



Prayer and Spiritual Life on the Web

by Sherry Weddell

There are thousands of Internet sites devoted to prayer and spirituality which range in quality from the glorious to the grotesque. To our website's "links" collection, I have added over 90 of the most inspiring and useful sites for lay Catholics. They are categorized alphabetically by keyword: Classics, Contemplative Prayer, Eucharist, Icons, Intercession, Lectio Divina, Liturgy, Movements, Prayers, Rosary, Salvation, Spiritual Paths, Traditions, and websites on prayer. To explore these sites, go to our website at www.siena.org, click "Links", then "Life Within the Church," and then "Prayer and Spiritual Life."

By "Classics" I mean great works of Catholic spirituality that transcend the centuries, such as *The Interior Castle* of Teresa of Avila or *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*. One little known classic is the delightfully illustrated 13th century work, *The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic* (www.op.org/domcentral/places/stjude/NineWays.html). Dominic was a man of intense prayer who reputedly spent his days talking to people about God and his nights talking to God about people. When Dominic knew that God was about to work a miracle, such as the well-documented raising of a dead boy in Rome, he would pray with his arms held out like a cross. *The Nine Ways* depicts Dominic bowing, prostrating, and pacing as he prayed with his

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Putting our Past in Front: Redeeming the scandal

by Rev. Michael Sweeney, O.P.

"It has always intrigued me that in biblical Hebrew the way of referring to past and future has the opposite orientation than does either

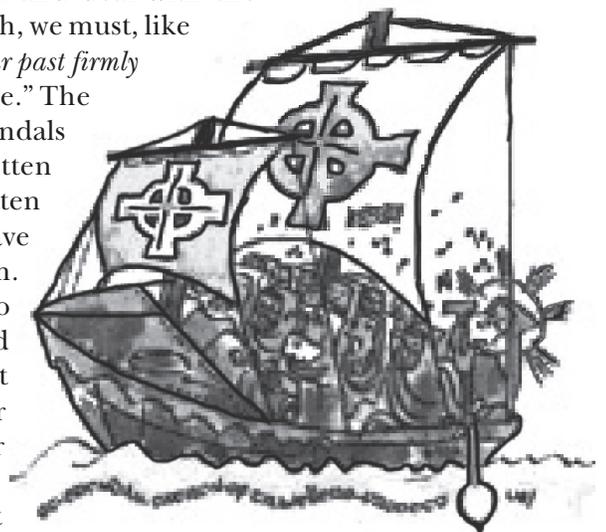
English or French. While we say, 'the past

is behind me' and 'the future is in front of me,' the biblical idiom is the opposite: i.e. *the past is in front of me* (before my face) and *the future is behind me* (at my back). The image is visual, something like rowing a boat across a lake. The receding shoreline is 'in front of you'—where you are headed is 'at your back', behind you. You view the 'past'—the receding shore—in order to fix your course for where you are going." (Donald Senior, CP, "The Biblical Heritage and the Meaning of Vocation," *Origins*, Vol. 31, No. 46).

If we are to understand and deal with the recent scandals in the Church, we must, like the ancient Hebrews, *keep our past firmly in front of us*—"before our face." The reason we are suffering scandals at all is that we have forgotten who we are. We have forgotten who we are because we have forgotten where we are from. Our task therefore is to remember who we are, and where we are from. To chart our course, we must put our future behind us, and our past before us.

What are the things that we should remember?

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Happenings...

Jakarta bound: It's official! We head to Indonesia mid-August for two-plus weeks of workshops and training for an enthusiastic and vibrant Catholic community eager to discern their gifts and their calls. Both written and electronic slides are being translated into Bahasa for the occasion and for future use there. Traveling with Fr. Michael and Sherry will be Inge Hendromartono, a native Indonesian and long time US resident, whose knowledge of the language and culture have been invaluable in making this possible. And thank you to all those who contributed to this effort in response to our recent letter!

A new tape series, *Discerning the Vocation of Marriage*, will be ready for shipping towards the end of July. Fr. Michael talks about marriage as a communion of life and love, calling for a sincere gift of self and requiring a respect for and a perfecting of "true personal subjectivity." We hope this tape set will greatly facilitate those considering marriage and also that

it will inspire and challenge established couples to deepen their hopes and expectations for their union. Fr. Michael creatively makes accessible the wisdom of the Tradition. This four tape set can serve as a marriage preparation class or as a basis for small group discussion. A booklet is included.

We have a busy **fall and winter** already scheduled. We make our fifth trip to Hawaii in September, where the gifts discernment process has really taken root, largely due to the tireless efforts of Sharon Chiarucci, a lay diocesan leader. For the first time, we will visit the states of Nevada, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Louisiana, and also have our first workshops here in Colorado. For more information, see our calendar page, or visit our website calendar, which always has the most up-to-date information.

