



Courage & EnCourage
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ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

When: **Sunday December 16, 2012 from 2:30 to 4:00pm**

Where: **Holy Spirit Catholic Church
9565 Musch Rd.
Brighton, Michigan 48116**

Directions: US-23 to Silver Lake Rd. Exit (exit #55) West on Silver Lake Rd. to Whitmore Lake Rd. (a short distance). South on Whitmore Lake Rd. to Winans Lake Rd. (a three way stop). West on Winans Lake Rd. approximately one mile to entrance marked with a sign for Holy Spirit Cemetery and Holy Spirit Rectory and School. Turn left. We meet in portable classroom number four. Look for Encourage Meeting signs.

Susan and I extend our heartfelt wishes to all for a very Blessed and Holy Christmas and a peaceful and grace-filled New Year. May God bless you all!

We read with alarm and sadness that more and more Americans believe that same-sex marriage is a 'civil right' equal to or the same as, marriage between a man and a woman. This shift in belief is predominately in the 18 to 30 year old bracket. This, of course, reflects the significant support that homosexual behavior receives in the media, in our elementary and secondary schools as well as colleges and universities.

We have enclosed an article by Peter Herbeck that appeared in the November 2012 bulletin from Renewal Ministries. Mr. Herbeck is Director of Missions for Renewal Ministries and has long been associated with Catholic renewal and evangelization. We thought that the article gives an objective look at the direction our society and culture seem to be moving.

We have also included the real meaning of the Twelve Days of Christmas. We actually did this a few years ago, but we thought, "like us, you may have forgotten". It seems appropriate for our times.

Fr. Paul Check, the Director of Courage and EnCourage, asked in last month's letter for a donation to help the ministry survive. If you have laid the request aside, please pick it up and make a donation, large or small (preferably large) to the ministry.

We also want to remind you that all the talks from the past Annual Conference are available on DVD and CD. They can be obtained on line at www.couragerc.org or by phone at 1-203-803-1564. The website is a plethora of information and inspiration, and we urge you to visit it.

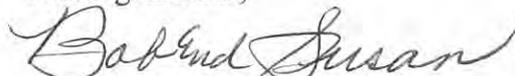
Remember please that we unite to pray each Thursday to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in reparation for our sins and the sins against human sexuality such as same-sex behavior and abortion. Reparation is making amends for the wrongs committed through our sinful condition. Additionally, we pray as intercessors for all our loved ones who will, like the prodigal, someday return home. We generally follow the model given to us by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in the booklet *Holy Hour of Reparation* published by CMJ Marian Publishers. If you would like a copy of the booklet, we have a small supply in our office or you can order one by calling the publisher at 1-888-636-6799. Another beautiful prayer is the *Chaplet of the Precious Blood* that available upon request. "That the necessity of reparation is especially urgent today must be evident to everyone who considers the present plight of the world, 'seated in wickedness'. The Sacred Heart of Jesus promised to St. Margaret Mary that He would reward abundantly with His graces all those who should render this honor to His Heart." (Pope Pius XI Encyclical *Miserentissimus*)

Please note if you cannot attend the December 16th meeting, our next regular meeting is January 20, 2013.

For more information regarding our meetings, or to talk about the issue of same-sex attraction in your lives, call our Diocesan office at 517-342-2596 or email us at caverart@comcast.net

We look forward to meeting with you. Let us remember, however, to always respect the right of each to complete confidentiality.

Trusting in Jesus,



Bob and Susan Cavera

In the darkness, we stand and pray in hope to the One whose life brings light to all the world.



FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN.
UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN.

Is 'Twelve Days' deeply religious?

Lengthy Christmas carol is interpreted many ways

By SUSAN HOGAN
Dallas Morning News

It's a carol people love to sing — and argue about. Some insist that "The Twelve Days of Christmas" refers to the days leading up to Dec. 25. Others say it marks the time between Christmas and the Feast of the Epiphany (Jan. 6), which commemorates Jesus' baptism and the visit of the Three Magi.

Many think it's merely a funny children's song. Others insist it's deeply religious.

Historians generally agree the song's words were written in England during the 18th century and put to music composed in France much earlier.

And those pears and French hens aren't just fruits and birds, some historians say, but code for teachings to aid Catholics being persecuted. The song was an underground form of religious education, they say.



Interpretations differ, but here are some of the meanings attributed to the lyrics:

- ◆ **My true love:** God. The song is about the gifts from God.
- ◆ **The partridge:** Jesus.

- ◆ **Two turtle doves:** Old and New Testaments.

- ◆ **Three French hens:** Faith, hope, charity.
- ◆ **Four calling birds:** The Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

- ◆ **Five golden rings:** The Torah (the first five books of the Bible).

- ◆ **Six geese a-laying:** The six days of creation, according to the Book of Genesis.

