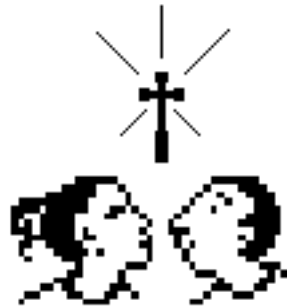


# Common Sense Spirituality



## A Catholic Guide to Avoiding Spiritual Nonsense

Having originally appeared  
as a column in  
*The Troubadour*  
The Student Weekly of  
Franciscan University of Steubenville  
1991–92, 93  
Plus Other Essays

by  
John Mallon



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**Dedication:  
To the Students of  
Franciscan University  
of Steubenville**

♡XOX



Special Thanks to  
My Editors  
*The Trobadour:*  
The Schmiesing Publishing Dynasty:  
David, Justine, and Kevin  
Mario DeAngelis,  
Domenico Bettinelli  
*Hearth:*  
Genevieve Kineke  
*Voice:*  
Mary Beth Bonocci  
*Vita:*  
Dave Manny  
*The Observer of Boston College:*  
Michael Raiger  
Loren Goloski



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# Introduction

**M**ost of the essays contained in this collection were written for a very special and unique audience, perhaps unique in all the world: the student body of Franciscan University of Steubenville. The vast majority of them are consciously seeking to live holy lives in the great tradition of the saints, martyrs, and confessors of the Roman Catholic Church. Most of them are daily communicants, frequent the sacrament of reconciliation, support, defend and embrace the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church, not grudgingly but rejoicingly. Many of them spend an hour a day in prayer before the exposed Blessed Sacrament. They do these things with no sense of pressure or duress, or mandatory obligation or rules. They do them because they are in love with Jesus Christ, His Blessed Mother, and His Vicar on earth, Pope John Paul II.

There are critics and cynics who would portray them as some sort of religious automatons, living in a “hothouse environment.” They simply cannot believe young people would embrace the Church and Her teachings—especially Her moral teachings of their own free will without some qualifying element of dissent. But they are wrong. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, there *is* a healthy and youthful rebellion among these young people. It is a rebellion against dissent and the flaccid moral teachings, relativism, and “Political Correctness” handed them by the preceding generation, and a culture bequeathed to them awash in moral squalor.

When I write for them about the Catholic Faith or the spiritual life I don’t have to explain all the basics before I make a point, as I’ve had to with other audiences. No, they are evangelized, converted, catechized, educated and on the path of the spiritual life. They are also young. But in writing to this audience in no way do I set myself up as an “expert” or presume to “give teachings.” I am simply a fellow pilgrim who has lived a little longer, made more mistakes, and, I presume, committed more sins than they have, and have been forgiven much. I also live, eat, study, and work with them, and I am grateful for that.

Some people have said to me, supposing it to be a compliment, “What are you doing writing for *The Troub*? You should be...”, and I’m always a little shocked by it. It hurts. The answer that springs to mind is, “But these are *my people*, my family, my community...” Furthermore, I have been publishing nationally for some time now, but I’m not sure there is a *more important* audience I should be reaching. These people are the Church of tomorrow. They would be, I’m convinced, among the first to march into the lion’s jaws, or go to the block, should it come to that, in our time. And it may. Some *already have* faced jail sentences, billy clubs, lies, and abuse in defense of the unborn, while some bishops wince at the slightest syllable that might give offence to

the self-declared enemies of the Church. World Youth Day in Denver this past Summer proved that young people with this kind of commitment to the Faith are by no means confined to Steubenville. They are the sleeping giant of the Church.

Secondly, it is the most *enjoyable* writing I do. The issues these students face are the same issues I face, and we're all working them out together. The feedback is immediate and some people even claimed to have been helped by the essays contained herein, and I am grateful for that. No, it is with great pride, love, and affection that I dedicate this collection to my colleagues, the students of Franciscan University of Steubenville. They truly are the flowers of the New Spring.

John Mallon

*Steubenville, Ohio*  
*Feast of All Souls, 1993*

# 1

## Buds of the New Spring

September 6, 1991



**I**n the 1800's, Cardinal Newman delivered a legendary sermon, the title of which became a prophetic symbol of hope for a glorious renewal of the Church. This title was *The Second Spring*. This hoped-for renewal is sometimes also referred to as the New Spring.

Fr. Michael's homily for the opening of the school year Mass reminded me of this as he remarked on the amazing convergences of events in recent years (and recent days) which coincide with Catholic prophecy going back for at least the last century and a half, and even further back in some cases. To name a few, there is a well known story that has circulated in the Church for years, that Satan requested one century from God in which he would attempt to sift God's people and turn them against Him, and that he chose the 20th century. This, I believe, was revealed in a vision to Pope Leo XIII, and has been alluded to in various Marian apparitions. Furthermore, there was a prophecy delivered (by Fr. Mike, incidentally) at the international charismatic leaders conference in Rome in 1975, which spoke of a period of darkness coming over the world to be followed by the greatest period of evangelization the world has ever seen. (For more on these and similar prophetic messages see Chapter 12 of Ralph Martin's book *A Crisis of Truth*, "The Signs of the Times: Pointing toward Judgement", and the video tape *Fatima* narrated by Ricardo Montalban).

I was amazed when Fr. Mike mentioned that the site of our new Austrian campus was once the site of the regional Soviet military command in Austria after World War II, (but who then left after Austrians took to the streets with their Rosaries). The story of how the University came into possession of the Austrian campus is quite remarkable. Vice President for University Relations, Nick Healy, and his wife Jane, were at a private Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II at the Vatican in September of 1988 just as the walls of Eastern Europe were beginning to crumble. Afterwards, when they met the Holy Father, Mrs. Healy asked him to pray for the University, and the Holy Father promised he would. The next day as they travelled through Europe, the Healys met with Dr. Josef Seifert, a philosopher from the International Academy of Philosophy in Liechtenstein, who works closely with the Holy Father. Professor Seifert told them of a Mr. Walter Hildebrand who owned a Carthusian Monastery property in Gaming, Austria, who had a vision for it someday being a center of Catholic renewal for all of Europe. For whatever reason the Academy of Philosophy was unable to take it over, so Dr. Seifert asked the Healys if Franciscan University might be interested. This led to a meeting with Mr. Hildebrand, and discussions which, in the light of what

was brewing in Eastern Europe, were electrifying. At the close of these discussions Mr. Hildebrand mentioned that this vision for a Catholic renewal center on this property serving all of Europe was very close to the heart of the Holy Father! The last time the millennium turned, 1,000 years ago, there was another great renewal center in Europe: the Abbey at Cluny, with another Hildebrand involved, who went on to become Pope St. Gregory VII...coincidence? Anyway, Mr. Healy reported back to Fr. Mike and the wheels were set in motion.

Obviously, space does not permit doing full justice to this remarkable story, but what struck me as Fr. Mike spoke was a sense of goose-pimple awe at how God seems to be placing us—Franciscan University—in the center of his plan for reclaiming His people as this century closes. This plan includes the messages at Fatima and how they fit with the breathtaking current events in Russia and Eastern Europe, as well as the various other reports of Our Lady appearing throughout the world.

As this bloody and weary century winds down we have already seen how seeds have been planted in the sufferings, faithfulness, and prayers of those who heeded the message of Fatima, and those who stood up to cruelty, bullets, and tanks for the sake of God's gift of freedom. As Fr. Mike spoke I looked around the tent at the students of Franciscan University, and the image came to me: These are the buds of the New Spring.