Copies of **Cardinal J. Francis Stafford's talk, "The Laity in the 21st Century,"** are now available. Presented last year at our conference on Lay Apostleship in San Francisco, he talked of the call to holiness while living out the essentially secular role, and explained that the laity are in the heart of the world and the center of the church with an obligation to never retreat from the truth. Those who listened to his talk will appreciate the opportunity to revisit his profound discussion of "eschatological reserve." In booklet form, it can be ordered from our office for \$2 plus postage.

We send *The Scribe* **free of charge** to provide our readers with an interesting and useful resource for lay apostleship. If you enjoy the newsletter, please consider making a contribution to help with production and mailing costs. Otherwise, pass it on or let us know and we'll take you off our mailing list.

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whole body, which provides hope to those of us who experience difficulty praying using static postures.

Ambrose, beloved 4th century Bishop of Milan and mentor to St. Augustine wrote, "You have shown Yourself to me, O Christ, face to face. I meet You in Your sacraments." This quote is the motto for the website *Meeting Christ in the Liturgy* (MCITL) (www.christusrex.org/www1/mcitr/lowhome.html). It contains readings and meditations for Sundays throughout the liturgical year as well as helpful links to many other resources that enable lay men and women to more fruitfully participate in the liturgy as prayer. Our section "Prayer and Spiritual Life" also contains links to 18 superb sites dedicated to the Eucharist. Maps of adoration chapels around the US are included together with additional information about the theology and history of Eucharistic spirituality. Two particularly interesting sites are the lay-run *Apostolate for the Eucharistic Life* (www.eucharisticlife.com/sm_index1.htm), which is dedicated to helping lay people encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, and *The Real Presence Association*, whose site contains dozen of links that describe the transforming power of Christ's presence in the Blessed Sacrament (www.therealpresence.org/eucharst/a.html).

Numerous collections of Catholic prayers on the Internet include the comprehensive *Awaken to Prayer: How to Pray as a Catholic* (landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/prayer.html), whose author pastors two tiny missions high in the mountains of Western Washington. From the prayer of the Mass to the prayer of the heart, this website compiles an amazing compilation of information and encouragement for See *Prayer*, page 8

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"As he is, so are we in this world."

1 John 4:17b

When Evangelical is Not Enough

by Sherry Ann Weddell

When we moved our office to Colorado Springs I did not understand how different life would be in the “evangelical Vatican.” Over 100 national and international evangelical

Protestant organizations make their home here including Focus On the Family. We have no skyscrapers, only “purple mountain majesties” (*America the Beautiful* was inspired by the view from Pikes Peak) and gigantic churches with names like “Radiance” or “New Life” that dominate the corners and hilltops. *Visible*, unapologetic faith is much more a part of the public scene here than would ever be imagined in Seattle.

When I drop into my local dry cleaner’s or Mail Boxes, Etc., the staff is listening to Christian talk radio. During a recent morning walk, a friendly older man wanted to demonstrate his dog’s best trick. I witnessed the apparently charismatic pooch “praise the Lord” by rising on her hind-legs and waving her paws in the air on command. Honest.

If I walk into the local discount warehouse, the genial older gentleman who greets me will very likely bellow a few bars of “Amazing Grace.” The first time I heard it, my West Coast urbanite paranoia kicked in. Grabbing my husband’s arm I gasped, “He’s singing a *Christian hymn in a public place*. He can’t do that! He’ll be fired for sure.” Six months later, he’s still singing hymns at the top of his lungs. I now know that Colorado Springs shoppers consider him a bit of local color rather than a one-man assault on the separation of church and state.

While most Catholics would shrivel like salted slugs at the prospect of singing religious solos in a discount warehouse, the general acceptance locally testifies to the prevalence of evangelical *culture* and how it affects our response to religious expressions. Part of a culture’s power is its ability to make certain aspects of reality visible and obvious *by what it affirms or emphasizes*. At the same time, it renders other dimensions of life virtually invisible

by what it denies or ignores. One of the ironies of the American scene is that although Catholics have been the largest Christian communion in the US for 150 years (we are nearly four times the size of the next-largest: the Southern Baptist Convention), the primary Christian *cultural* influence in America today is evangelical Protestantism.

This creates a problem for Catholics because Evangelical belief is rooted in the 500-year-old Protestant denial of essential Catholic doctrines and practices. Many of the early Reformers taught that Catholic

beliefs—the ordained priesthood, the episcopate, the teaching authority of the Church, the intercession of the saints, and the sacraments—were not part of apostolic Christianity but were later corrupting additions that obscured the Gospel.

