night.”

Despite all of the progress made in the past century, when it comes to expanding the definition of women’s “place” and

women's roles, women are still valued, above all, for their maternal function. This sentiment crosses all communities—liberal, conservative, Republican, Democratic, prochoice and antichoice. On the surface, these communities' treatment of women and motherhood may differ; but at a fundamental level the pressure in all of these communities for women to have children runs high.

You might imagine that the women's movement would have no place for this otherwise fundamental undercurrent. Not true. Self-declared feminists can still make it very difficult for women who do not have children to find power in that choice. Perhaps we fear that we could be seen as "anti-children" if we were to embrace that choice and the power it can bring women.

Our prochoice rhetoric often invokes the power of mother and family. Some have suggested that we could fight anti-

choice language by claiming that most women who have abortions are, or will become, mothers. While this is true, this language hints that it is acceptable to choose an abortion only because someday we *will* have children. Thus we are rejecting the decision to have children at that moment but not rejecting the role of mother. It is a recognition of the right to delay pregnancy. But is there a right to intend never to be pregnant or have a child?

In this paradigm even our sexual freedom is based on the understanding that we can redeem ourselves in the role of rearing the next generation. Even though 19 percent of US women will never have children and many women are not "good" mothers, this kind of set up supports the traditional notions of good women versus bad women, Madonna versus whore. This right/wrong thinking

is the epitome of what we are trying to work against in the women's movement.

At the very least, there are two key reasons why it is important to have women who do not want to have children as an active and vocal part of the women's movement:

1. These women prove false the myth that motherhood is the ultimate signifier of femaleness, femininity and personhood for a woman.
2. These women validate and represent part of the vision for which many women have fought in our history.

We do not take the choice not to have children lightly. We know that we have this choice because of the courageous women who fought for women's right to determine whether or when to reproduce. We stand on the shoulders of the many, many women who had children whether they wanted to or not. It's a privilege for us to be able to choose.

We want to know where the voices have gone that talk about living child-free as a viable option for women. We want to have a movement that sees child-free women as part of the vision and value that we bring to the community.

We share a vision of a movement that understands and values women's full, autonomous personhood outside of the role of mother—a movement that fights assumptions and stereotypes about women so that we can make choices free from judgment. We are aware of the collective power we possess. As a movement, we must find ways to convert this power to cultural, political and legislative change.

If you are a woman who is struggling with this choice, know that you are not alone. There are many women who choose not to have children and others who don't have children for various reasons and live full, amazing, valid lives. You do not have to have children to know love, to know life or to be a woman. And while it may be a road less traveled, it has been well traveled by many women before us. ■

Making the Tubal Ligation Decision: One Woman's Experience

By Wyndi Marie Anderson

As a child, I don't remember ever wanting to have children. At 28, I fell in love and considered it. However, when I actually faced an unplanned pregnancy, everything about it felt wrong: the situation, the physical condition and the thought of having a child. I had an abortion. I made the right choice.

At 32, I decided to have a tubal ligation. I was sure that I did not want to have children and even more sure that I did not want to have another abortion. So, I talked to my gynecologist about having the procedure. I was met with scorn and a lecture that I had plenty of childbearing years left. He said that I would regret my decision and would only consider it if I agreed to talk to a psychiatrist.

A psychiatrist? What year was I living in?

I left feeling his office angry, confused and wondering where to turn for help.

He was the first of four doctors who said similar things—though not all of them wanted me to see a shrink. I waited until I was 37 to have it done by the first doctor who turned me away. I was determined and he was finally willing, though he did have the final word. As I was being wheeled into the operating room, he whispered, "I am only blocking the highway. There is nothing wrong with you. If you meet the right man, I can put a baby in there for \$15,000." His words were meant as comfort. But in reminding me that he thought this was a mistake, I was thoroughly annoyed.

Sadly, the doctor was not the only person disappointed in my decision. Some friends and colleagues have been less than supportive. My tubal ligation was a thoughtful though surprisingly controversial decision about my life. It allowed me to see that we are far from realizing women as whole people outside of their roles as mothers and why we cannot forget the voices of women who choose not to have children.

Prayer

THE ONLY CHANCE OF PREVENTING A PREGNANCY WITH CYCLEBEADS

By Linda Pinto

T MAY BE HAVING grown up in the 1960s or my obsession with reading every issue of *Mother Earth News* cover to cover that regularly makes my car gravitate to the Whole Foods, which is far from my home. These visits to the church of healthy choices renew my commitment to breathe more deeply, choose foods without polysyllabic ingredients and live a more wholesome and thus, holy life. I can hear 93-year-old Sister Immaculata from my inner depths saying, “Treat your body well because it is a vessel of the Holy Spirit.” I could never quite grasp this image, but that is a topic for another article.

As I wondrously meander through the displays, I respond with childlike glee when I see a fruit or vegetable or fish which I never knew existed, let alone appreciated for its healthiness. But shockingly, my most recent visit provided more food for thought than actual sustenance.

There among the roasted edamame beans, tofu candy bars and just left of the “make your own peanut butter” kit lay a product by the name of CycleBeads.

LINDA PINTO is secretary of **CORPUS**, the Association for an Inclusive Priesthood.



© CYCLEBEADS

Developed by the Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University, CycleBeads is a string of 30 color-coded beads aligned in a manner that will help you identify the days of your menstrual cycle, the days of your fertility cycle and the days of you-can't-get-pregnant-so-have-a-blast cycle. The necklace starts off with a red bead indicating the first day of your menstrual cycle. You are then instructed to move a rubber band over each bead as the month progresses. It is advertised as a natural method of preventing pregnancy.

Now, I'm a lover of beads. Using beads as a method of meditation, relaxation and reflection is as old as written history. It is a proven fact that prayer beads have decided physical, metaphysical and psychological benefits. The physical fingering of the molded shapes in tandem with a mantra of repeated sounds creates

an internal psychic space that frees one of worry or concern.

Nearly all religions use prayer beads. In Hinduism and Sikhism, they are called Japa Mala and are usually made up of 108 beads. For Buddhists, the malas range in size from 27 to 111 beads. In Islam, 33 or 99 beads are used. The Greek komboloi has an

odd number of beads—usually one more than a multiple of four. Our Roman Catholic tradition of the rosary (from the Latin for rose garden), has 54 beads, which we use to recite five decades of the rosary, each comprising an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and one Glory Be to the Father. My seven-decade Franciscan rosary is still one of my prized religious possessions. On occasion, I gently cradle it in my hand and enjoy a flurry of warm memories and peace.

It is challenging to see how CycleBeads might bring one peace. Advertised as a plan to prevent pregnancy naturally, one has to wonder how natural, how healthy and how unsettling this practice might be.

It is hard to understand why certain methods of birth control are condemned simply because they are deemed “artificial.” If we were to use the same analogy,

why would we endorse the artificial use of electricity? Cutting down trees, treating them with preservative chemicals, stringing wire that transports dangerous levels of electricity through backyards and fields certainly seems artificial. Why not stick with beeswax candles and wood stoves?