- ◆ **Seven swans a-swimming:** The seven sacraments — baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, marriage, Holy Orders, reconciliation, last rites.

- ◆ **Eight maids-a-milking:** The Eight Beatitudes, found in the Sermon on the Mount. ("Blessed are the poor in spirit.")

- ◆ **Nine ladies dancing:** The fruits of the Holy Spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

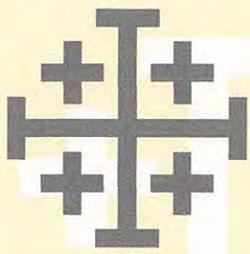
- ◆ **Ten lords a-leaping:** The Ten Commandments.

- ◆ **Eleven pipers piping:** The Apostles, minus Judas.

- ◆ **Twelve drummers drumming:** The articles of faith in the Apostle's Creed.

May this be a blessed time for you and your family as you prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bob and Susan



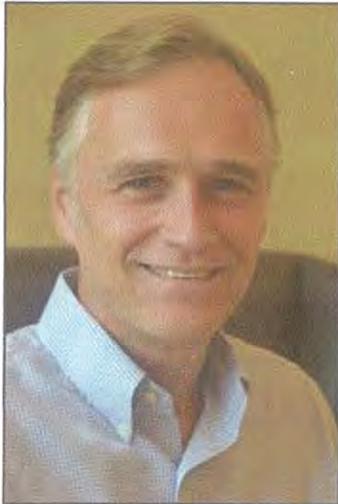
Renewal Ministries

November 2012

Proclaiming Jesus through Catholic Renewal and Evangelization

God is Disappearing...

An article by Peter Herbeck, Director of Missions



In March of 2009, Pope Benedict XVI wrote a letter to the Bishops of the world in which he made a powerful, prophetic statement about our times: "In vast areas of the world the faith is in danger of dying out like a flame which no longer has fuel... The real problem at this moment of our history is that God is disappearing from the human horizon, and, with the dimming of the light which comes from God, humanity is losing its bearings, with increasingly evident destructive effects."

In that one paragraph the Pope captures the central drama of our time, the battle that is at the root of nearly all our current social ills. Many people don't see it, but its effect is pervasive and profound, touching all of our lives. The Holy Father is fulfilling his prophetic office, reading the signs of the times and diagnosing the cause of our most disturbing social maladies and pathologies.

At this moment in history, something monumental is happening. Humanity, blinded by sin and the powers of darkness, is pushing God from its horizon. Vast portions of humanity are freely, consciously, and aggressively rejecting the light which comes from God. The battle between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light is not new, but what is new is that we are living through a period of great upheaval, a time of decline of the Church in the Western world, and great advance for the kingdom of darkness.

The battle is expressed most fully in what are called the "Culture Wars." Culture refers to the whole way of life of a people or civilization—its laws, social mores, customs, politics, art, entertainment, etc. The Western world, including Europe, Canada and the United States were distinctively Christian cultures, that is, they were profoundly influenced by a Christian worldview and its principles. As the recent Popes have stated, this is no longer the case:

"In the Western world the almost complete identity that once existed between European and American culture and Christian culture is dissolving..." (Cardinal Ratzinger, *New Outpourings of the Spirit*, Ignatius Press, 2006, p. 115)

"Even in countries evangelized many centuries ago, the reality of a 'Christian society' which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measured itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone." (John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* #40)

Case in Point

The recent Democratic Convention
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“...God is disappearing from the human horizon, and, with the dimming of the light which comes from God, humanity is losing its bearings, with increasingly evident destructive effects.”



Sr. Ann Shields, seen here with some of the sisters from the Servants of God's Love, was awarded the Benemerenti Medal by the Holy Father in recognition of her service to the Church. The medal was bestowed by Bishop Earl Boyea in a ceremony in Lansing, Michigan.

God is Disappearing...

provided some sobering examples of the dissolution of Christian culture in the United States. For the first time in our history, a major political party incorporated the support for the redefinition of marriage in its official platform. The platform, which articulates a party's statement of belief and core values, called for the complete repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), and in its place the Respect for Marriage Act which would require the federal government to recognize same-sex marriages.

Another "first" came with the elimination of all references to God from the party platform. No one seemed to know who was responsible for the omission or why it happened in the first place. President Obama then directed convention chairman Antonio Villaraigosa to hurriedly propose an amendment to include references to God, but he was met by a clear majority of no's. Despite the opposition, the chairman stated that the amendment passed and a very awkward moment was over. The platform also included a strong, consistent articulation and celebration of "reproductive rights" for women, free contraception and free abortions without restriction. The platform states:

"The Democratic Party strongly and unequivocally supports Roe v. Wade and a woman's right to make decisions regarding her pregnancy, including a safe and legal abortion, regardless of ability to pay. We oppose any and all efforts to weaken that right..."