For most evangelicals, the repudiation of Catholic values and beliefs is no longer conscious. The bitterness of the 16th century is gone (thank

heaven!) but a stripped-down Protestant worldview is still their unquestioned map of the spiritual universe. In the minds of many, authentic Christianity *is* evangelical Protestantism, period. This notion was driven home to me once again after a recent lunch with a publishing director for a huge evangelical organization in town. My gracious host gave me several back copies of their journal. One article began “Despite over 150 years of Christian evangelism, the Gospel has not been widely embraced by Asia’s people” (*Interlit*, “Theological Publishing in Southeast Asia,” Soonim Lee, October 2001). The only problem with this statement is that it

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ignores 650 years of successful Catholic evangelization in Asia. Lee's understanding of history renders invisible the millions of Catholics who endured terrible persecution in central Asia, Japan, China, Vietnam, India, and Korea for their faith in Jesus Christ during the centuries *before* Protestant missionaries arrived. Although the heroic saga of Asian Catholicism is well known, I am certain that the author did not intend to falsify history. It just never occurred to him or to his editor that *Catholic* history is part of *Christian* history.

Mere Christianity?

If Catholics are to be successful in forming lay apostles, we must understand that *the majority of practicing American Christians today* (including a significant number of Catholics) *regard evangelical Protestantism as foundational, "mere" Christianity*—in what it affirms, in what it denies, and in what it ignores. From this perspective, Catholic distinctives are at worst a dangerous corruption, or at best questionable spiritual frills—decorative cultural icing on an essentially Protestant cake. So powerful is the identification of basic Christianity with evangelical Protestantism in the US that some *Catholics* use the term "Christian," as do many evangelicals, to mean "non-Catholic"!

Millions of American Catholics, especially those who most earnestly seek to follow Christ, have been deeply influenced by evangelical thought. Evangelicals dominate the popular Christian resources that many lay Catholics turn to for help in their spiritual journey: religious television and radio (there are over 1200 evangelical Protestant radio stations and only 42 Catholic

stations in the US), contemporary Christian music, bookstores, websites, and ministries by and for the laity. Hundreds of participants at our own workshops have told me that they have been, or are currently involved with, evangelical groups or programs.

Programs for sale

In a new twist, Catholic parishes and dioceses have begun turning to evangelical ministries and models for help in a variety of areas, from Bible study to gifts discernment to evangelism. Sensing a huge new market for their products, some national evangelical ministries are now specifically *targeting* Catholics. I have been approached myself by Protestant ministries looking for help to revamp their materials for a Catholic audience. The overwhelming majority of these evangelical pioneers are *not* seeking to "convert" Catholics into Protestants but to help them become mature disciples of Jesus Christ. The problem is that their understanding of Christian maturity is not a Catholic understanding.

As Catholics, we respect our evangelical brothers and sisters for their efforts to follow Christ's command to "make disciples of all nations." We are challenged by their zeal in communicating Christ to every person in every generation. Evangelicals are extremely sensitive to cultural change and its effect on the proclamation of the Gospel, and they have often devised inspired and innovative methods to more effectively reach each new generation. What Catholics need to hear most from evangelical Christians is their insistence that encountering Christ should be profoundly life-changing and the corollary that *if people's lives aren't changing,*

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something is wrong in our proclamation of Christ.

But it is also important to remember what we *cannot* learn from evangelicals. Evangelical Protestantism is only 60 years old, emerging from American fundamentalism at the end of World War II. In that brief time, it has spread with breath-taking speed and there are now hundreds of millions of evangelicals around the world. But Catholic Christianity has a living memory of 20 centuries of seeking to follow Christ in every culture on earth; it is still far larger and infinitely broader and deeper. Catholic theological, intellectual, and cultural traditions; contemplative spirituality; liturgical and sacramental life; and sophisticated teachings in the area of social justice have no equal in the evangelical world. Compared to the banquet that 2000 years of Catholic prayer, tradition, and life offer, evangelicalism is seriously impoverished—a sort of spiritual “Lean Cuisine.” A person can live on it but why would anyone want to if Christ calls us to so much more?

Differences: subtle but real

Eager, apostolically-minded Catholics are often drawn to Protestant evangelical programs that seem to change people’s lives. Unfortunately, as every good teacher knows, good will does not render students immune to the disease of unintended effects: those we form will learn not only the content that we are trying to teach but the worldview behind that content. When this backdrop is the evangelical worldview, large parts of the historic Christian tradition become invisible.

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Consequently, *Lay Catholics absorb an “abridged” Christian worldview founded upon the denial or ignorance of Catholic essentials. They come to view truly Catholic spirituality as unnecessary, foreign, or hopelessly complex.* To our chagrin, we may find that in using evangelical approaches in Catholic lay formation, without first vetting and amending them, we are *d&forming* Catholics rather than forming apostles.

The problem of the evangelical worldview in Catholic formation programs can manifest itself in subtle ways. I recently came across a Bible study guide for Catholics intended for novices in which the Catholic author assured her readers several times that the Holy Spirit will “teach you everything” (John 14:26). Never once did she mention that the Word of God comprises Church Tradition and Scripture *together*, nor did she refer to the critical role of the Magisterium in interpreting God’s Word. In her laudable attempt to help Catholics become familiar with the Bible, the author inadvertently vaccinated her readers against the Catholic understanding of Scripture. Despite her good intentions, her silence in these critical areas renders the true source and context of Scripture invisible. Earnest and open Catholic readers will very likely absorb the evangelical belief that the *Bible alone* is the Word of God, something separate from the teaching of the Church, and that its true meaning is obvious and sufficiently understandable by prayerful individuals. It is highly unlikely they would guess that the Church had anything essential to say on the matter at all.