I am also mystified by proponents of the rhythm method who claim it to be natural rather than artificial. Look at any recent Viagra or Cialis advertisement. It claims to assure the user that when the moment is right, you will be ready. What happens when the moment is right, but the woman is on the ninth day of her fertility cycle, as told by CycleBeads? How artificial is that? It is a great irony, or tragedy, that the use of contraception for women is prohibited by the Catholic hier-

many of us were not on a “normal” menstrual cycle. Apart from that, even a normal cycle can be influenced by factors like excessive exercise, stress, hormonal imbalance, eating disorders or extreme weight loss. From my perspective, relying on plastic beads with a rubber ring is like playing Russian roulette with your biology. Sounds pretty unhealthy.

Not only unhealthy, CycleBeads are also unsettling. It is reported that boxes of CycleBeads are being shipped for distribution in developing countries. Their similarity to rosary beads will not be lost on women who are denied access to other means of family planning.

If this must be, then let me suggest we use CycleBeads as prayer beads. I propose three decades: eight beads for the embraced pregnancy, twelve beads for the

The second decade is that of the unintended pregnancy. It spans the next twelve beads representing the fertile period of a woman’s cycle. This is where the rubber meets the road. I have used the term “unintended pregnancy” intentionally. In other circles, these pregnancies would be termed “unwanted.” This oppressive language defines the woman as the perpetrator. I do know that there are circumstances when being forced into a pregnancy unintentionally is unwanted. Obviously, instances of rape and incest are on the top of the list. Second to that is the use of a wife, unprotected by birth control, by a husband because “his needs” dictate. This is known as “rendering the debt.” We can also include in this decade those women who have been steeped in Catholic educa-

CycleBeads similarity to rosary beads will not be lost on women who are denied access to other means of family planning.

archy; and yet, there is not a peep over the use of stimulants for men.

We are surrounded with artificial ways to make our lives better. We live in a world where a 17-mile long tunnel was dug to house the Hadron Collider, which fires beams of subatomic particles at each other in an attempt to artificially recreate the circumstances that existed just after the Big Bang to expand our knowledge of the physical processes that led to our very existence. We live in a world where the response to the H1N1 virus was to provide artificial vaccines that prevent death. We live in a world where artificial hydroponic farms are being constructed on top of office buildings throughout Southeast Asia to help keep pace with the needs of a growing population.

And how healthy are CycleBeads, anyway? CycleBeads are only recommended for women who experience a normal menstrual cycle of between 26 and 32 days. As a former Franciscan nun who lived with more than 400 women over the course of eight years, I can attest that

unintended pregnancy and twelve beads for the impossible pregnancy.

The first decade of the embraced pregnancy corresponds to the first eight bronze colored beads representing the time a woman menstruates. It has been traditional to explain to our daughters that they should be happy when they get their period as this celebrates becoming a woman. Obviously, whoever started that tradition never had to pick from a variety of feminine hygiene products or ride the hormone rollercoaster without a grab bar. Nonetheless, I feel it is an appropriate time to celebrate embraced pregnancy: when a couple chooses to share the joy of living and the ecstasy of their committed relationship with someone else on an intimate level. Embraced pregnancy leads to a life-long commitment to new and rich experiences: reading books at bedtime, family dinners, festive holiday traditions, birthday parties, campfire songs, sporting events, school milestones, etc. Embraced pregnancy does not end at conception; it is only the beginning.

tional circles. They are programmed not to use birth control and then find themselves pregnant after a sexual encounter, even if the encounter was filled with a sense of genuine love and commitment.

The last decade of twelve beads is dedicated to the impossible pregnancies. It is within this decade that I hope our most ardent mantra will be answered a hundredfold. These last twelve bronze beads intensify in color as they approach the beginning of the woman’s menstrual cycle. It is a time of “freedom from fertility.” How artificial is it that this is the defined time for the grace and sacrament of marriage to be celebrated liberally? How tragic and frustrating is it for couples who seek an embraced pregnancy but for physical reasons are denied that privilege? Ultimately, how unjust is it that methods to assist a couple to become pregnant are deemed “artificial” and thus, not Catholic?

If you must purchase CycleBeads, heed this warning which should appear on the label: Caution: use only for prayer. ■

Malign Neglect

THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY'S COMPLICITY IN THE ABORTION WARS

By Fr. Emmett Coyne

TODAY, ABORTION ROILS THE Catholic community and many claim it is the single most important moral issue. However, between 1953 and 1966—when I spent 13 years in formation preparing for ordination to the Roman Catholic priesthood—abortion hardly registered exposition or inquiry. (Unless, of course, I slept through all those classes.)

Abortion was alluded to largely in passing, as a reserved sin that only a bishop could absolve. There was never a sense of it having any moral imperative. “Thou shall not kill” was not immediately applied to abortion. Thirteen years of formation did not prepare me for the acrimony of the abortion assault in the years ahead. Pastorally, I was totally unprepared for the looming, all-engulfing war that was to be waged.

When *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion in the United States in 1973, it gave birth to the “prolife” movement and the Roman Catholic church found a new voice. Recent popes, in tandem with other members of the hierarchy, have put abortion on the front burner and organized members at the parish level, ultimately galvanizing a militant minority who vigilantly emphasize abortion as the moral issue beside which all others pale.

FR. EMMETT COYNE is a retired priest from the Diocese of Manchester, N.H.



When Father Coyne was a seminarian, his education did not include anything on sexual and reproductive health.

Is abortion *the* foundational issue of the Christian, or more specifically, the Catholic church? Again, my 13 years of seminary formation would never have led me to conclude so. Although abortion was widespread in the Greco-Roman world of Jesus and Paul, the New Testament is mute on the subject. Revelation is found wanting, having nothing to declare specifically on the issue. For example, in Romans 1:28, Paul provides a laundry list of depraved persons whom he considers deserve death. Among them he targets gossipers, slanderers, God-haters, the arrogant and boastful, and those who disobey their parents. Absent from his disturbing

tirade are people who perform abortions.

Where revelation failed, reason sought to enlighten. Greek philosophers, before Jesus and Paul, investigated the issue of abortion head on. While they had divergent opinions, they provided a context for the personal and societal ramifications of abortion.

My seminary formation did not present a history of thought regarding abortion and other issues pertaining to sexual and reproductive health, neither from a scriptural viewpoint nor a philosophical or theological one.

Abortion was discussed within the context of the sins of adultery and forni-

© REUTERS/ALESSANDRO BIANCHI, 2008.

cation. Sex was viewed in a negative light, frequently leading to sin. Women were identified as the eternal Eve, always tempting the male.

Given the strident discourse within the church today, and its high-pitched voice on the issue of abortion, it would have been beneficial for all if priests had been trained with knowledge and accurate information of human sexual biology for starters before wading into the turbulent tides of contraception and abortion. This did not happen.

VATICAN II

While the antiabortion movement is uncompromising in its absolutist position that abortion is the paramount moral issue, it is striking that the Second Vatican Council did not embrace this view. If anything, it suggested that everything

remains that many, if not the majority of sincere Catholics and Christians do not universally agree with the teaching. If nothing else, a formal declaration of infallibility regarding abortion would render the church's stance unequivocal.