Franciscan University appears to be at the vanguard of something so big and so wonderful that God is doing that it is beyond the scope of our imagination. This is not a cause for pride but rather trembling, exhilarating, and thrilling humility at being individually and corporately used by God. We are certainly not the only ones God is using, but I cannot help thinking as I look around campus: Here are the buds, soon to blossom, of the New Spring.

*I assure you, many a prophet and many a saint longed to see what you see but did not see it, to hear what you hear but did not hear it. (Mt. 13:17)*

*See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? (Is. 43:19a)*

# 2

## The Goodness of the Normal

September 12 1991



One year ago when I first arrived at Franciscan University in late August 1990, I walked around for several days trying to put into words the quality I found in the people here. As with any new venture I had various apprehensions. The chief among them expressed itself in the thought, “Oh, no! what if everyone in this place is a ‘holier than thou’ type?” This fear was quickly put to rest when the words I was searching for suddenly came to me: “I love the students here, they’re so... *normal!*” I pondered this thought for the next several days, and it was my surprise and delight to hear it confirmed by Fr. Mike as he spoke to the opening of the school year conference on what it meant to be a *normal* Catholic Christian at a *normal* Catholic university. A *normal* Catholic Christian not only accepts and follows the teaching of Christ as it comes to us through the Teaching Magisterium of the Church and the Holy Father, but also rejoices and delights in it. A *normal* Catholic university is one which boldly holds, teaches, and proclaims those teachings with conviction.

By the Grace of God, and the hard work and prayers of many committed people, Franciscan University has managed to hold on to the “normalness” of knowing God as Father, Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and Their Holy Spirit as the Paraclete Who empowers us to do the will of the Father.

In the third volume of C. S. Lewis’ marvelous Space Trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*, the main characters, Mark Studdock and his wife, Jane, undergo many terrifying and eye-opening things before experiencing what I call “The Conversion to the Goodness of The Normal.” At first swept away by ambition, and the apparent novelty and glamour of new “innovations” emerging on the college campus where Mark works, these ideologies soon show themselves to be empty promises, and leave them with a yearning for the familiar and the Good. That sense of home.

In an age where the conditions warned of in Lewis’ prophetic novel are beginning to come to pass at many colleges and universities, including, sadly, many of those bearing the name Catholic, Franciscan University seems to be emerging as a light to the nations, and a city on a hill in the midst of gathering darkness. The wave of intolerance which is sweeping American college campuses in the form of so-called “Politically Correct” ideologies has become common knowledge. The wrath of these ideologies is especially directed at traditional Christian faith and morality. Franciscan

University has miraculously managed to remain as a bulwark against these ideologies, which are starting to resemble hate groups in some circles. However, we, at this explicitly Catholic Christian institution face our own unique array of temptations. One temptation is to be reactionary. There is an old adage that every reaction (especially in the Church) is an over-reaction. Before long we may find ourselves more governed by a concern to appear different from the secular world than by a concern to resemble Christ. Someone's ideal of what makes a "Christian life-style," replete with do's and don'ts and moral imperatives may replace the freeing message of the Gospel—and thus become an ideology in itself, which has little to do with Christ. This course inevitably leads to legalism, moralism, prudery, and priggishness—a very unattractive witness to say the least. Who would want to follow that gospel?

My dear late mother used to sometimes gently reprove me by saying, "Don't be holier than the Church!", pointing out my pride and self-importance when I would would try to push ascetic practices beyond what the Church considered healthy. It is good advice. It is this spirit that this column will try to explore; to try to seek the Golden Mean, which is orthodoxy. God set the norm for human life, and it is found in the example of the Perfect Man, His Son, Jesus Christ. Christianity is not an eccentric or esoteric cult, it is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It is, in the largest sense, to be fully human and fully alive. To be *real*. It may not be very common these days, but it is normal. It feels like home. God must like the normal, especially since He made so much of it. Holiness is normal with a capital N. More on that next week.

# 3

## On Holiness

September 19, 1991



In those times in my life when I've been in the presence of truly holy people, what impressed me most about them was how *human* they were, how *normal*. Not in the sense of super-human but in the sense of *fully* human. They are not distant head-in-the-clouds people, but they are very *real*; and immensely loveable and likeable. They are not intimidated by their own imperfections, but can see them as somehow amusing while still being able to weep over their sins, all the while knowing that Christ's love is bigger than their faults and that He is the One Who matters.

These people have emotions, get angry, laugh, weep, all straight from the heart, while neither making a show of it, or engaging in stoic repression. They have a refreshing absence of prudishness and they are fun to be with. They give witness that Christianity is not about grim asceticism, but about loving. Loving God, Who first loved them, and drawing others into the cross-fire. They know that true asceticism, fasting, and prayer are a school for love—a means to an end, tools of the Spirit. Jesus speaks of this when He tells us to groom our hair, wash our face and not look gloomy when we fast, that our selflessness may be genuine.

Holy people give off great warmth, and you come away from them feeling that you are special to them, that you are their friend, after having felt delight and embraced in their presence. Even great mystics are hard-headed, feet-on-the-ground type people, because the mystical only exists to serve the practical. And loving is the most practical and hard-headed thing there is.

Holy people are free to love because they have confidence that they are loved by Jesus, that He is friend as well as Savior. They love, not because they are free of interior clutter, woundedness, and sin, but in spite of it, because great men are formed in the crucible of humiliation; (see Sirach 2: 5b) and suffering is also a school for love along with prayer and sacrifice.

In those times I have encountered Jesus most deeply in His personality, this is what amazes me the most: how *human* He is. Fully God, yet *fully* man. We are called to be like Him in all his humor, warmth, and passion—fully human. It is sin and pride which detracts from our humanness, and therefore our holiness, but it is consoling to know we are not called to be something we are not, but something we already are: human. Our Lord said, "I come that you may have life and have it to the full." (See John 10:10.) An authentically full human life, realistically lived, includes suffering as well as joy. Gratefully received in Christ they add up to holiness, and, ultimately, Glory.

# 4

## Discernment, Obedience, and Rescue

November 15, 1990



I have been very struck by what I consider to be a false dichotomy in the minds of many on this campus, namely that there is a conflict between Pro-Life activism and the vocation of the Catholic student, when in fact, they are different battle fronts in the same war. As a veteran of a few rescues, and as a veteran of the fierce ideological wars going on on the modern campus, and especially on Catholic campuses (from which, by the sheer grace of God, Franciscan University has thus far been mercifully exempt), I am convinced that today's Catholic scholarship is spiritual warfare of the most urgent kind. If it is faithful, it is indeed a form of Pro-Life activism and is about the business of rescuing. People are dying as a result of bad theology and bad philosophy. This includes—but is not limited to—the babies. The battle for these lives would not now be in the streets had the battle for the mind not been so bungled in the last 30 years or so. This is why a crucial aspect of Rescues lies in their being acts of penance and reparation. But the battle must not only be in the streets. It is also in the classrooms. Evil concepts were first floated on campuses which then made possible the evil occurring in the abortion mills. There is territory that must be retaken in the battle for the mind, heart, and soul of this country—and indeed in the Church—if Western Civilization is to survive.

Where do we get such aberrations as “Catholics for a Free Choice”? They are the results of our failures as the Church, not only to evangelize the world but to catechize and love our own people. To correct this grievous situation is the task that Franciscan University is committed to. It is the task Our Lord gave to St. Francis as He looked down from His Cross and said, “Go and rebuild my Church,” and it is the legacy which this university has inherited and joyfully taken up.