Evangelization is another area where things get confused when Catholics draw upon evangelical expertise. Catholics and evangelicals both want people to have life-changing encounters with the risen Christ, something all believing Christians desire for everyone. I have talked to hundreds of Catholics around the country whose lives have been changed through an experience of a personal encounter with Jesus. Some conversions were quiet but profound. Others were dramatic knocked-off-your-horse, mind-blowing, convention-shattering experiences that completely reoriented lives. What

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The scandal has not so much to do with the sins and criminal acts of certain priests. That Catholics—including priests—sin should not surprise us. We should not be shocked that sin infects even the episcopate. Jesus came in order to redeem sinful humanity: it could be said that the first pre-requisite for being a Catholic is that we have

sinned. Therefore the first thing to remember is that we are sinners—not just sinners, but sinners whom Christ has redeemed.

“I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me,” says the psalmist (Ps 53:1), and we must never pretend otherwise. The scandal is not that some of us have sinned, even sinned egregiously, but that church leaders attempted to cover up the fact, even to the degree that priests who are incompetent to govern the people of God were reassigned to pastoral offices. Why?

Again, we have forgotten where we are from and, therefore, what we are to do and to become. The Church was founded upon a commission to the apostles—which, as John Paul II insists, was actually addressed to each of us: “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age’.” The Holy Spirit was communicated to the apostles and to the Church for the sake of this commission; we will correctly chart our course only if we have this commission “before our face.”

Redemption versus edification

Notice that Jesus did not command us to edify others. He did not say, “Go and be a moral example to the nations” or, “Go and edify all nations.” The work of the

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Church is to redeem, not merely to edify. Our job is to baptize and to teach—to bring to others the salvation and healing of the One who, we know, is with us always.

Some of our bishops appear to be acting as if Jesus had commanded us to edify and to preserve the public reputation of the Church’s ministers at all costs. I am utterly certain that they did not intend the betrayal of Christ and his Church. Yet this is what has occurred. In contrast, Our Lord seems to have been singularly unconcerned for the reputations of the Twelve. And what a hopeless lot they appeared to be in the beginning: they were quarrelsome, slow to understand, and, in many cases, more of an impediment than a help to him. In the end they abandoned him completely, committing him to face his passion and death alone, deprived of their consolation. Yet it was to them and to their successors that Our Lord committed the care of the Church. We who belong to the hierarchy are in every way the successors of the twelve: we, too, are quarrelsome, slow to understand and, as is all too apparent, capable of impeding Christ’s mission and betraying him.

The Church’s ministry, however, does not rest upon the moral indefectibility of her ministers any more now than it did in the beginning. Rather, it rests upon the commission and power of Christ communicated to the Church through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We should never pretend that the integrity of the Church’s witness depends primarily upon the moral integrity of her ministers—nor should we permit others to think so. If the world sees us as we are, sinners who have received a knowledge, a power and a commission that we do not—could not—merit, then so much the better. It is in our weakness, St. Paul reminds us, that the divine source of our mission is most manifested.

Keeping our past firmly “before our face,” we remember other things to help us chart our course. We recall that Jesus identified himself completely with the mission of the apostles: underneath every command of Our Lord is his admonition, “Do this in memory of me.” In his Name are we to exercise his mission. Therefore

we must notice that these scandalous acts first betray not the child who has been molested, or the parents who have been completely overlooked in their Christian office to care for their children, or the parishioners who have been entrusted to the care of a criminally behaving priest. The first person who has been betrayed is Christ himself. Because he has been betrayed, his body, the Church, has been betrayed. If we are to exercise his ministry with integrity, we must first be reconciled to him.

Through being reconciled to Christ, we will chart the course that is necessary for us to be reconciled to each other. What must we do? Those of us who serve the Church in the hierarchy must judge with Christ. God himself has placed a father and a mother in authority over their children. When a child is abused, the parents must be the ones who first prescribe what is to be done for their

*To pursue uncritically a “no tolerance” policy—
sometimes in a manner that directly contradicts the
sensibilities and judgment of the lay faithful—
is to forget that He is with us always.*

child. Some children may, indeed, require psychological help. All will need to be healed in their relationship to Christ and to the Church. Alone, the priests and bishops of the Church do not have the competence to judge what is to be done for the children who have been abused; we must have recourse to the parents, supporting them in whatever ways they judge best for their children.

The way of reconciliation

In many cases this recourse was neglected. Most of the cases with which we are presently concerned occurred many years ago. The children who were abused have grown into adulthood and many have ceased to practice their faith. We must now seek true reconciliation, in person and in a personal way—one by one. Offers of cash settlements and therapy are expedients appropriate to civil corporations, but are wholly inadequate for the Church. For Christ insists that we *reconcile*. Quite simply, it is necessary for us—members of the hierarchy—to seek the mercy of those whom we have offended.