Ratzinger's argument undermines the reasoning Pope Pius XII employed in issuing the infallible statement that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. In providing his reasoning, Pius XII noted, "Various testimonies, indications and signs of this common belief of the Church are evident from remote times down through the course of the centuries; and this same belief becomes more clearly manifest from day to day." It was his judgment, then, that the Assumption of Mary was "so evident" that the obvious thing was to declare it infallible. His infallible statement became "the formality of

a unanimous tradition on this point and authors are as yet in disagreement."

Nonetheless, for those who hold the extreme, absolute position, interfering with a zygote at the moment of conception is tantamount to murder. Anyone, according to them, condoning abortion at this stage is complicit in murder. These absolutists have free range to denounce others as murderers and in so doing aid and abet extremists such as the Army of God who aver that it is just to take "all godly action necessary to defend innocent human life including the use of force."

The reluctance of successive popes to declare abortion an infallible moral evil underscores their hesitancy in pinpointing exactly when personhood begins, which is crucial to drawing a line in the abortion wars, at least for Catholics. If they were

Popes and bishops fail as moral teachers in refusing to consistently acknowledge the ambiguity in the church's teachings on the status of developing human life.

that threatens life in any way is equally wrong.

If the church hierarchy is certain about its stance on abortion, the bishops should make an infallible pronouncement to clear up any doubt. William F. Buckley Jr., the intellectual father of modern American conservatism, attacked the social encyclical, *Mater et Magister*, and claimed the church was mater (mother), but not magister (teacher). By allowing endless, accelerating strife without resolution, is the church a competent teacher or a caring mother who stands idly by while her children are bloodying each other?

In his letter, "The Gospel of Life," Pope John Paul II could have made an infallible statement on abortion, and apparently an early draft contained one. However, the final one appeared without it. Later, Cardinal Ratzinger explained that while the teaching on abortion is authoritative and deserves obedience, the encyclical stopped short of the "formality of dogmatization." However, the fact

dogmatization" of the Assumption. It is hard to fathom the necessity of declaring Mary's Assumption as infallible as it has little impact on human lives. The doctrine of the Assumption is neither contentious nor a contested doctrine, yet a pope deemed it important to make an infallible statement.

The issue of abortion continues to be relentlessly contentious and contested because there is not a unanimous and universal acknowledgement, even within the church hierarchy, about when the fetus becomes a person. Some Catholics believe it is at the very moment of conception, something the hierarchy has carelessly condoned, confusing Catholics in the pews rather than clarifying the matter. They would have been authentic teachers if they reminded Catholics about the Vatican's 1974 *Declaration on Procured Abortion*. This declaration admitted that the Vatican does not know when the fetus becomes a person. It states, inter alia, "There is not

scientifically certain, they would not hesitate. Popes and bishops cannot let themselves off the hook by passive ambivalence. They fail as moral teachers in refusing to consistently acknowledge the ambiguity in the church's teachings on the status of developing human life.

Again, declaring the Assumption as infallible while finding no need to pronounce an infallible statement on abortion because it is apparently "so evident" and not in need of "the formality of dogmatization" underscores the hierarchy's failure in moral teaching. It remains disingenuous by refusing to acknowledge moral and scientific ambivalence.

While Benedict XVI did away with limbo after centuries of constant belief, he condones a moral limbo regarding abortion and sanctions needless but serious violations of charity and justice. No wonder more and more Catholics decide for themselves when those who purport to be teachers fail in their obligation. ■

Telling One Side of a Story

By Steven W. Sinding

Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population

Matthew Connelly

(The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008, 544pp)

978-0674024236, \$35.00

MATTHEW CONNELLY approached me in the summer of 2002, just as he was joining the history department at Columbia

University and I was leaving Columbia to become director general of the International Planned Parenthood Federation. He told me he was writing a history of the population movement and asked if I would help him gain access to the IPPF archives in London because, he said, he was having trouble getting to see them. He told me he had been a student of historian Paul Kennedy at Yale and that he had taught at Harvard before joining the Columbia faculty. Since I knew and admired Kennedy's work and respected Harvard's history department, I had no hesitancy in agreeing to give Connelly access to the IPPF archives. Connelly subsequently visited London, spent many hours in the IPPF archives, and then asked if he might interview me about my own recollections as a 35-year participant in the movement. I agreed and we spent what I recall as several

pleasurable hours in tape recorded conversation.

It was thus a considerable shock to discover in reading *Fatal Misconception* that Connelly had produced not a work of history but a personal jeremiad. This becomes obvious from the first words in the book, the dedication: "To my parents, for having so many children." Now I ask you: what kind of dedication is that in a work that purports to be a serious history of the population movement? Then comes the preface, in which Connelly tells us about



his intellectual journey, from curious graduate student to campaigner and activist. He writes, "this book reflects the passion of a convert.... [P]opulation control [is] something that all of us should reject, and in that way find new ways to renew a dialogue about the meaning of life, and the meaning of freedom."

Matthew Connelly, it turns out, has become a very angry man and the words just quoted reveal much that I think is wrong with this book. This is not a balanced and judicious history of a complex 50-year movement. Rather, it is a highly selective reading of that history, carefully presenting the bits and pieces that support a radical point of view and omitting mountains of

evidence that might contradict, or at least modify, it. It is deceptively scholarly in much of its presentation, with page upon page of footnotes from archival materials, including never-before-presented evidence gleaned from the files, not only of IPPF, but also the Ford and Rockefeller foundations, the Population Council and other important and influential institutional actors in the story. And there is much in the book that is true and valuable, as, for example, Connelly's excellent and revelatory examination of the eugenicist, national security, nativist and even racist roots of some aspects of the movement. But the well-informed reader perceives almost instantly that Connelly was combing the archives for quotations that would support a point of view, rather like a member of the high school forensics club preparing for a debate tournament on the topic: "Resolved, that the population movement was a conspiracy inspired by racism, eugenics and concerns about national security and foisted by a Western elite on unsuspecting and defenseless poor countries and poor people." In the process, he ignores critically important evidence that demonstrates the multidimensional nature of the movement. In those same archives are many communications from and amongst early leaders such as Bernard Berelson, Julia Henderson, Rafael Salas, Gunnar Myrdal, John D. Rockefeller III, Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger—communications that demonstrate a deep concern with the problems associated with unwanted and unintended pregnancies and that show an equally deep commitment to improve the condition of women by giving them the right to control their own childbearing. How can Connelly, who purports to have written this book for the sake of safeguarding human rights in the face of coercive attempts to control people's fertility, completely ignore the other side of the story—the enhancement of the basic right to have children by choice?

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There are so many ways to find fault with this book that one hardly knows where to start. But the reasonably astute high school debater, faced with Connelly's position in the affirmative, might select the following points in rebuttal.