Perhaps we are squirming restlessly in our classroom chairs while Mr. Minto is lecturing about Enlightenment presuppositions, thinking, “They’re killing babies! What does this stuff have to do with it?” It has everything to do with it. Chet Gallagher is a hero—a very courageous and inspiring man, but he displayed a flawed ecclesiology when he said, “This is the Church militant, not the Church academic!” His mistake lies in the fact that there is no such distinction. The Church militant is a whole of which the “Church academic” is a very crucial component. The troops in the trenches are dependent on the troops in the intelligence forces, and they work together, mutually dependent, in the same war.

So this brings us to the crucial question so many students on this campus are agonizing over: to rescue or not to rescue. Some readers may already be anticipating that my purpose in writing this is to “give permission” not to rescue to those who don’t want to. This is not true. On that question I stand (as on so many others) with Joan Andrews. I don’t know who God is or is not calling to rescue. It is none of my business. But I do know we are all called to do the will of the Father. But I am afraid there may be a tendency to downgrade the vocation of the student to something secondary. I hope to show it is not. If we are called to scrub toilets woe be to us if we don’t scrub toilets. If we are called to go out and save babies by risking arrest in Operation Rescue, woe be to us if we fail to do so. If we are called to save babies by staying in and studying so that we can go out into society in the long run, and take back and rescue the system that makes it legally possible for the baby killing to go on and help to put an end to it, woe to us if we do not obey. Both are necessary, and those in each group need the support and prayers of the other.

Fr. Michael has given a teaching that whichever we choose we should do that well, after a careful weighing of all the factors, including the justice issue, of who is paying for our education, and whether we have the right to be generous with someone else’s investment in us. These are very difficult matters to discern. How do we know which we should do? Not by asking all of our friends, in a fit of insecurity, what they think we should do, but rather go to God—repeatedly—and ask Him what we should do, *and then* go and discuss what *we think* God is saying with a competent spiritual director. Such important discernments are not made in a vacuum. Nor should things be discerned to death as a way of procrastinating—the opposite error to recklessness.

If I sound severe, let me explain why. I have been disturbed by this false dichotomy that has emerged between the call to be a rescuer and the call to be a student. If these calls to different individuals are genuinely from God, they are not in opposition but in harmony. As Saint Paul teaches, “Now the body is not one member, it is many. If the foot should say, ‘because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,’ would it then no longer be part of the body? If the ear should say, ‘because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body,’ would it then no longer belong to the body? If the body were all eye what would happen to our hearing? If it were all ear, what would happen to our smelling? As it is, God has set each member of the body *in the place he wanted it to be.*” (1 Cor. 12:16-18; emphasis mine). I mention this because I think there is a tendency on our campus—which I would even call a temptation—for many of us to think that if we are not doing rescues and risking arrest then we are not “doing our part.” And of course, some of us are not doing our part—and that’s another problem—but I am convinced that if we are not called to directly participate in rescues and risk arrest, everyone who bears the Name of Christ in these, our times, is called to do something for the babies and for the life cause as a whole. Dr. Joseph Stanton, the great Pro-Life pioneer always makes it a point to publicly salute “anyone who has ever lifted one

finger one millimeter in the cause of defense of human life and the lives of the unborn.” The question is not “to rescue or not to rescue?” but rather “Am I obeying God?”

If our informed and spiritually directed consciences clear us on this question we may rest assured that we are participating in the process of rescuing our society from the darkness into which it has fallen. If we are obedient to God we then have no need to explain or defend our actions to anyone, and no one has the right to criticize us whether our rescue activity takes us to the sidewalks and into prison, or if it takes us into the library sweating over the books—when we might even prefer to be out at the rescue site with our brothers and sisters. Wherever we are, if we are obedient we are in solidarity and moving as one body and God’s army.

# 5

## The Call of the Catholic Student

December 6, 1990



*(This is the second in a two part series. The first installment dealt with the need for obedience and discernment over where we are called to fight the Pro-Life war—in the streets, or in the classroom. The following continues that theme by developing further the critical importance of orthodox Catholic scholarship in our times.)*

**R**ecently I heard a story from a professor who was disheartened over a conversation he had with a student who was getting poor grades. As was his duty, the professor was advising him that a student should be spending at least two hours of study for every hour spent in class. It turned out that this student was involved in many extracurricular activities on campus. At hearing this the professor advised him (as was his duty) of his primary vocation as a student and that perhaps he should consider cutting back some of those activities. It was the student's response to this that had the professor disheartened. The student said, "I don't want to take that time away from God."

We must be careful of self-deception. Our discernment and our commitment must be mature. If we are seriously and faithfully following a call to be a Catholic student, it is obvious that time spent on studies is not time taken from God. On the contrary. In fact, there is a long tradition in our Church of study and scholarship as a form of spirituality. Saint Thomas Aquinas and the charisms of the Jesuit order are but two examples of this. Furthermore, we can (and should) in our times also view our studies as a form of Pro-Life activism. The life-and-death battle in which we Christians are engaged is taking place on all levels of society, from the streets to the classroom, to the courts, in politics, hospitals, and most especially in theology and philosophy departments in our universities. God needs His people in all these places working for the Kingdom against enormous opposing forces.

For example, I came to Franciscan University from a Catholic university which just recently held a "Women's Health Day" at which Planned Parenthood had set up a table. I have seen orthodox Catholic students harassed by *university officials* for objecting to this sort of thing. At that same university a witchcraft ritual was recently held in the Women's Resource Center on campus, and a friend of mine was harassed when trying to investigate it—not only by the participants, but also by the associate student life dean who oversees that center. When I tell people about these things they usually react with surprise: "What? At a Catholic university?" Yes. At many Catholic universities.

One may well ask, “How did it come to this?” The answer is simple. In the last 25 years or so, left-wing ideologues and enemies of the Church buckled down and earned Ph.Ds. They now effectively control higher education in the United States and Catholic colleges and universities with a particular vengeance. A good many of the theology departments in these schools are controlled by dissenters who are hostile to the Holy Father and the Magisterium. The Franciscan University of Steubenville is unique in all the world. It is a beacon of hope for the Church worldwide. There are other schools that are committed to orthodoxy but they are small, few, and far between. Furthermore, Franciscan University is the only one rooted in, and committed to, charismatic renewal. Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II both referred to charismatic renewal as “a chance for the Church.”

There has been a prophetic word going around campus which speaks of “the battle for the mind” as the focus of Satan’s virulent attacks on this university. Professors and other university leaders have continually stressed that the primary vocation of the student is to study. That ought to be self-evident, but as a friend of mine—herself an undergraduate—recently said to me, “Some students come here for a four year retreat.” There are those among us called here by God for healing and restoration, but if many students view their time here frivolously (and I don’t think many do) it is a tragedy. There’s a war on. If that is the case we are letting down the Church worldwide who looks to us, on a hill in Steubenville, Ohio, as a light of hope.

I had the occasion and privilege to assist in praying over people recently for the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Life in the Spirit Seminar here on campus. I was intrigued to hear people asking God for the “Isaiah gifts” (which I found laudable) and few people asking specifically for charismatic gifts (which I found curious) but I did not hear anyone ask for the charismatic gift which I consider crucial to the proper use of the other gifts, namely the gift of discernment of spirits. What does this have to do with the young man with all the extra-curricular activities mentioned above? I’ll explain.