Priests and bishops have failed to take seriously the lay faithful they serve and with whom they are called to collaborate in the mission of the Church. They have covered up the actions of certain priests, fearing that Christ’s people would falter in their faith if they became aware of such transgressions. They did not trust that the laity were as capable of

faithfulness as they themselves, and that their faith—a gift of God—does not depend upon the witness of the hierarchy.

Reconciliation does not mean inaugurating administrative reforms or democratizing the Church. Indeed, such measures presume that no reconciliation is possible and that therefore drastic steps are in order. Reconciliation means that we of the hierarchy must recognize the dignity of the laity’s faith and apostolate and rely upon their support and judgment. It means trusting that they will respect our ordination and the role we have been given in the community, even as they insist upon the apostolic roles they possess for the sake of the mission of the Church to the world.

In the exercise of our pastoral judgment, we should also keep firmly before us that Jesus redeemed each man, each woman, without exception. This does not mean that men and women are incapable of serious sin or undeserving of punishment. A priest who has committed pedophilia deserves to be punished as the law stipulates. We must remember, however, that Christ has united himself to each of us—even to a pedophile—in such a way that there can be real contrition and even a real transformation of life. We are told that pedophilia is a sickness, one for which there is no cure, and certainly those who govern the Church should take into account the judgment of health professionals. We

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Our Mission:

Working to make apostolic formation and support readily available to all lay Catholics by:

1. Making self-formation resources available to lay Catholics throughout the world.
2. Equipping parishes to become houses of formation, discernment, and apostolic support for the laity.
3. Forming clergy, religious, and lay leaders to be effective formators of lay apostles.
4. Fostering awareness, discussion, theological inquiry, and pastoral consultation throughout the Church regarding the apostolic mission and formation of the laity.
5. Collaborating with interested individuals, groups, and organizations in the service of this mission.

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exploring the full range of Catholic prayer. The huge *Prayerbook* mega-site features a remarkable collection of traditional litanies, devotions, novenas, prayers, and chaplets as well as information about creating a home altar (www.prayerbook.com/contents.htm).

One can find detailed information about *Lectio Divina*, the ancient contemplative art of reading the Scriptures, on at least four different websites. One excellent site is *Accepting the Embrace of God: the Ancient Art of Lectio Divina* sponsored by St. Andrew's Benedictine Monastery in Valyermo, California. This site not only provides an introduction to the art of *Lectio Divina* but also guidance on how to practice it in a group as well as individually (www.valyermo.com/ld-art.html).

An ancient teaching of the Church states that initial forgiveness of sins is just the beginning of salvation. "Being saved" is more than a one-time event; it is a process which centers on sharing in God's own life, the ultimate purpose for which we were created. The Fathers of the Greek Church called this process *divinization* or *theosis*. As St Peter explained,

His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power. Through these, he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them *you may come to share in the divine nature*, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.

(II Peter 1:4)

This awe-inspiring teaching is wonderfully explained and distinguished from heretical distortions in *Grace and the Divinization of Humanity*, a Web page found on the stimulating site *Mystical Rose*. Read it and rejoice! (home.nyc.rr.com/mysticalrose/grace3.html)

Finally, words cannot convey the spiritual encouragement and riches to be found in *A Catholic Page for Lovers*—one of the truly outstanding websites of Catholic spirituality. Webmaster Gerard Sarafin has lovingly gathered links to hundreds of the most beautiful, wise, and joyous writings by Catholic authors, illustrated with exquisite paintings and icons (praiseofglory.com). Be prepared to spend prayerful time at this site and to return often when you need to be reminded that "*The first thing that must strike a non-Christian about a Christian's faith is that it is all too daring. It is too beautiful to be true*" (Hans Urs von Balthasar).

I'm always looking for more great sites for lay Catholics, so let me know of your favorites not yet listed on our website by writing me at "sherry@siena.org".

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separates Catholics from evangelicals is not the *experience* of conversion but how that experience is *interpreted*.

A Catholic approach would assure the newly awakened disciple that initial conversion, however dramatic or quiet, is merely the first step in a lifelong journey of love. The next step for a follower of Jesus is membership in Christ's visible body on earth, the Church, and participation in her worship and sacraments, which are powerful ongoing encounters with Christ and his life-changing grace. However, a new believer's spiritual experience can be interpreted for her or him in a way that obscures the sacraments, leading the neophyte to regard them as nothing more than memorials of the "real" event which took place entirely within the new disciple's psyche.