FIRST, CONNELLY BLAMES WELL intentioned but misguided Western elites (mostly American) for imposing on developing countries a population control agenda that effectively coerced hundreds of thousands if not millions of people into involuntary fertility limitation. Yet, volumes of documentation show that the vast majority of programs in developing countries were based on carefully protected principles of voluntarism. As

it has been the governments of developing countries that have designed and perpetrated them. Indeed, the international community has long attempted to persuade these governments to suspend such policies or has condemned them outright. Whether or not these international agencies might have acted sooner or more decisively to terminate their association with those governments is a debatable point but it is simply wrong to blame the international population movement for the excesses that occurred. And there is in Connelly's treatment of this subject a most distasteful condescension toward the developing world—as if these countries were the unwitting dupes of Western charlatans. In fact,

Impact of Population Policies: Comment" *Population and Development Review*, September 1994.) While Pritchett asserted, and Connelly accepts, that only five percent of the decline in fertility can be explained by these programs, virtually every other analyst who has examined the question concludes that a minimum of 40 percent, and perhaps as much as 60 percent, of the decline was contributed by family planning programs—programs that responded to a previously unsatisfied demand by couples, women in particular, to limit the number of children they bore. Why does Connelly ignore nearly all the contradictory evidence?

Matthew Connelly has revisited in great detail the darkest corners of what

How can Connelly... completely ignore the other side of the story—the enhancement of the basic right to have children by choice?

hundreds of internationally comparable surveys in developing countries have shown (e.g., the World Fertility Survey and Demographic and Health Surveys), these programs responded to a genuine demand, initially mostly among women, to have the information and the means to control their own fertility. Most countries responded with voluntary family planning policies, along with reinforcing policies to improve girls' education, reduce infant and young child mortality, and advance the status, rights and employment of women. A tiny minority of countries at one time or another violated these principles and two of them, India and China, are indeed, very large. But it is seriously misleading to condemn an entire movement because of the missteps of a few. And it is a grotesque perversion of history to assert, as Connelly does, that millions of women and men were misled into acting contrary to their perceived or actual self-interest in adopting contraception and limiting the size of their families.

Second, to the extent there have been violations of human reproductive rights,

some of the great family planning success stories—in Thailand, Colombia and Bangladesh, and earlier in Korea and Taiwan—were home grown. They were largely developed and implemented by intelligent and committed local leaders, often with the support and assistance of outsiders, but always under local control.

FINALLY, THERE IS THE ASTOUNDING assertion that the family planning programs were not only inherently destructive of human rights but that they made hardly any difference in affecting birthrates. Connelly derives this conclusion mainly from a highly controversial single source—a provocative and widely disputed 1994 article by economist Lant Pritchett (Lant H. Pritchett, "Desired Fertility and the Impact of Population Policies." *Population and Development Review*, March 1994), that has since been refuted by practically every leading expert who has examined the question of program impact. (See, for example, John Bongaarts, "The

I consider to be a generally laudable and highly successful movement to bring about population stabilization through voluntary programs of international cooperation in a world where human numbers were growing at an unprecedented and unsustainable rate. It is regrettable that he has chosen to place the most negative possible interpretation on this admittedly complex history and in so doing has violated the cardinal value of his discipline—the search for truth through the objective assessment of historical evidence. One wonders, after finishing this unbalanced volume, what motivated Connelly to write it in the first place. I will not speculate on that, except to say that it seems highly unlikely to have been a search for the truth. This book will be (and to some degree already has been) greeted with glee by those on the religious right and elsewhere who are determined to destroy what remains of the once powerful movement to ensure reproductive health and rights, and to achieve population stabilization. ■

Integrating Two Cultures

By Kate Ott

Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement

Mary J. Henhold

(University of North Carolina Press, 2008, 291pp)

978-0807832240, \$32.00

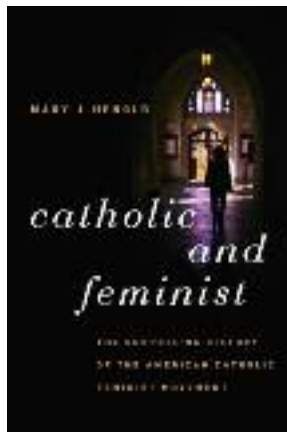
CATHOLIC AND FEMINIST seeks to debunk the myth that the title itself is an oxymoron. In recounting the rise of organized Catholic feminism, author Mary Henhold responds to religious scholars who dismiss feminism, feminist scholars who dismiss religion and the institutional church that desires a monolithic faithful. Henhold's style reflects the movement itself, juxtaposing personal accounts and relationships with substantive critiques of the official church and the development of strategies employed to resist sexism. The combination of personal and political formation is a common theme of feminist-consciousness raising. Similar to the secular, second-wave feminist movement, Catholic feminists sought women's equality through access to leadership, the replacement of hierarchy with shared leadership (in many scenarios) and a recognition of their self-determination.

Yet, Henhold draws a clear distinction between the secular, second-wave feminist movement and the Catholic feminist organizational movement. The women and movement Henhold

describes were not feminists first; they were Catholic with a strong connection to the institutional church. Laywomen and women religious alike used the tradition to explain, justify and develop their feminism. As one example, Henhold lifts up the statement by Saint Joan's International Alliance—US Section (SJIA-US), "We are feminist BECAUSE we are Catholic." Not all in the movement Henhold describes felt this way, but it represented a majority view and a unique development in a feminist history better known for its dismissal of religion. Unlike secular

feminists, Catholic feminists mined the tradition for sources of liberation and integrated spirituality, worship, ritual and prayer as a rationale for their activism and often as the activism itself.

The historical narrative of the Catholic feminist organizational movement is woven from extensive research including 23 oral history interviews, reviewing the archives of 18 individuals and organizations, numerous Catholic periodicals and academic texts. The time period covered is short but intense, spanning from 1960 to the early 1980s. Henhold cites the rise of second-wave secular feminism as a contributor to Catholic feminist consciousness, but it is never described as a primary catalyst



but rather as a tenuous and criticized partner. Henhold highlights the lack of women's presence and general sexism that permeated the Second Vatican Council, the infamous Paragraph 66, and the subjugation of women religious seeking new vocational calls in civil rights work as catalytic events for the formation of Catholic feminism. In addition, writings challenging the official teaching of "eternal woman" rhetoric mirrored (albeit with a Catholic lens) critiques similar to those in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*.

The development of Catholic feminism, like all feminist history, had many diverse groups and individual paths, but in order to make the history more accessible Henhold admits, "While generally I resist shoving my subjects into little boxes, we must do a bit of that...." The narrative depicts the events of 1963-1970, the intense organizing period of the Catholic feminist movement leading to a climactic event, the 1975 Women's Ordination Conference in Detroit, Mich. Henhold tracks two different paths: those who leave the official church, having concluded that feminism was ultimately incompatible with Catholicism and those who stay and create Catholic feminist organizations, including members of SJIA-US, National Coalition of American Nuns, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, members of the NOW Taskforce on Religion, a few prominent academics and others. Henhold writes that these groups claimed the Gospels first, and their feminism as a natural extension of the Gospel message. For them, feminism was often seen as a Catholic ministry of social justice.