Good works are not always God’s works. They can be the devil’s works. It is temptation to become involved in many good activities at the expense of what God may truly be calling us to do. This usually involves doing something that we enjoy doing and assuming it is what God wants us to do. We must ask this question: does God really want us to do this or that good work or did we just decide it would be “nice” to do it? This is a classic case for discernment of spirits—are we dealing with the Holy Spirit of God, the human spirit (which means well but is easily deceived), or the evil spirit? The Deceiver himself would rather have us do *anything* no matter how good it may objectively be, so long as it is not what God is really calling us to do. Put more directly, If God wants us studying, the Devil would rather see us do anything else—even rescue. What if we rescue when God has called us specifically to do something else for Him that also needs doing?

Rescues are intended as activities with supernatural as well as natural effects and they absolutely depend on obedience.

God, of course, smiles on our honest mistakes made in an effort to please Him, but it would be a shame if someone were rescuing out of a sense of peer pressure while called by God to go about some other work. And I fear some students may be feeling that pressure which may be a temptation away from their own vocations for which they are equipped and gifted. To rescue unequipped with the grace, temperament or spirituality to do so could place the movement at risk and give the Evil One cause for rejoicing. A good soldier follows orders; each his or her own—not someone else's. This is where discernment is critical, especially as it regards rescuing. The way things are going, rescuing with the risk of arrest can hardly be considered an extra-curricular activity. The stakes are too high for that now. More and more it must be a total commitment one way or the other in whichever we choose.

It is extremely encouraging to see the many extra-curricular activities of a spiritual nature, and the genuine desire on our campus to embrace Our Lady's call for prayer, sacrifice, and the offering up of our sufferings—but what sacrifices? What if the suffering and sacrifice God calls us to is boring, mundane, tedious, inconspicuous, and altogether too normal and commonplace—like studying two hours for every hour spent in class? Suppose we even sought out some apparently lowly or menial task for ourselves and took pride in saying, "I'm scrubbing toilets for God!" But then on the Last Day Jesus says to us, "But I didn't call you to scrub toilets, I called you to get a Ph.D., and help counteract the evil being done that is misleading My people at so many of My universities, which then spreads out into the world at large?"

The fact is we have brothers and sisters in prison for the Truth. They need the support of our obedience to our call whether it be in studies, the streets, or something else. Those enemies of the Church who did their homework, and now pretty much run things in our society, have not only established legalized child killing, but now euthanasia is on the way. Christians, through our apathy, complacency, and indifference have let Western Civilization slip through our fingers.

Pro-Life leader Dr. Joseph Stanton has stated that the hope for the future of the Pro-Life movement lies in the battle for the minds of the young. I left behind a group of comrades fighting against their own professors and administrators at a Catholic university in defense of the truth of Christ. While I was among them, enduring the pressure, outrage, and injustice I continually thanked God for the Franciscan University of Steubenville and the work that is done here. I still do; especially since God's grace made it possible for me to be here. But I admit it was a bit of a shock to hear of students blowing off their all important studies while claiming "serving God" in extra-curricular activities as an excuse.

Theology students especially need to be rigorously trained because the dissenters they will encounter as they go out into the wider Church for service and employment are masters of the

theological double-talk that does so much harm. These students should be especially forewarned that in many theology departments, diocesan offices, and parishes, charismatics are often *persona non grata* and generally regarded as idiots. We are written off and dismissed as “anti-intellectuals,” “fundamentalists,” “holier than thou,” “emotionalists” and so on. These stereotypes must be overcome because it hurts the Church whenever one of us makes one of these false characterizations appear true. They are false. Charismatic renewal is the finger of God. We must be intellectually armed, as well as armed with prayer, for if we are naïve we will be eaten alive. I have seen it happen.

The mind is under attack at Franciscan University because a university exists for the training of the mind. The Devil is afraid of the potential that is here and will do anything to thwart it. The Pro-Life war was fought on an intellectual level before it took to the streets and now our finest Catholic minds are in the struggle to retake the ground that was lost due to our collective sin and neglect of our duties. If society is to be retaken by Christian thought and ideals—and it must be, or it will self-destruct—God needs crack troops. Not just in the streets, but also, and just as importantly, He needs them hitting the books, in the library, and in the classroom.

We are fighting a come-from-behind battle. I have rescued and I have been arrested. But if I were in prison now, I would be praying and pinning my hopes on the troops being trained at Franciscan University to come out and retake society through excellence in training and virtue so that society may be transformed and renewed so that the innocent—the unborn and the unjustly detained—may no longer have to suffer. More and more the eyes of the Church are fixed upon our Franciscan University to lead the way and be a light to the Church and to the world. The Church is waking up. We dare not be caught napping again.

# 6

## The Demise of the Charismatic Hug

September 26, 1991



One of the more disturbing developments I've seen in the past year on campus is the demise of the charismatic hug. Charismatic Catholics have always been noted for their loving acceptance of one another as expressed in great bear-hugs of affection; but something has gotten lukewarm. One might be tempted to think that this is part of a "maturing" process in the renewal, as if there were anything mature about increasing interpersonal stiffness—are we to be congratulated on graduating into awkwardness?

Perhaps it is an ostensible concern for modesty and purity—if so, this too is misguided, because the genuine love and acceptance which is (or at any rate *was*) expressed in such hugs in the family-like context of a living faith community is precisely the *cure* for lust and impurity. Lust is nothing more than a frustrated desire for love and acceptance turned to sex in a desperate bid for the consolation of human contact. With the deep brokenness that comes with the culture-wide dissolution of loving family bonds it is much less vulnerable to chase lust than seek love—or so it seems.

There are several mutations the charismatic hug has taken. Two of my least favorites are the one-armed sideways hug (the inventor of which has at least 100 years of purgatory coming to him), and the A-Frame. In the one-armed sideways hug, instead of being received open-armed, you suddenly find yourself spun side-by-side with the other person and squeezed shoulder-to-shoulder. The message conveyed, it seems to me, is, "I don't really want to get too close to you, but I guess I have to do something, after all, you are my brother in the Lord." Speaking for myself, these "hugs" seem to me to carry an ever-so-slight hint of non-acceptance, if not rejection. Under the circumstances a simple clear-cut handshake would be preferable for its honesty, at least if the other is squeamish about hugging (or squeamish about *me* for that matter).

The A-Frame occurs when you go to hug someone and she (A-Frames are normally given by young attractive women) maintains some distance from you, places her hands on your shoulders, bends from the waist, and touches shoulder blades with you. Minimal contact. The underlying message seems to be, "I don't want to make my brother stumble!" The fact is that you almost *do* stumble over your own feet from the sheer physical awkwardness of it. The disheartening message

received, as I have discussed it with my men friends, is that rather than receiving you like a brother, to her you are just another in a long line of men trying to put your arm around her.

Seriously though, we do live in a sex-mad culture where many women suffer abuse in this area that most of us men can't even imagine. I also hasten to add that I reverence the fact that some people are very uncomfortable being touched at all, and for good reason, or they are concerned with not sending the wrong message to those whose brokenness may cause them to receive such messages wrongly. But it is a tragedy. The ongoing war on human instinct and all that is good between people is driving us further into self-consciousness, isolation, separateness, and misunderstanding. Especially between men and women. Even St. Peter's admonition for Christians to greet one another with a holy kiss now produces hesitation and uneasiness in its living out. Heal us, O Lord. How sad that something as straightforward as a hug is now so subject to misinterpretation and distrust of motives. Lord have mercy. Lord teach us love.