A case in point

One example of such an interpretation comes from Alpha, which began in an evangelical Anglican church in London; it is a ten-week, parish-based, evangelistic outreach now used (with a "Catholic addendum") in Catholic parishes and dioceses all over the world. When I first heard of Alpha, I was quite excited. Here was an evangelically-inspired approach to sharing Christ with the unchurched that seemed to really work and was being used effectively by Catholics. I went through their formal leadership training and talked to Catholic leaders around the country about their experiences with Alpha. Only when I was asked to give a live presentation of one of the programmed talks, however, did I review the videotaped presentations and accompanying booklets in detail. It was then that I realized the content had significant problems from a Catholic point of view.

From a Catholic perspective, becoming a Christian and being saved are related but not identical. One becomes a Christian through baptism into Christ's life and death—an act that forgives all sins, bestows sanctifying grace, and serves as the doorway to Christian life and salvation. Salvation, on the other hand, is not an act or event but rather a lifelong process that follows baptism. Salvation is the *process of being made Christ-like* by a lifetime of freely accepting and cooperating with God's unmerited grace made available to believers primarily (but not exclusively) through the liturgy, sacraments, prayer, and acts of charity. All the baptized are real Christians but not all real Christians are necessarily saved. Individuals can always freely refuse to cooperate with the grace that is freely bestowed.

In contrast, Alpha portrays salvation as a one-time event. At the end of the third session, participants are invited to pray privately, asking Christ to forgive their

sins and to invite him into their lives as Lord and Savior. The following session, their experience of having encountered Jesus in prayer is interpreted for them. The participants are assured that as a result of their prayer the previous week, they are now Christians who have received forgiveness for all their sins and the promise eternal life.

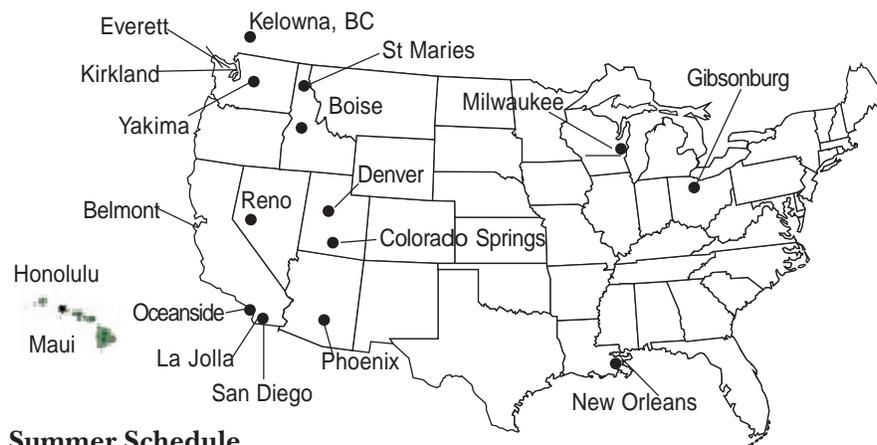
No reference is made, of course, either to the sacraments or to the Church as being channels of saving grace, an omission consistent with Alpha's evangelical worldview. Given the way Alpha contextualizes the topic, those already baptized could hardly be blamed for reaching the conclusion that they were not *real* Christians before they prayed that prayer. If the private decision of an individual is what really makes you a Christian and gives you eternal life, by implication, the sacraments are nothing more than mere symbols or memorials.

Many Catholics using the Alpha process are aware of some deficiencies and provide follow-up sessions on specifically Catholic topics. But this is dependent upon busy adults committing to a second program after the initial 10-week process. Moreover, even if participants do continue on, pitting an academic "re-education" held 2 months later against the power of their initial experience violates one of the fundamental principles of adult education, namely, that the most effective way to convey a new paradigm is *through personal experience*. The second most effective is *through the experience of others*. Lagging way behind, in third, is *through the teaching of ideas*. How participants initially learn to interpret and understand a life-changing spiritual experience will not be readily undone months

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Upcoming Catherine of Siena Institute events

Confirmed engagements only – new events are being added continually



Summer Schedule

- 6/21-22 Phoenix, AZ. *Called & Gifted* workshop, Holy Trinity Church. Contact: Parish office (602) 944-3375.
- 7/12-13 Kelowna, BC. *Called & Gifted* workshop. Contact: Institute office.
- 8/16-17 Boise, ID. *Called & Gifted* workshop. Sacred Heart. Contact: Carol McGee (208) 344-8311.
- 8/24-9/1 Jakarta, Indonesia. *Called & Gifted* workshop and Facilitator Training. Contact: Institute office

September

- 6-7 Belmont, CA. *Called & Gifted* workshop, Immaculate Heart of Mary. Contact: Church office (650) 593-6157.
- 6-7 La Jolla, CA. *Called & Gifted* workshop, All Hallows Catholic Church. Contact: MaryAnn Russell (858) 459-2975.
- 13-14 Denver, CO. Young Adult *Called & Gifted* workshop, Immaculate Conception, Contact: Heather Geyer (hgeyer@greenwoodvillage.com)
- 13-14 Oceanside, CA. *C&G* workshop, Mission San Luis Rey, (760) 757-3250
- 20-21 Honolulu, HI. *Called & Gifted* workshop, St Elizabeth/Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish. Contact: Parish office (808) 689-8681.