Humanity is Losing Its Bearings

My intention here is not to make a political point, but to state the obvious: the attempt to push God from the human horizon is a reality unfolding all around us. The effort to do so is

systematic, aggressive and unrelenting. What the convention made clear is that the party has signed on to radically change marriage, the most fundamental institution of society, and to continue to put the full force of law behind unfettered abortion rights and a complete embrace of the logic of the sexual revolution.

At the core of each of these bold assertions by the party is the enormous lie that for me to be free, I must have power to define my own truth, to determine my own reality, to be the master of my own destiny. I have the power to redefine marriage, even in the face of the witness of all of human history, the order of creation itself, the language of my own body, common sense, and the testimony of Scripture and the unequivocal, unchanging teaching of the Church. I have power over life and death; I will determine whether the child in my womb is a person or has a right to live. If you deny me these powers I cannot be free. They are my right, granted to me by the constitution.

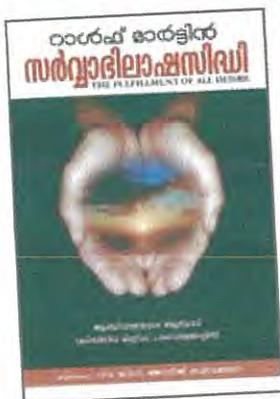
The truth is, no one has the right to do wrong. Freedom is not the right simply to do what I want, but it is the right to do what I ought. Our fundamental rights are not given to us by the Constitution, but rather, the Constitution recognizes and protects those rights that precede every form of government, which are mine by virtue of being human, and which are given to me by "nature and nature's God."

Taking Our Stand

Here is where the Church must take her stand, even in the face of great opposition. Secularizing forces in our culture have sought to intimidate the Church into silence. First, by insisting that all arguments given by people of faith whether lay or clergy, must necessarily be religiously informed arguments. Next, they further insist that all religiously informed arguments must be relegated to the private sphere with no standing in the public arena. For a person of faith to present an argument in the public square is to violate the principle of the separation of church and state. Pope Benedict XVI makes clear what our duty is in the face of such opposition:

"As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, the principal focus of her interventions in the public arena is the protection and promotion of the dignity of the person, and she is thereby consciously drawing particular attention to principles which are not negotiable.

The truth is, no one has the right to do wrong. Freedom is not the right simply to do what I want, but it is the right to do what I ought.



The Fulfillment of All Desire by Ralph Martin is reaching many throughout the world! It was recently translated into Malayalam, a language spoken in parts of India, into Korean, and into Spanish.

1. Protection of life in all its stages, from the first moment of conception until natural death.
2. Recognition and promotion of the natural structure of the family—as a union between a man and a woman based on marriage—and its defense from attempts to make it juridically equivalent to radically different forms of union which in reality harm it and contribute to its destabilization, obscuring its particular character and its irreplaceable social role.
3. The protection of the right of parents to educate their children.

These principles are not truths of faith, even though they receive further light and confirmation from faith; they are inscribed in human nature itself and therefore they are common to all humanity.” (*Address to European People’s Party*, 3/30/06)

Forming Conscience

Echoing the words of Pope Benedict XVI, Bishop Robert Morlino, of the Diocese of Madison, made an important distinction between “intrinsic evils” and the broad range of policy issues that call for prudential judgments:

“Some of the most fundamental issues for the formation of a Catholic conscience are as follows: sacredness of human life from conception to natural death, marriage, religious freedom and freedom of conscience, and a right to private property.

Violations of the above involve intrinsic evil — that is, an evil which cannot be justified by any circumstances whatsoever. These evils are examples of direct pollution of the ecology of human nature and can be discerned as such by human reason alone. Thus, all people of good will who wish to follow human reason should deplore any and all violations in the above areas, without exception. The violations would be: abortion, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, same-sex marriage, government-coerced secularism, and socialism.

A Catholic conscience can never take exception to the prohibition of actions which are intrinsically evil. Nor may a conscience well-formed by reason or the Catholic faith ever choose to vote for someone who clearly, consistently, persistently promotes that which is intrinsically evil.” (Diocese of Madison, *Catholic Herald*, 8/16/12)

The silence on these “non-negotiables” was deafening at the Democratic Convention. Where were the courageous prophetic voices speaking out in defense of the truth of the dignity of the human person? Is there anyone in leadership in the party capable of grasping the “grave wound inflicted onto justice itself” by these policies? The Democratic Convention was just one example of the enormous pressure within our culture to silence the voice of conscience, and ultimately, the voice of God.