# 7

## Vocational Terrorism: Part I

October 3, 1991



One of the things I am attempting to do in this column is identify, question, and discuss those little things, attitudes and practices, which sneak in among Christians and somehow tend to become enshrined as virtues or at least “moral imperatives” —which may in fact be nothing of the kind. For example, many Christians behave as though being “open” were a virtue, when in truth we must be very discerning about what or who we are open to. The Book of Proverbs and other of wisdom books of the Bible often cautions us to be careful about who we trust with our openness. That is only one example. There are many such ideas and things I observe occurring among Christians, and on this campus, that I know from conversations bother people but are seldom mentioned. This week I am beginning a short series on something I have encountered in my life, and I suspect has been a source of some pain in the lives of students here: that is, a phenomenon which I call Vocational Terrorism.

Vocational Terrorism occurs when someone with no spiritual authority appears out of nowhere and proceeds to buttonhole us about our vocation. Such people appear as self-appointed messengers of the Spirit and ask probing questions about what we are planning to do with our lives. At first it might seem very friendly, but soon they are asking questions that are frankly none of their business. If we don't give the answers they think we should (for example, priesthood or religious life) they begin to imply that we are “running from God.” I consider what they are doing to be an act of spiritual violence. It is irreverent. The call of God in one's life is a very sacred and private matter. The call of God grows in peace out of the deepest desires of our heart from seeds which God Himself planted. The vocational terrorist tends to exhibit a busybody spirit by probing and pressing into private regions where he has not been invited and with remarkable arrogance. “You're single, you love God, you should be a priest! You should be a nun! How do you know it's not the Holy Spirit speaking through me?” Well, you know it's not the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is a gentleman and not a bully. The tendency is to put up with this abuse thinking that perhaps we really are being challenged, or “called on.” But lately I've begun to wonder how much of what passes for “being challenging” or “calling another on” instead of being genuine fraternal love, as it should be, is really just plain bad manners, having more to do with the ego of the

questioner than the other's good. We need to be discerning, and even protect ourselves, sadly, even from ostensibly "well meaning" other Christians. Bad manners and bullying are not of God.

Anyway, such a person is way out of order and out of line, but we mysteriously let ourselves be bullied because Vocational Terrorism plays off a deep fear that Catholics seem unusually prone to: that whatever it is we want for ourselves God couldn't possibly want. There seems to be a deep fear that what God really wants is to see us miserable! Poor God! Misery certainly does occur, and we can put it to work as intercession for the Church and world, and God allows suffering that we may grow, but He *does* want to see us happy! If we have a deep desire for babies in our arms and we are honestly striving for holiness and to do God's will, God delights in that longing and vision and probably put it there. If, for example, we have a deep desire to love, protect, and nurture a wife and family, God rejoices in this vision, and it is pride if we think we are doing God or the Church a favor by going into the priesthood if that is not our call.

God doesn't need these kinds of favors. In fact, we could even be doing great damage to Church and our own salvation if we enter these vocations without the necessary gifts and graces—so says St. Alphonsis Ligouri and other spiritual writers. Some may accuse me of discouraging vocations—not at all—I am discouraging *non*-vocations. The Church *does not* need unhappy priests and religious; and that is usually how those not genuinely called, but otherwise pressured, often end up. A great truth about how vocation works is found in Psalm 37:4 "Take delight in the Lord, and He will grant you the desires of your heart."

It is important to encourage vocations in the Church, but that is not what Vocational Terrorism is about. Nor is it the kind of Holy Terror the mystics speak of. It is ugly terror. It brings the temptation to not trust God with the surrender of our lives. Vocational Terrorism is a psycho-spiritual power game. That is not God. What we need is a spiritual director with the humility to be the assistant of the Holy Spirit in gently drawing the desire of our heart out into common sense clarity. We need to simply give God more credit by trusting in His tender happy plan and love for us. God *wants us happy*, and we need to be confident in that, and the confidence to let the vocational terrorist know, in so many words, politely and gently, that he should mind his own business (which probably *needs* attention). God is quite capable of speaking to us Himself about His desires for us in the peace of our own heart. More on this topic next week.

# 8

## Vocational Terrorism: Part II

October 10, 1991



I actually believe that the power behind the more troubling manifestations of Vocational Terrorism is a demon. In my life I have encountered him as the Spirit of False Vocation. There was a time in my life when I was in utter torment over being in love with a woman I knew I could not have (she was married). One day when it was especially bad, a horrible voice within started telling me that God wanted to ratify this terrible pain and loneliness by making me be a priest, forever cut off from *any* woman's love. I knew Jesus well enough to know that this whole thing was nuts, and not of Him, so I fled for relief to the Blessed Sacrament. I knew it was nuts because God doesn't operate that way, takes no pleasure in our pain, does not "make" people do things, but respects our free will, and lastly, because of the grotesque and twisted images of both the priesthood and human love I was presented with, and the false conflict between them. Anyway, I arrived in the pew talking ragtime to the Lord in a near panicky state, until I heard Jesus say to me within, "Be quiet. Don't do *anything*, just sit there. I'll handle this." That was okay with me. After about twenty minutes I felt a rumbling deep within me and a gagging feeling. From experience, I knew this was a manifestation of deliverance. I simply cooperated with what I felt Jesus doing. After several minutes of deep retching exhalations I felt that whatever it was was gone. It was pretty tiring, but I was at peace. After a few minutes I said, "Wow! Lord, what—who—was that?" I heard Him say within me, "That was the Spirit of False Vocation. I got sick of him tormenting you." I love Jesus.

Now, having told that true story, I pray that the Franciscans won't come beating down my door telling me that every student on campus is showing up complaining of being harassed by this spirit. My case was pretty extreme, and I don't intend to start an epidemic. (If you want to know more, see my story in the book *Spiritual Journeys* in the bookstore.)

Suffice it to say that this little beast torments people with the thought that God is going to call them into a trap they can't get out of, or, that they will be required, like a slave, to do that which they are not equipped to do. This spirit capitalizes on the natural human fear of surrender and loss of self which most of us feel when we need to surrender more deeply to God. He intends to be an obstacle to our surrender to God by telling us that something terrible will happen to us if we

surrender, that God is going to pull the rug out from under us as in some cruel joke. It is a kind of scrupulosity.

I once had a spiritual director who had an irrational fear that God was going to call him to Africa. He did not want to go to Africa. His spiritual director told him that if God was calling him to Africa, then God had better put Africa into his heart, or he pitied the poor Africans!

The Church won't stand or fall according to our vocational decisions. We flatter ourselves. The so-called vocation shortage does not have God in a panic. One place to begin in looking at vocation is to ponder what we daydream about when we are in the state of grace. Do we see ourselves celebrating Mass at the altar? Bringing the Sacraments to people? Do we long for extended periods alone before the Blessed Sacrament undisturbed as in a convent? Or do we fantasize ourselves in a home loving a spouse and raising a family? Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt. 6:21). St. Thérèse of Lisieux said, "God has placed desires in me that He intends to fulfill!" Amen.

# 9

## Vocational Terrorism III

October 24, 1991



Vocational Terrorism, we must note, is not merely confined to matters of religious vocation. I feel a slight shudder and a chill when I walk around campus and overhear things like, “So, you feel you’re called to marriage?” I want to say, “Whatever happened to *falling in love*? *That’s* the call!” How cold-blooded our Christian jargon can become! God is so much more human than we are. One is not called to marriage, one is called to a *person*, and marriage ratifies that call. Marriage is indeed a vocation, but a vocation *to someone*, not a mere state of life. Indeed, the same is true for religious vocations—I think we can lose sight of that.

I am disturbed by a very subtle unspoken attitude that matters of the heart, unmet longings, and disappointments in love are somehow Bush League concerns that “Big League” Christians shouldn’t be concerned about. What poppycock! These things hurt! And God cares. Loneliness is the number one killer of God’s people. Rejection by a loved one can be more emotionally devastating than even the death of a loved one.