October

- 4-5 Gibsonburg, OH (Toledo area). *Called & Gifted* workshop, St Mary, St James & St Michael. Contact: Sam Knepper (419) 849-2298
- 4-5 Milwaukee, WI. *Called & Gifted* workshop, St Theresa's Church. Contact: Marguerite Thompson (414) 771-2500.
- 11-12 Kirkland, WA. *Called & Gifted* workshop, St John Vianney. Contact: Anne Merklin (425) 823-0787.
- 18-19 Maui, HI. *Called & Gifted* workshop, Christ the King Parish. Contact: Shirley DePonte (808) 678-6277.
- 25-26 St Maries, ID. *Called & Gifted* workshop, St Mary Immaculate Church. Contact: Valerie Rouse (208) 245-4189.

November - February

- 11/3-4 New Orleans, LA. *Called & Gifted* workshop, St Jerome's Church. Contact: Bill Brockman (504) 834-2612 (daytime phone).
- 12/13-14 Boise, ID. *Extended Discernment* workshop, Sacred Heart Church. Contact: Carol McGee (208) 344-8312.
- 1/17-18 Yakima, WA. *Called & Gifted* workshop, Holy Family Church. Contact: Frank Murray, Parish Office (509) 972-2479.
- 1/21-23 San Diego, CA. *Called & Gifted* workshops, San Diego Diocese. Contact: Bernadine Carr (858) 490-8272 bcarr@diocese-sdiego.org
- 1/31-2/1 Reno, NV. *Called & Gifted* workshop. Location to be determined.
- 2/7-8 Everett, WA. *Called & Gifted*, Immaculate Conception Parish.
- 2/21-22 Colorado Springs, CO. *Called & Gifted*, Holy Apostles Church

must not, however, limit the power of God. To pursue uncritically a “no tolerance” policy—sometimes in a manner that directly contradicts the sensibilities and judgment of the lay faithful—is to forget that He is with us always. As Gabriel insisted, “Nothing is impossible with God.” We must exercise real pastoral judgment in each case. Christ himself forbids us to remedy situations within the Church, or even in civil society, in a way that disregards the power and the mercy of God.

The response of the laity

As a member of the laity, what is your role? What are you to remember? You must remember that the Church has one single end: “That each person will be able to find Christ, in order that Christ may walk with each person the path of life...” (John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 13). You must remember that you are members of the one Body that is Christ’s Church; you may never speak of the Church as if you were not fully a member and fully responsible for her mission. You must keep “before your face” the fact that you have been personally called to Christ’s work of redeeming the world through evangelizing and through healing social structures and relationships so that they may truly serve men and

women. You must recall that you have been appointed to this apostolate by Christ himself, and therefore that you have apostolic dignity in your own right.

You must remember that you have been empowered by Christ himself for the sake of your mission, and that your spiritual gifts are no more merited than the graces bestowed in Holy Orders. The efficacy of your work *on behalf of others* does not, in the first instance, depend upon your holiness of life, but upon the power of Christ communicated to the Church through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. You must, therefore, also remember that you are as capable of betraying Christ as are members of the hierarchy.

At the same time, we must remember—every single one of us—that the first call we have received *for our own sakes* is to holiness, and we must support each other in this call. As the lay faithful, your support and encouragement of the hierarchy is of inestimable importance. When you call me to be a priest, to be obedient to the Tradition, and to present Christ in word and sacrament to the community, and when you recognize that this is my path to holiness, you affirm and make possible the collaboration upon which the work of Christ depends. When I call you to be an apostle to the world, to remain faithful to Christ as he is revealed in the Church, and to bring his redemption to the world, and when I recognize that this is *your* path to holiness, the Church can be fully constituted in her life and mission. Then a wonderful thing happens: together we embody the promise of Christ that he will be with us always. We discover that we are not alone.

I firmly believe—and I altogether deny it is naïve to believe it—that the vast majority of men and women secretly want to believe that the Catholic Church is truly the revelation of the authority and power of God. People seem unable to simply ignore the claims of the Church. They attack the Church because they recognize, deep down, that the Church really *does* speak from authority. And although they will never admit it, they are disappointed when Catholics do not live up to the faith that they profess. Indeed, those who are most scathing or sarcastic are likely the ones who are the most disappointed of all.

Using your charisms, especially for those hostile to the Church, invokes the power of the Holy Spirit; you will show to others that the power of God is truly manifested through his Church. The incontrovertible evidence that people are seeking, the evidence that alone can justify the claims the Church makes on Christ’s behalf, is the power of God at work in the world. The present crisis confronts us not with heresy or apostasy—there has been no direct compromise to the teaching of the Church. Rather, it has compromised our witness of the Gospel. The remedy is within the authority and power of the laity: to make God known and to restore the Church’s witness through discerning and using the gifts they have been given. 