For those who stayed in the church, activism took two primary forms according to Henhold: advocating for ordination, to which Henhold dedicates most of the book, and advancing the Equal Rights Amendment. Like any history, the meetings leading up to the 1975 Women's Ordination Conference and those following it were marked by areas of agreement as well as differences.

KATE OTT is Associate Director of the Religious Institute.

Bookshelf

The Art of Happiness in a Troubled World

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, MD (Doubleday, 2009, 338pp)

In this much-anticipated second part to the *Art of Happiness* series, Dr. Howard Cutler lays out the philosophies of the Dalai Lama, providing conversations, stories and case studies to underline the Dalai Lama's ideas on violence, dialogue and happiness. In the book, the Dalai Lama attempts to provide ways to overcome personal unhappiness and find common humanity with others.

The New Enlightenment: A Search for Global Civilization, Peace, and Spiritual Growth in the 21st Century

Grady E. Means (Two Harbors Press, 2010, 292pp)

In his book, Grady Means, a moderate Republican and life-long Catholic, suggests that mainstream religions aren't giving humans the guidance they need. He asserts that religions are simply corporation-like entities, driven by politics and economics, and therefore the cause of problems and conflicts throughout history. Means suggests that instead humans should revisit the philosophies of the Enlightenment and free their minds and souls.

Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict xvi

Tracey Rowland (Oxford University Press, 2008, 214pp)

Before he was Pope Benedict xvi, Joseph Ratzinger was a theologian with his own unique brand of theology. Theology professor and papal-supporter, Tracey Rowland, gives readers a peek into the philosophical and theological development of the pope. In the chapter entitled "Beyond Moralism," Rowland explains Ratzinger's take on conscience, noting that he refutes the modern theories of the autonomy of conscience that the hierarchy has widely adopted.

Religion and the American Presidency: George Washington to George W. Bush

Gaston Espinosa (ed.) (Columbia University Press, 2009, 543pp)

The separation of church and state is one of, if not the founding ideal of the United States. Nevertheless, religion has factored into American presidencies since George Washington first took office. Using the examples of 13 presidents, this collection of articles demonstrates how American presidents have drawn on their religious upbringing and ideals to promote their policies, both foreign and domestic, in the United States. From JFK's Catholicism to George W. Bush's crusade against Islamic fundamentalism, presidents consistently use religion as a political tool.

Religious Pluralism, Democracy, and the Catholic Church in Latin America

Frances Hagopian (ed.) (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009, 498pp)

Some might argue that the Catholic church – at least the church hierarchy – poses serious challenges in Latin America. This book posits the opposite, that societal trends in Latin America such as secularism and pluralism are actually threatening the Catholic church. The essays in the book look at how the church hierarchy is responding to these challenges, focusing on how democracy has changed the church and how the church influences democracy in the region.

While the primary intention was to re-envision a Catholic priesthood that was inclusive, many participants and groups began to ask: "For whom and why?" As Henhold describes, sisterhood had its limits. Tensions grew between laywomen and women religious and groups who represented racial/ethnic minorities such as Las Hermanas and the National Black Sisters Coalition (NBSC). Shawn Cope-land, for example, then leader of the NBSC, challenged the leadership not to get singularly focused on ordination and be cautious of repeating the social injustices the movement sought to dismantle. Much like the secular feminist movement, the consciousness that sexism was inextricably linked to other forms of oppression such as racism and classism was not integrated or articulated, even when groups such as Las Hermanas and NBSC spoke directly and poignantly to the issue.

RACISM AND ABORTION REPRESENTED divisive and often ignored issues within the movement through the 1960s and 1970s. As for abortion, Henhold contends the issue was intentionally avoided. Granted, there were some prominent Catholic feminists who spoke out strongly for or against abortion rights. But that was not the norm. First, many Catholic feminists avoided speaking about abortion because it brought controversy and punishment. They did not want to lose their employment as women religious, lay leaders, teachers or academics if they spoke out for abortion access. In an effort to maintain a united front regarding the Equal Rights Amendment, the leadership sought to assure its members and politicians that the ERA was not synonymous with abortion rights. Perhaps most important was an ideological divide that Henhold observed and may still be with us today. She writes, "It is likely that most viewed abortion as a significant moral dilemma (instead of a mortal sin, on the one hand, and a triumphant rally cry, on the other)."

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the leaving/staying dichotomy rang false

for many of her interviewees. After the Vatican's 1976 *Inter Insigniores* (Declaration on the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood) and re-affirmation that the Catholic church would not permit women's ordination, many Catholic feminist women (and men) believed the institutional church had left them. In other words, they did not make a decision to leave or stay; they continued to maintain their faith and identification as Catholic. The liturgical practices developed in the 1960s as models of a renewed church eventually became the primary practice of Catholic communion for many of these feminists. Unfortunately, many of the movement's goals were not achieved. In fact, the church hierarchy began a concentrated crackdown on Catholic feminist practices during the 1980s. Evidence suggests this continues today.

As a young Catholic feminist, I believe the struggle is not over. The history of this intense period of Catholic feminist development, which Henhold carefully details, continues to be instructive today. First, feminist movements need to be aware and consciously work toward ending all oppressions, not just sexism, or we are doomed to uphold the very systems we seek to eliminate. Second, leadership must reflect in its own workings what it seeks to enact on a larger scale. Third, Christian tradition and Catholic history provide resources for seeking and sustaining liberation. Fourth, spiritual practices are not only byproducts of a movement, but are often the start of ideas that result in positive change. Fifth, perhaps most relevant to *Conscience* readers, many Catholic feminists, especially young Catholic feminists, are still seeking a way to navigate the political abyss between antichoice and prochoice rhetoric. Political attempts at "common ground" don't seem too appealing. But addressing abortion in the context of social, economic and global concerns as well as bringing to bear Catholic wisdom regarding moral conscience and the common good perhaps represent our best option, as well as our greatest struggle. ■

Not on Their Terms

PREVAILING OVER THE HIERARCHY'S ABUSE OF POWER

By Anthony Padovano

Practicing Catholic

James Carroll

(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009, 400pp)

978-0618670185, \$28.00

A HALLMARK OF JAMES Carroll's later writing has been an effort to fuse personal experience with contemporary Catholic development. *Practicing Catholic* is well-written, theologically insightful and carefully researched.

Carroll struggles with a sense of inadequacy despite the talents and accomplishments of his admirable life. "I was born into an unworthy people," he writes, with an abiding sense of "existential inadequacy," an "inbred sadness" which makes him feel "lost" in "self-doubt." A "feeling of unworthiness" resides "in the core of my selfhood."

There are compensating moments or else Carroll would not have become the creative person he is. His mother gave him "the morning sun on the polished floor" as he absorbed the light and her love. She engenders a "balance between being unworthy and being chosen."