Recently I heard a priest who is very much involved in checking into Marian apparitions report that Our Lady said that Satan is attacking marriage hammer and tongs—or words to that effect. It occurred to me when he said this that it stands to reason that if Satan is attacking marriage, he is also attacking all that leads up to marriage (i.e. attraction, dating, courtship etc.). So when a woman comes up to me and says, “How come the guys don’t ask us out?” I know it is pointing to a very deep spiritual malady in our culture. Some women complain of guys who seem to have an attitude of “Don’t get too close! I’m discerning!” (Of course, it wouldn’t be right to be a tease under the circumstances, but I wonder if it occurs to these guys that her closeness may be *part* of the discernment process.) On the other hand, a lonesome guy might be justified in wondering why pre-theologate guys get so much female attention when he can’t even *buy* a date. (I hope to treat these and other dating issues in future installments of this column—that is, if I have the guts.) Anyway, I have been making this tragic malady, the attack on human love, a special focus of my own theological work. It is not an unimportant issue.

The fact is, that it is the most natural thing in the world for people to fall in love and get married—but we live in very unnatural times. Men and women are supposed to (at least) *like* each other—all things taken into account. But we witness in our society widespread distrust, contempt,

and outright hatred between the sexes on a massive scale. Women appear to take the worst brunt of it—not to mention the children in the womb. The so-called Sexual Revolution, over the last 25 years, has given women permission to be promiscuous, and men permission to be irresponsible. The Sexual Revolution has been a war against human instinct.

The current generation is reaping the sorry harvest. The human faculty, the ability, to love and trust has been devastated. So many women are aching in their bones to make a self-gift in love, and long to bear children—while the biological clock is ticking—but just can't seem to trust any man. So many grown men are still adolescents who walk away bouncing a basketball at the thought of commitment. And he can't help himself. If he's not in terror he's in confusion—or denial. Poor thing.

One temptation for Christians can be to flee into the spiritual disease of angelism—the denial of one's humanity through flight into hyper-spirituality. The problem with this mode of Christianity is that we have a God who became flesh and blood, who had to contend with thorns, spit, splinters, nails, sweat, exhaustion, horrible pain, a spear piercing His side, death, and a bride who broke His heart (that's us). So we know that *He* takes these things seriously. It is time for some Vocational *Tenderness*. More on this in future columns.

# 10

## Christian “Life-Style”

October 31, 1991



If we fall into the habit of preaching “Christian life-style” instead of the Gospel we paint ourselves into a corner of moral perfectionism leaving ourselves terribly vulnerable to the charge of hypocrisy when we inevitably fail. Our opponents salivate for the chance to expose our failures, which, God knows, are abundant enough. The Catholic Church is just too big and too rich, thank God, to be reduced to a mere mode of behavior. Christ does not call His followers to fall into some lockstep pattern but rather to be transformed into His image. Christ was neither prude nor libertine. He was (and is) God.

Catholic teaching, including the Ten Commandments, and all the Revelation and Tradition involved is not an arbitrary moral code but the roadmap of reality. They point to the way of getting out of this life alive. Disregarding the map will lead us into manifold ditches, ruts, ravines, dead ends and ultimately to the abyss.

The word “life-style” itself is a neologism which lends credibility to false paths. Christianity is not a “life-style” but *The Way*, as well as *The Truth*, and *The Life*. When Christianity is reduced to something like a “life-style” we can easily slip into the temptation to sectarianism and even become cult-like. The notion is promoted that there is a certain “right” way to be a Christian that is based on superficialities. A code develops to which one must conform—with little or no basis in Revelation—or is at least a misapplication of Revelation, going over the heads of the Magisterium—and soon one is expected to walk like a Christian, talk like a Christian, smell like a Christian, et cetera, *ad nauseam*.

This approach takes our focus off Christ, where it belongs, and places it on one’s self and (if not more dangerously) others, with a temptation to judge, as it carries with it an inevitably unhealthy consciousness of who does or does not “measure up” to this false standard. This very unhealthy self-consciousness leads to inauthenticity, and worse, and makes Christianity appear quite unattractive—if not ridiculous—to those we are presumably supposed to be drawing to Christ.

Thomas Howard has said that self-consciousness came in with the Fall, and that before the Fall “Adam didn’t give a farthing about what he looked like!” Letting our self-consciousness be peeled off us, by Grace, may well be what it means to be transformed into the image of Christ. As it is, in our brokenness, we, as C.S. Lewis so beautifully puts it in *Perelandra*, are “always stepping

out into the alongside” and watching ourselves live instead of living. Did you ever try to seriously think about walking while doing it? If you did you probably fell over your own feet—sort of like an A-Frame Hug—or did you ever think about the process of breathing? If you did you probably choked. Christ wants us to breath free in His Spirit. If our eyes are on Christ, and our hearts fixed on Him, our feet will know what to do as we follow Him. He created us and wants us to be ourselves—fully human—not robots. Fleshing out the image and likeness of God in our own uniqueness, by Grace, is the process of holiness, peeling off what is false and contrived and letting the true creation shine that God created and said was good.

# 11

## Avoiding Educational Terrorism

November 7, 1991



**T**he hardest thing for me about school is figuring out how to learn. Interest is a natural motivator. I want to know things, but somehow I always seem to fall into the trap of thinking I'm doing the work for the professor instead of for myself. I always seem to be able to read any book in the house except the one I'm assigned—even if it is a book I really *wanted* to read before it was assigned. Why is that? After all, we are here to educate ourselves, not the teacher. Most students (grad students, anyway) are highly motivated to go to school, pay large sums of money, make sacrifices, and yet always seem to complain about the work—work we came here to do! How do we reclaim it? Make it ours? The professor does not pay for the privilege of reading papers, the student pays to write them! So then why gripe? Because, somehow we don't think of the work as ours, but as the professor's.

My theology colleagues have intense concerns about theology, the Church, and of course, God, so how does the work so often seem so arbitrary? Perhaps because we are concerned with answering the prof's questions—not ours—the ones we came here to answer. We fear we must live up to the teacher's standards, not ours (which are probably just as high, if not unreasonably higher).

Perhaps one way to remedy this problem is to approach a text with a question of our own—not just what we think the prof wants us to know—but something *we* want to know. And then, in the process of asking the text our question—thus making the text come alive—it will hold our interest, and, perhaps, without realizing it, we will pick up along the way what the prof wants us to be able to spit back. But the text will be ours, and we will care what it says because it is answering a question that is important to us. For example, we could approach *Dei Verbum* with the question, “Why have so many modern day Scripture scholars gone whacky and talk like unbelievers?” We may find that it is because they are not following the directives of the document—i.e. reading Sacred Scripture in the Spirit in which it was written. (See *Dei Verbum*; 12c.)

In my humble opinion—I should add here that anyone is completely free to disagree with anything they read in this column at any time—the mistake some professors make is in assigning *too much* material for one course, so that the material itself suffers an injustice (more on this next week). In any case, it is not likely such professors would take my advice, much less speak to me

after this series runs, but I think, in the name of learning, it would be an interesting experiment to cut the number of reading materials in half, to the most important, essential ones, and ask the students to hand in a question that is important to them at the beginning of the course to be answered in one of the assigned texts, and then require that the assigned texts be read *twice*. Then have the student write a paper answering their own question from the reading.