Religious Freedom

The increased attacks upon religious freedom give a sobering picture of where things are heading. The political and legal system is steadily being manipulated to intimidate the Church into silence. In January of this year a New Jersey judge ruled against a United Methodist retreat house that refused to allow a same-sex civil union ceremony to be conducted on its premises, ruling the Constitution allows “some intrusion into religious freedom to balance other important societal goals.” (Lifesitenews.com, 1/13/12) As one astute friend of mine, a prominent legal scholar said, “Anti-discrimination laws will be the wave of the future.”

Just today as I sat down to write this article, the national agency which grants accreditation to social work courses is questioning Franciscan University of Steubenville over a course which lists homosexuality as a deviant behavior. A group who identifies itself as “Franciscan Gay Alumni & Allies” has demanding publicly that the university “revise its course descriptions, stop contributing to the culture of hate and ignorance and remove any information being taught on this subject that is outdated and not substantiated by sound scientific fact.” (Lifesitenews.com, 9/12/12)

The Health and Human Services Mandate that requires employers to provide for contraceptive coverage, including abortifacients in their health care plans is another significant attack on religious liberty. Cardinal Timothy Dolan recently said, “The threats to freedom are abundant,” [The mandate] is the raw presumption of a bureau of the federal government to define a church’s minister, ministry, message, and meaning...The defense of religious freedom is...the quintessential American cause, the first line in the defense of and protection of human rights.” (*National Review*, 9/11/12)

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“A Catholic conscience can never take exception to the prohibition of actions which are intrinsically evil. Nor may a conscience well-formed by reason or the Catholic faith ever choose to vote for someone who clearly, consistently, persistently promotes that which is intrinsically evil.”

For the sake of the salvation of souls the Church must be purified, made holy, so we can be an authentic witness, a genuine, shining light in the midst of the darkness.

To stand with the Church now will put you at odds with the dominant culture.

The Battle

Cardinal Dolan knows we are in a spiritual battle and he is leading and engaging the fight. St. Paul reminds us, “We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12) Our enemy is not President Obama, the political parties, the ACLU, gay rights activists, abortionists, hardened secularists, fundamentalists, skin heads or the new atheists. We are all up against the “spiritual hosts of wickedness.”

How to Respond?

First of all, we need to clearly understand the situation. Cardinal George of Chicago, a man not prone to hyperbole, described our current circumstances:

“At the present moment, Catholics in this country are facing challenges to our institutional existence and our mission that we thought would never arise here...The laws that used to protect us are now being used to weaken and destroy us, and this quite deliberately.” (*Cardinal's Network*, 2/6/12)

“The long-term effect is that the Catholic Church will be stripped of the institutions that are her instruments for public service. We will lose hospitals, we will lose universities. That's not the country I was born in...Something monumental is happening here.” (*Chicago Tribune*, 2/18/12)

“I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square.” (*St. Louis Review*, 2/16/12)

The stakes could not be higher. The devil is after eternal souls. Our public scandals, the failure of some leaders, a broad compromise with sin, and conformity to the world among the baptized have left us vulnerable to attack.

I believe the Lord is permitting this trial to come upon the Church to purify us. For the sake of the salvation of souls the Church must be purified, made holy, so we can be an authentic witness, a genuine, shining light in the midst of the darkness. What good is the Church to the Lord and his mission if our light has gone dim and our salt flat?

Second, we need to seek God's forgiveness at every level of the Church. There is still a great need for our leaders to publicly repent for the failure of leadership we have experienced on

many levels over the past forty years. Recently I heard one Cardinal acknowledge the following to a small gathering of leaders: “At this moment when so much is at stake, when so many fundamental issues are in play, I have to admit with embarrassment and some sense of shame that many of our people are not with us on this. It is our own fault. It is the result of forty years of very little evangelization and bad catechesis.”

It's time to get our own house in order. Bring everything in your life—your time, money, family, business, relationships, sex life, leisure, and entertainment under the Lordship of Jesus. Bring everything into the light of God's mercy.

Third, we need to decide if we are going to enter the battle. For most of our lives being in the Church has been easy. That is changing. Instead of being at the center of culture and public influence the Church will be marginalized. The Church is standing on the “wrong side of history.” To stand with the Church now will put you at odds with the dominant culture. You will be called a hater, an ignorant bigot. The Catholic Church will not acquiesce to the logic of the sexual revolution or make accommodations with the spirit of the age. She will stand. The question is will you stand with her in this battle?

Fourth, pray, fast, and give alms. Prepare your mind and heart. Pray for courage, for a profound and healthy fear of the Lord to come upon the Church. Frequent the sacraments.

Fifth, do your duty. Live your vocation to the maximum. Vote with an informed conscience and help others do the same. Put your time, talent and treasure into the fight.

Sixth, take your place in the New Evangelization. This time of trial will also become a time of great harvest of souls.

Seventh, remember the words of Jesus:

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets before you.” (Matthew 5:11–12)

“In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) +