What to tell others

What immediately practical contributions can you make to renew the Church’s witness in this country? You have received Christ’s commission to teach, and whether or not you possess a specific charism for teaching, there are things that you can make clear to your families, friends, and co-workers about the Church and her mission. You can assure them that we are all of us sinners and that we are all of us unworthy of the life and vocation that we have received from God. To be a Catholic is not at all to assert that we are superior to others. It is, rather, to assert that we have received gifts and graces that are equally available to everyone else, through Christ.

You can explain to others that the revelation God has entrusted to us is to be trusted not because *we* proclaim it but because it comes from God. We can betray it, but we cannot falsify it or render it powerless. Similarly, Christ himself is the one who acts in the sacraments; the ordained are only his very imperfect instruments. For this reason, the sacraments remain efficacious, even if the priest who administers them is in a state of mortal sin. (Here I cannot help but remember the wisdom of my father. After every Mass in which the homily had been particularly dull or uninspiring, Dad would remind us, “No matter how out of touch the priest is, it’s still the Eucharist!”) You might share with others an insight of Humbert of Romans, the third Master General of the Dominican Order. Humbert insisted that God may permit a preacher to remain in a state of serious sin for a time in order that both the one who preaches and the congregation he addresses may remember that true preaching is from God, not from the preacher.

later by a videotaped lecture. *How we help people understand their encounter with Christ at the moment of conversion* is foundational.

By no means am I saying that we should throw out all evangelically-inspired programs and start over. But we must take the time to ensure that all our evangelistic and formation initiatives, whatever their origins, reflect the fullness of Catholic teaching *before* we offer them, not afterwards. For instance, when offering an Alpha-based program in Seattle, where we were blessed with a number of excellent teachers (many of them converts from evangelicalism), we substituted live presentations for the standard videotapes wherever there was a problem. When we offer a *Called & Gifted Workshop*, we present gifts discernment in the context of the Church's teaching on the mission of lay people to the world—that they are secular apostles called to evangelize the people and structures of the world. To our astonishment, many who have attended our workshop say that the material concerning secular apostleship is the part that they like best. But this profoundly Catholic way of understanding our identity in Christ—one so many find compelling and exhilarating—will be absent from resources born in an evangelical environment.

Turning to the Tradition

We must not believe that by default, we must follow evangelical models in order to be effective as evangelizers and formators. As Catholics, we have evangelizing assets in the Tradition, the sacraments, the Eucharist, and the communion of saints that evangelicals have not dreamed of. In my judgment, the most fruitful response Catholics can make to the challenging success of the evangelical movement is to return to the fullness of the apostolic Tradition with renewed expectations, asking, "*How does knowing Christ change lives?*" and then let the Tradition speak. Trusting in the fullness of Church teaching and letting it address the challenges of their times and experience has always been a source of tremendous creativity for saints and apostles over the centuries.

To successfully evangelize and form lay Catholics in the United States, we must go to great lengths to affirm the parts of the faith that are ignored or denied by our popular religious culture. In the midst of a Christian culture saturated with the idea of "Bible alone," we must never talk as if the Bible alone were sufficient. Yes, it is very important that Catholics be taught to encounter Scripture directly, but always in a way that shows how the Bible is part of the apostolic Tradition and interpreted by the teaching Church. When we challenge people to follow Christ, we must let them know that being a Christian is not just a private arrangement between "me and Jesus," but about receiving Christ's life and being united with his Church through the sacraments.

As Catholics, we have evangelizing assets in the Tradition, the sacraments, the Eucharist, and the communion of saints that evangelicals have not dreamed of.

Most of all, we must do our homework and creatively demonstrate how the *fullness* of the Catholic faith answers the desires of 21st century hearts.

If you would like to know about more programs in specific areas that reflect the fullness of Catholic beliefs, you can e-mail Sherry (sherry@siena.org).



A Catholic Evangelization Program

One example of creatively applying the assets of our Tradition is a very effective but little known Catholic program of evangelization in Idaho. Called "Evangelization Retreats" and run by lay people for lay people, these weekend gatherings are entirely Catholic in practice, language, and worldview and have an amazing impact on those who attend. Men and women who have stayed away from the Church for decades undergo intense conversions, powerfully encountering Christ as they renew their sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, and as the Eucharistic presence of Jesus is adored. Their renewed life as disciples continues to be nurtured in the small Christian communities formed at the close of the retreat.

Even the lives of non-Catholics have been transformed by these Evangelization Retreats. A Protestant participant told me that when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, she felt a powerful spiritual energy issuing from the Host. "What *is* that?" she gasped to her friend. Before that moment, she had never imagined what the Church teaches about the Eucharist could be true, that Jesus is really and fully present. But by the time the retreat ended, she had come to believe her Catholic friends were right. A year later, she was received into full communion.

(For more information on Evangelization Retreats, contact Carol McGee at Sacred Heart Church in Boise (208) 344-8311.)



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this world. I John 4:17*

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