I would be willing to bet that the students would get better grades, that actual learning would take place, and the professors would be fascinated at seeing what the students are really concerned about. Instead of the student's standing on their heads trying to psych out what it is the professor wants, these questions would provide students with the opportunity to learn what they want and need to know, and enjoy it. But it's just an idea.

# 12

## Educational Terrorism II: Joy of Learning or Endurance Contest?

November 14, 1991



One of the things I've come to view with dismay in higher education after living in a college environment for the past eight years, is the attitude that education is an endurance contest rather than an exercise in the joy of learning. Part of this, of course, is an effect of original sin, it's hard to get all things going in one direction at once. But the sad image is one of professors shoveling out knowledge as if under a quota while students use their notebooks like baskets trying to catch as much as they can while getting discouraged at seeing how much they are not able to catch for not being fast enough.

The problem is one of concern for quantity over quality—and the quality of the material at Franciscan University is good—very good. But one does not guzzle fine wine, one sips and savours it. A university is not a filling station; it is an H'ors d'ourve table—it should provide samples to whet the appetite, and create a desire for more.

Peter Kreeft has often said that the job of the professor is to be an introducer—John Jones, meet Plato, Mary Smith, this is St. Thomas. Little more than this is possible in four years, let alone one semester. It is better to cover ten pages—or one page—well than one hundred pages in a blur. I wince whenever I hear a teacher say, “We have no time for questions, we have to get through this material!” Why do we have to get through it? Especially at the expense of understanding? Is there another agenda more important than understanding the material?

Good intellectual food deserves to be chewed well and savoured—which in turn creates an appreciation and appetite for more. Education is a lifetime affair, and it should be a love affair. School is just the springboard. Intellectual gluttony—if you can call it intellectual—when force fed, produces resentment toward the material. How sad it is when I hear students at the end of a course say, “I never want to look at these books again!” This is a failure of education, even if they crammed to get an “A” on an exam they will never remember. I am looking forward to graduation so that I can go back and read all those books I could only gloss over in so many classes over the years.

Great educators *inspire* learning. One has only to hear Thomas Howard speak, or Alice von Hildebrand, and you want to rush to the library to be like them, and know what they know. They inspire admiration and friendship with books, as opposed to adversarial student/teacher relationships which taint the material. The classroom should be a place of joy and wonder, not the fear and desperation one often finds in students. The professor must lead students from the simple through the complex to the profound, (and how often the profound is really quite simple!) This training consists in no mere memorization of facts, but in the graced ability to apprehend truth, be it in physics, chemistry, mathematics, philosophy, or theology, and to make a lifelong habit of it.

# 13

## Human Survival & Reverence For Sex

December 5, 1991



**I**t seems that we have dissociated sex as far as possible from our hearts, when at the core of our hearts is where it belongs—integrated. Nowhere are we more disintegrated today than in our sexuality. Sex is used to sell products, to gain power, control others, take revenge—everything but what it was intended for: to consummate and sustain a committed exclusive union between two people freely given to each other. The mad rush to use sex to solve the fundamental problem of human loneliness has left us lonelier than ever.

No one denies that sex is very special, but we no longer treat it as special. We want to deconsecrate it, separate it from ritual, community, God and family, and are surprised at that point to find ourselves very, very lonely: two ships colliding in the night, and limping on our separate ways. As opposed to sailing off together forever.

Suppose there is an order to things, a design, of how things fit together, a design put together by a loving Creator. How does sex fit into that? The Catholic Church makes an outrageous claim. She claims that this order has been revealed to Her, and that She is charged with articulating it. Let's examine this claim. The Church claims to have the solution to the loneliness and distortions our world is so obviously suffering under. If this claim is true, we all ought to be beating down the door to hear it out—even to just find out if it's true. Many people of our present generation view Catholicism and sex like oil and water—things that do not mix—under pain of the almighty guilt-trip.

But is that a true understanding? Could it be that the Church sees sex as a very precious thing? A divine gift, sacred and sacramental in character, but also delicate and easily broken or desecrated? Or is it *we* who are easily broken when it is desecrated? Is it not something that touches human beings in the deepest core of our deepest needs, and therefore something to be handled with extreme care? Something lovely, lifegiving, capable of producing extreme joy when used properly, but with the potential for producing great harm and devastation when used carelessly or improperly? It is a gift so delicate that it must be used in union with the Giver and not separate from Him; because through this act new life can come into being—something human beings can not do on their own. It is a three-way partnership. God demands that a spiritual union be formed in Him (What real lover would not want this?) because without it the physical union entails great

risk. Emotional risk, as well as psychological, spiritual, and physical risk to the couple and the new life that may be formed.

Marriage is the velvet-lined case in which the jewel of sex is kept lest great damage be done; kept precious by the faithfulness of the two entrusted with exclusive rights to open this box. If this precious box is stolen, or opened by another, the loss is profound. We feel it. Its safekeeping is a terrible responsibility. The case containing this precious jewel must be itself enshrined in love, which provides the motivation and will to be vigilant against enemies and thieves that prowl about our souls looking to gain entrance. These security measures provide a healthy environment for new human beings to be born and develop in. Without it they may grow deformed—bent and bruised reeds. This healthy environment is called family. This family is the extension of the parent's love which creates a home. A home must be nestled in the Bosom of God.

The family interacts with other families forming a community. Communities together form societies which together form a world. All of this radiates from this precious jewel of sex. Upon how much love, care, and reverence we treat this jewel depends the state (and safety) of our world. If we are careless with sex it will necessarily follow that we will be careless with human life. If we are careless with human life our world is doomed. Our world does not consist of a “mankind” which we love; it consists of individual human lives, each one of whom is equally precious, and whom we must love. We must love in order to survive.

The recovery of human dignity lies in the reverence in which we hold sex, since the sex act is the very sowing of the seed of life. Without reverence for sex, the lack of reverence which we now see toward the unborn, the old, the infirm, and the less-than-perfect will invent new categories of people which society deems inconvenient until no one is left.

The inversion of “be fruitful and multiply” is “be sterile and disappear.” Self-destruct. If we do not turn outward, spread, and expand, We will turn inward, wither and wilt. We have received the gift of life. “What you have received give as a gift” says Jesus. To do otherwise is to bury our ten talents. The Master in this parable is a hard man who would rather see us invest and risk all than hoard. We do not exist for our own sake or the sake of our rights. We were created in order to give Glory to God by our love, but love we must if we are to survive.

# 14

## The Good Guys vs. the Good Guys: Part I

January 30, 1992



I came away baffled last semester by the debate, discussion—or whatever they finally decided to call it—on the subject of “traditionalists vs. charismatics.” It was another of those “only at Steubenville” events. “Why is this discussion even taking place?” I thought. “The whole world is going to Hell in a handbasket, and we are squabbling among ourselves over how we pray.” I sensed that many others also shared my sentiments. I don’t mean to put anyone down here, nor am I making light of anyone’s feelings. I understand that those who brought the issue to the fore did so with some courage and took some flak for it, and I respect people who are willing to take flak for what they believe.

Obviously, those on campus who are called “traditionalists” in this debate feel aggrieved. From what they said, one could conclude that they feel that some charismatics are being, well... pushy. And, probably, in some cases they (we) are. And that is not good. In my experience when someone is pushed they are invariably pushed *away*. Charismatics have been known to be guilty of this on occasion. As the Good Book says, “Without knowledge even zeal is not good.” (Proverbs 19:2a). But still, I think the whole question has been wrongly framed. The problem, as I see it, has nothing to do with doctrine or orthodoxy, but is centered on style, personal taste, imprudent witness, peer pressure, and Original Sin.