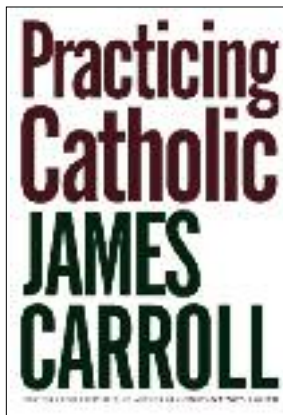
Carroll's book and his life are filled with contrasts and tensions, the stuff of poetry and of drama. He is unworthy and

called, an American growing up when the Catholic church formally criticized the core of American identity, its separation of church and state, freedom of speech and dissent, pluralism and democ-

racy. In 1899 Leo XIII condemned American cultural norms as "Americanism." If Carroll feels chosen, it is to be a priest and a poet, two apparently contradictory avocations. Allen Tate, the great poet, tells him he cannot have both. Carroll senses that Tate is right. He loves Catholicism and he is appalled by it. He discounts the pope as often irrelevant, yet he

gives an inordinate attention to John Paul II and Benedict XVI. In this maelstrom of conflict and concurrence, he forges the rhythms and meters of his life and work. His calling is to hold in tension what he cannot resolve, to make harmony of dissonance and discord. He is, in a word, a modern person, too bright to follow blindly, too diffident to be a rebel without a cause.

He admires the way Augustine discovered God. Augustine's *Confessions*, creating the genre of autobiography, meets God in the memories of his life. Augustine is not Aquinas who seeks God through the hard certitudes of reason rather than the amorphous recollections of personal experience. The doubts of Augustine, the



ANTHONY T. PADOVANO holds doctorates and professorships in theology and literature. He is the author of twenty-eight books including three award-winning plays, translated into eight languages.

unworthiness he never jettisons, the critical intelligence, all this finds its place in Carroll's narrative. He is Augustine, without the misogyny and the sexual obsessions, with the passion, the poetry and the wild but unstable hope that leads him to God with exuberance and sadness.

It is no surprise that another mentor is Thomas Merton, the monk who schooled Carroll in piety (*Seeds of Contemplation*) and protest (*Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*). Merton had the restlessness of Augustine.

THE MAJOR CRITIQUE THAT Carroll levels against Catholicism is abuse of authority. Abuse of authority may well be the most pernicious of all our infidelities and Catholicism is trapped by this excess at every

betrayal of this vision shatters Carroll to the core of his being. He endures by affirming Catholicism as simultaneously "all important and not all that important."

There are a few tame criticisms I would register. The theological syntheses, though always correct, are longer than need be. Editing would have focused more earnestly on Carroll's compelling personal story. The role assigned Cardinal Richard Cushing is pivotal to the development of modern Catholicism but not as great as Carroll's admiration indicates.

I do not agree with Carroll's description of his resignation from canonical priestly ministry. He portrays it negatively. He is not an "ex-priest," someone guilty of "breaking my vows," a "layman" who "left the priesthood." There is a hint

There are three points I would offer. First, the letter carefully responds to the then recent papal encyclical prohibiting artificial birth control. It throws the issue to the conscience of Catholics, stating that couples may find a need for sexual expression in their marriage, a realization they cannot responsibly have more children and a desire not to be at odds with official church teaching. In such instances, they must follow their conscience in the practical choices they make. This was as far as the national conference of bishops would go but it was further than the world at large had expected.

Second, the letter gave remarkably expansive legitimacy to theological dissent against the papal encyclical and other official teaching. The norms, which

He is Augustine, without the misogyny and the sexual obsessions, with the passion, the poetry and the wild but unstable hope that leads him to God with exuberance and sadness.

turn. The infallibility of some papal teachings, the unrelieved rejection of modernism, the control of clergy by mandatory celibacy and of laity by the prohibition of artificial birth prevention, all these are part and parcel of the attempt to create a pope-centered church and to eliminate the authority of God in the conscience of every Catholic.

Carroll celebrates the capacity of Catholicism to renew itself in its most desperate moments. He is embraced, as a high school student, by John XXIII during a private papal audience. John gives the church and the world the Second Vatican Council, by most accounts the most successful and revolutionary of all church assemblies. John dies soon after writing a remarkable encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, in which he endorses the emergence of women, the end of colonialism and the yearning for economic justice. Carroll is attuned to these themes and to the world's affection for John. The sadness of the

here of the unworthiness Carroll overcomes in other instances but not this time. Carroll resigned, with formal Vatican acceptance of his decision, not the priesthood but the clerical status he once held. He is, in my estimation, both priest and poet. The callings, for him are not exclusive but inseparable. He would have been a lesser writer, a substantially different person, had he not been ordained. His unwillingness to obey (obedience, not celibacy, occasions his resignation) was not at odds with his priesthood but an expression of it. He sees the "lies" in a clerical system that condemns birth control more heatedly than war, the death penalty, the sexual abuse of children and the denigration of women.

James Carroll criticizes the 1968 "Human Life in Our Day" pastoral letter of the United States Bishops. I would like to speak in its defense. Full disclosure: I wrote this letter for the American bishops.

are official, stated that theological dissent was legitimate when the reasons were serious, well-founded and respectful and that such dissent could not help but be public given the world in which we live.

Third, and most to the point, especially granting James Carroll's heroic and prophetic stance against the Vietnam War and draft resistance, this letter became the first in the Catholic world to call explicitly for "selective conscientious objection." It cited, with approval, the possibility of "powerful opposition to a given war as pointless and immoral." This letter gained selective conscientious objection status for many young men during the Vietnam War.

IN ANY CASE, CARROLL MAY HAVE achieved what his mentor Hans Kung achieved by distancing himself from official church approbation. Kung confided to Carroll that because John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger

punished him by removing his license and standing as a Catholic theologian, he was compelled to go forward with a project for universal religious understanding. He was “liberated” by what was meant to be his confinement. He became active in the Parliament of World Religions and with the Global Ethic, endeavors that had nothing less than the survival of humanity at their core. Kung insisted that there can be no peace among the nations without dialogue between the religions.

Carroll was also liberated from elements of clerical life he found dishonest and corrupt. He is not angry in this rejection, merely disillusioned, disappointed and sad. In this new freedom, Carroll has become a guide for Catholics in the US who are determined to remain Catholics but not on the terms given by Church officials alone. He does not accept a “deity so small as to be held in check by a church.”

The richness of Carroll’s inclusivity and cultural sensitivity is on full display in this book. The section on Michelangelo’s painting in the Sistine Chapel is very good as it traces the proximity of the 1534-1541 painting to the Reformation, Copernicus and the Council of Trent. In another instance, he gives an exegesis of Mary Magdalene that is clear and compelling. He quotes *The Origin of Species* and Darwin’s amazement at natural selection “scrutinizing every variation, even the slightest, rejecting that which is bad, preserving... all that is good,” a good description of Carroll’s journey to God and authentic Catholicism.

Carroll quotes the first-century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, commenting on the followers of Jesus whom he encountered not long after the loss of their leader. Fully aware that crucifixion was a shameful death, Josephus finds their response admirable. “Those who in the first place had come to love him did not give up their affection for him.” This is a worthy commentary on the ministry, life and writing of James Carroll. ■

Reports Worth Reading

Abortion Worldwide: A Decade of Uneven Progress

Guttmacher Institute, 2009

This recent Guttmacher report looks at the progress of the past decade pertaining to the safety, legality and accessibility of abortion. The report posits that progress has been a mixed bag: while some countries have liberalized their laws and increased access to reproductive health services, these services still remain restricted in many regions. The in-depth data research and analysis shows the abortion rate has decreased as has the rate of unintended pregnancy, as contraceptive use increases.

Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Family Planning and Maternal and Newborn Health

Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA, 2009

In honor of the 15th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Guttmacher Institute teamed up to look at the fiscal benefits of supporting reproductive health. Among the chilling numbers presented in the report, the authors suggest that fulfilling the unmet need for modern family planning methods would cost a mere \$6.7 billion annually and save at least \$5.1 billion from money that would otherwise be spent on maternal and newborn care.

Bridging the Divide: Disability Rights and Reproductive Rights and Justice Advocates Discussing Genetic Technologies

Generations Ahead, 2009

Beginning in 2007, Generations Ahead convened five roundtable discussions with 17 disability rights and reproductive rights advocates working in California. This report describes the dialogue that took place, focusing on four main topics: selection technologies, notions of personhood, caregiving and perceptions of being aligned with the rightwing.

Defending Human Rights: Abortion Providers Facing Threats, Restrictions, and Harassment

Center for Reproductive Rights, 2009

The death of Dr. George Tiller last July was a shocking reminder to the world that abortion providers remain the subjects of threats and violence even where the practice is legal. This report by Center for Reproductive Rights documents the plight of abortion providers, and outlines the obstacles they face from harassment and threats to legal restrictions.

HIV Prevention: A Global Theological Conversation

Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, 2009

Drawing from consultations with 35 theologians of five continents and various religious traditions, this book summarizes the theological reflections from these consultations and highlights places of commonality. The book’s first part explains the relationship between HIV prevention and theology and the remainder is divided into three parts which look at HIV prevention at the global, community and individual levels.

Ireland's Contemporary Underground Railroad

By Ruth Riddick

Ireland's Hidden Diaspora: The "abortion trail" and the making of a London-Irish underground, 1980-2000

Ann Rossiter

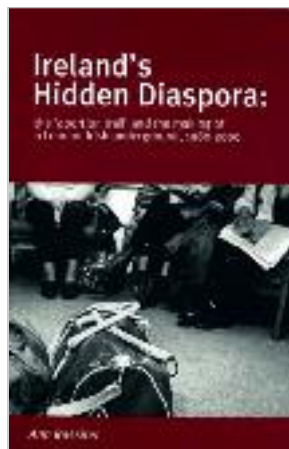
(IASC Publishing, 2009, 250pp)
978-0956178503, \$12.00

"I have always relied on the kindness of strangers." —Tennessee Williams,
A Streetcar Named Desire

IMMEDIATELY UPON INSTALLATION as seventh President of Ireland in 1990, Mary Robinson lit a candle in a prominent window of her official residence as a beacon to Ireland's emigrants around the world, a scattered population she forever characterized as "the diaspora." As candidate for this office, Robinson had promised to be a president for "all the people," including the marginalized and forgotten. By this gesture, she gave visibility to one ambiguous, if perennial, reality of Irish life.

Author and activist Ann Rossiter is a member of this socio-economic diaspora. Born in Co. Limerick, Rossiter moved to London in the decade before Robinson's election, exchanging "the spotless purity of [her] Irish home for the pagan turpitude of a

modern Babylon." Rossiter is one face of the budget savings to the Irish economy of sustained emigration, publicly calculated during the 1980s by Ireland's then-Finance Minister. Through her work spanning a political generation (although she's likely to demur at the suggestion and is mostly invisible in her book), Rossiter is herself a figure of historical significance.



"Ireland's Hidden Diaspora"—a reference unimaginable before Mary Robinson—tells the story of Irish women's mostly secret migration to England for legal abortion, in their thousands every year, and collates the history of the women (socio-economic emigrants like Rossiter) who supported them by offering friendship, accommodation and a shoulder; activities described by these volunteers as "our bit of the [emigrant] Irish community."

Rossiter explains: "In writing this account it has become clear that before memory fades and, indeed, the activists concerned fade away, the task of compiling an extensive record of Irish immigrant women's activities takes on a particular urgency."

Here Rossiter steps into the void where, traditionally and across all patriarchal cultures, women's stories linger in the hope of being told—eventually.

Thanks to the academic women's movement, it's now a commonplace to observe that women disappear from history even as we still live and struggle with gender-specific oppression. Unless, that is, we are documented as fully as possible, the public lives and the private lives, preferably in real-time before our experience dies with us. This is where Rossiter's book, which she describes as "history from below," is so helpful.

In Ireland's rush to embrace the Celtic Tiger ("what stripes! what claws!"), we often overlooked our surer status as a post-colonial people struggling, with arguable half-heartedness, to establish a modern democratic republic poised to take its place among the nations of the world. Of course there were agendas from the start. Most notably, that of a reactionary Catholic church with its prurient interest in controlling sex, if not the sexual behavior of its priests, and a determination to enforce its diktat at every level of Irish life—education, politics and legislation, medicine, libraries and cinemas, sexuality, private life and choices.

Luckily, there's always been the safety hatch of nearby England, so lately our colonial "mother." A pagan Babylon, to be sure, but . . . when the going gets tough, the tough-luck can get going that crucial distance across the Irish Sea where lives with honest-to-god jobs, legal support for differing sexual identities, safe and lawful abortion and a church that knows its societal place, awaited the (re)infantalized children of a long-colonized people. A diaspora indeed!

As a long-term member of the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group, formed to respond to a less visible dispersal, Rossiter writes that "IWASG's political philosophy and organizing principles were part and parcel of the counter-culture and libertarian currents of the time [1981]. It was decidedly feminist."

This kindness to strangers, both personal and political in nature, was offered by IWASG with heart; no money exchanged hands, although funds were raised from third-parties to meet their practical costs and, later, the advocacy

Empowerment educator and reproductive rights activist, RUTH RIDDICK is founder-director of Open Door Counselling, which successfully sued the Republic of Ireland over freedom of information about lawful abortion services at the European Court of Human Rights (1992). Her most recent piece for Conscience was a review of "Doubt" (Summer 2009).

expenses of the Irish Abortion Support Campaign (IASC). The service was a huge relief to those pregnancy counseling clients referred by Dublin-based providers such as (the feminist) Open Door Counselling in the 1980s and the (liberal) Irish Family Planning Association from the early 1990s, as well as to the majority of women from both parts of a still-divided Ireland who make it to England—and, recently, even further afield—on their own and whose stories, recollected by IWASG members, are interwoven here.

DESPITE ROOTS AT THE ENERGETIC fringe, IWASG came to provide such a meaningful service that the perception arose that it was not a voluntary enterprise, but a mainstream NGO, somehow connected to the British National Health Service, itself staffed from the beginning by so many Irish emigrants. Volunteer Ann Hayes is quoted: “I remember one abortion seeker politely asking me . . . if I worked most evenings. When we got to my flat she was surprised to be given my spare room and an offer to share dinner with me. She had thought she was coming to some kind of institutional accommodation and that I was a paid employee.”

Thus, Rossiter tells two stories, both obscured in cultures hot to obliterate the messy facts of women’s lives. In the one, Rossiter tells of this support work and advocacy from the perspective of the volunteers and activists—including herself—caught in ambiguous relation to the mainstream Irish immigrant community. In the other, she presents an oral history from abortion seekers themselves. In the telling, Rossiter also discusses tensions both in Ireland (abortion shrouded in secrecy at a time of extraordinary political activity and relevant litigation in domestic and European courts) and in England (the emigrant Irish preferred to ignore the issue altogether, often in explicit deference to their Catholic heritage). Combined, the stories make for riveting reading.

There are, of course, two dimensions to story-telling: the telling and the hearing.

Who is to hear Rossiter’s well-researched and documented account? In part, the formation of IASC can be read as response to the willful refusal to value these stories on either side of the Irish sea. Again and again, women’s history faces this double challenge. There is the imperative, clearly felt by Rossiter, to capture and archive, and there is the subsequent difficulty of finding an audience for these otherwise lost stories. In meeting the first of the challenges, Rossiter chose to self-publish under the IASC label and market through Amazon. We are in her debt for this sensible approach.

Germane to any debate about abortion as Rossiter’s book undoubtedly is (the Irish abortion issue is now too serpentine for most commentators), it is still highly unlikely that decision-makers will make the effort to read what she has to say. Were an angel to finance distribution to every member of the Irish parliament, even to their colleagues throughout the European Union, could we guarantee any readership, much less direct affect on legislation or services to benefit this hidden diaspora?

Improbable as it seems at the close of the Celtic Tiger, abortion remains illegal in the Republic of Ireland, except where threat to the life of the “mother” exists, as identified by the Supreme Court on a case-by-case basis. Through a purposeful loophole of partition, the amendments to British law permitting abortion do not extend to Northern Ireland. In the information age, Irish women seeking abortion still travel abroad flying blind, and the need for support on the other side, as chronicled by Rossiter, remains undiminished after three decades.

It is no less than a national scandal that Ireland cares so little for her migrant daughters that crisis support is provided by socioeconomic emigrants acting in a voluntary capacity. Rossiter’s subtitle refers to “an underground.” It is grotesque that civilian adults in peacetime can be thus characterized by their own governments and people. What are we—electorate, family, doctors, pundits, lawyers, judges—thinking?

For now, Ann Rossiter’s remarkable account is all the candle we have. ■

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"If you look at the birth rates in France and Italy and Spain it seems as though I might not be the only devout Catholic who likes to control her fertility."

— Cherie Blair, spouse of former United Kingdom Prime Minister Tony Blair, explains why the hierarchy should change its teaching on contraception.¹

"Church teaching has officially conceded now that sex has a purpose other than procreation, namely to nourish and develop a relationship of love between two people...[The Vatican should] break the rigid connection between sexual activity and marriage, allowing for appropriate sexual relationships between people who are not married, when the quality of the relationship merits it."

—Fr. Tony Flannery, an Irish priest, calls for church teachings on sex to be updated.²

"Transsexuals and homosexuals will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, it's not me who says it but St. Paul."

—Mexican Cardinal Javier Barragan asserts that gay men and women can't enter heaven, prompting a reprimand from Vatican officials.³

"Last month the pope made [President Nicolas Sarkozy] of France an honorary canon of St. John Lateran's—and he is pro-abortion, pro-gay marriage, married invalidly to an actress, and the pope did that. It doesn't seem that [the Vatican] had quite as big a concern about this matter of Obama and Notre Dame as some of us."

—Archbishop Michael Sheehan of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe suggests that the actions of the US bishops who opposed the president's speaking engagement at the University of Notre Dame were unwarranted.⁴

"Bishop Tobin's role is to teach Mr. Kennedy and others. It is not his role to coerce Mr. Kennedy's conscience, however erroneous it may be, by denying him the faith-filled, prayerful and spiritually rich experience of participating in Holy Communion."

— Monsignor Harry Byrne calls for temperance in the debate over Bishop Thomas Tobin's threats to deny communion to Representative Patrick Kennedy (D-RI).⁵

"The fact that I disagree with the hierarchy on some issues does not make me any less of a Catholic."

— Representative Patrick Kennedy sets the record straight in a letter to his bishop, Thomas Tobin of Rhode Island.⁶

"The culture of homosexuality is a culture of self-absorption because it does not value self-sacrifice. It is a glaring example of what John Paul II has called the culture of death. Islamic fundamentalists clearly understand the damage that homosexual behavior inflicts on a culture. That is why they repress such behavior by death. Their culture is anything but one of self-absorption. It may be brutal at times, but any culture that is able to produce wave after wave of suicide bombers (women as well as men) is a culture that at least knows how to value self-sacrifice."

— Archbishop Anthony Apuron of Guam opposes a bill that would permit same-sex marriage in the US territory.⁷

"Regarding the present interrogation, I think the male hierarchy is truly impotent, incapable of equality, co-responsibility in adult behavior. In the church today, we are experiencing a dictatorial mindset and spiritual violence."

— Mercy Sister Theresa Kane speaks out against the Vatican investigation of US women religious.⁸

"We must protect our children from the poisonous message of hedonism, individualism and materialism on MTV and so many other places."

— Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston has concerns about some aspects of modern culture.⁹

¹ Jason Allardyce, "Blair plea on birth control; Former prime minister's wife accuses Catholic church of holding back career women," *Sunday Times (London)*, August 30, 2009. ² *Sunday Independent (Ireland)*, "It's time for the Church's outlook on sex to evolve," September 20, 2009. ³ *Irish Times*, "Cardinal says homosexuals can't enter heaven," December 2, 2009. ⁴ Tom Roberts, "Bishop decries 'combative tactics' of a minority of U.S. bishops," *National Catholic Reporter*, August 27, 2009. ⁵ (Msgr.) Harry J. Byrne, "Letters: Rep. Kennedy Not Welcome to Receive Communion," *New York Times*, November 24, 2009. ⁶ Bishop Thomas Tobin, "Dear Congressman Kennedy," *Rhode Island Catholic*, November 12, 2009. ⁷ Archbishop Anthony Apuron, "In Bill 185 the Stakes Are Very High," October 23, 2009. ⁸ *National Catholic Reporter*, "Mercy Sister Theresa Kane criticizes church hierarchy," September 30, 2009. ⁹ Amanda McGregor, "Cardinal urges: Protect children, preserve 'common good,'" *Salem News*, September 28, 2009.

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Index: What Catholic Millennials Think About Sex

The majority of Catholic Millennials (those aged 18 to 29) believe the following issues to be either “morally acceptable” or “not a moral issue.”

Sex between an unmarried man and a woman	80%
Medical research using stem cells obtained from human embryos	67%
Divorce	65%
Gay and lesbian relations	65%
Having a baby outside of marriage	64%
Same-sex marriage	63%

Source: Knights of Columbus, *American Millennials: Generations Apart*, polling conducted by Marist Poll, February 2010, 1006 Millennials polled, margin of error: +/- 3 percentage points.