My own position toward charismatic renewal is, “If I should forget you Jerusalem, let my right hand wither, let my tongue cleave to my mouth.” (Psalm 137). I will stand by charismatic renewal although I think charismatics (myself included) can sometimes behave in ways that may be silly or imprudent. But who *doesn’t* sometimes behave badly? If we were to give up on the Church, or a segment of the Church, over the behavior of its members, what would become of the Church? All have fallen short of the Glory of God. The whole argument, having less to do with substance than with style, therefore misses the whole issue of what charismatic renewal is all about. The essence of charismatic renewal is not a matter of whether you raise your hands, or like guitar music at Mass, or how many times you can use the word “share” in one paragraph. It is about the Power of God. The Power of God as manifested by the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic style, jargon, and so on, have nothing to do with it. In fact, those things can—and have—gotten in the way of God’s power. Indeed, if charismatics are so attached to familiar

charismatic structures that it keeps us from seeing what the Holy Spirit may be doing *now*, we are in trouble. If every prayer meeting, covenant community, festival of praise, and every sentence replacing say, speak, tell, give, or show with “share” were to collapse tomorrow, the Power of God would not. Perhaps charismatic renewal is giving way to charismatic *assimilation* as the charismatic gifts are restored to the normal life of the Church where they belong. Perhaps a renewal movement is like a scaffolding which should be removed when the restoration is complete. But this restoration is far from complete, although, I believe, it is underway.

My own entrance into the charismatic renewal, almost ten years ago, was signaled by high powered deliverance and healing prayer, for which I shall never stop thanking God. To my knowledge, at the time no one but charismatics had even heard of—much less practiced—deliverance prayer. Of course, it was always right there in the Tradition, under the name of private exorcism, but it was largely forgotten. Thank God for the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent to “remind you of all that I told you” (see John 14:26). It has been much the same with healing prayer with laying on of hands. Such things are not the province of a “spirituality,” they are part and parcel of the Gospel—the Tradition—the Church. It goes without saying that not everything charismatics do or say is from God, but no one can deny with any authority that the charisms themselves are of God when they are properly exercised—no one who claims to be orthodox. It is hard to find a more orthodox or traditional document than the Acts of the Apostles, and these things run through every page of it. St. Paul thanked God that he prayed in tongues more than all the Corinthians while being frustrated over their charismaniac antics.

It is a serious mistake to confuse one’s own spiritual tastes, likes, and dislikes with orthodoxy. (A trap some “traditionalists” are prone to. I have already mentioned some charismatic traps.) The question is not do *I like* this or that, but is it of God? Is it of the Church? If it is, the only proper response is gratitude. Silence and contemplation are not the property of the “traditionalist.” Vocal praise does not belong to the “charismatic.” Both, and then some, are part of being Catholic. The entire discussion, as posed, seems to be on very shaky ground. Fr. Giles recently delivered an excellent homily on this topic refuting the whole distinction through the use of St. Thomas and C.S. Lewis, and alluding to the Scripture: I belong to Paul... I belong to Apollos... More next week.

# 15

## Good Guys vs the Good Guys: Part II

February 20, 1992



An experience I had around 1985 at Boston College can perhaps give us a perspective on our situation here with the “Traditional vs. Charismatic” debate. (I place this in quotes because theologically it is a false opposition.) Our little charismatic group at BC was going under, thanks in no small part to a chaplaincy who saw us as a benign nuisance, and were only too happy to see us disappear. In a nutshell, we did not practice “Politically Correct” Catholicism. We practiced Roman Catholicism. While student life on campus was going under morally and spiritually, the theology department, chaplaincy, and the administration were playing church in an ideological La-La Land of dissent and leftist politics.

I went to the chapel and cried out to Jesus, “Lord, when are you going to do something about this place?” I believed I heard Him answer me, saying, “I am going to pour my Spirit out in power on this place, but I’m not just going use the charismatics, so don’t get jealous!” I laughed, “Lord, I don’t care what you do! Just do something!” He did. I saw it happen. When we started to fight back, people gradually came out of the woodwork to support and join us. God built a little rag-tag army of faithful Catholics of every stripe. We worked *together* in common cause. I saw this become a national phenomenon with the emergence of Operation Rescue.

My point is that we cannot afford the luxury of false divisions on our campus (or allow them to turn into real ones). Charismatics may have to reevaluate our attitudes, vocabulary, and witness. Those who are non-charismatics maybe ought to check out a Life in the Spirit Seminar with an open mind. If you go through it and still don’t like it, forget it. If charismatics come on too strong, tell them to back off. If you don’t like tongues at Mass, ask God if *He* does. Ask Him why you don’t. Worship is given to God, after all, and His tastes ought to be considered before ours. I imagine He likes it all—vocal and silent—when it comes from a sincere heart, but I don’t imagine He enjoys our criticizing each other’s prayer. Why *should* we feel uncomfortable with someone else’s prayer? (For the record, there is *no sound reason* for anyone to feel “inadequate” for not having the gift of tongues. Any charismatic who says or implies otherwise is *wrong*. If you want the gift, ask for it; if you don’t receive it, ask God to reveal the gifts you *do* have and *use* them. For further information, read St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians.)

Charismatics have been touchy and defensive about this whole debate because many of us came from places and parishes where we were regarded as screwballs, dismissed, or scoffed at for being what we are by liberals, certain types of traditionalists who think the Church started at Trent and ended at Vatican II, our pastors, and even our own families. Steubenville, for many of us, was seen as a haven, where we could raise our hands if we wanted to, with a whole congregation, pray in tongues, and sing. I grieved through many a liturgy butchered by political agendas and the theological distortions of “inclusive language”—but where any sign of *charismata* would be viewed with utmost suspicion. In many of our parishes, we had to make the sacrifice of stifling ourselves in worship. We viewed Steubenville as *ours*—a place we could be at home. And to find our worship attacked *here* came as a shock. The University does not belong to the charismatics, of course, but to the Church, and I offer the above merely as an explanation of the intense reaction sparked in charismatics by this debate which evidently caught those who initiated the discussion off guard.

More and more, Franciscan University is becoming known not as the Catholic charismatic University, but as the orthodox Catholic University. And this is good. Orthodoxy is bigger and *charismata* is part of orthodoxy. In my travels around the country for the admissions office last semester I was privileged to see many forms of orthodox renewal breaking out all over the place. At the Supernatural Rescue in Washington, D.C., I saw a conference attended by mostly traditional Catholics with all the enthusiasm for the faith that I used to only see at charismatic conferences. There is a renewal going on in apologetics with Karl Keating and his Catholic Answers organization, as well as the unprecedented popularity of Scott Hahn’s tapes (which probably amazes him more than anyone). I saw renewal in the realm of authentic Catholic womanhood at the Women for Faith and Family Conference in St. Louis—Catholic women standing up in the face of demonic feminism and saying “No! You do not represent me! We love God, We love men, we love the unborn, we love family, children, the home, and we love our Church! And *we will defend* what we love!” There is renewal in Catholic publishing, Ignatius Press, Daughters of St. Paul, Sophia Press, and countless magazines like *Crisis*, *Catholic World Report*, *This Rock*, and *First Things*, (all of which I wish more students on this campus would read). Mary Ellen Bork, William Bennett and others have formed a Catholic Coalition in Washington to go after the media and keep them honest. There is a renewal of Catholic philosophy and Thomism. I have been seeing orthodoxy make a comeback in Catholic education in high schools, and—it almost brings a tear to my eye to say it— even in some Catholic universities.

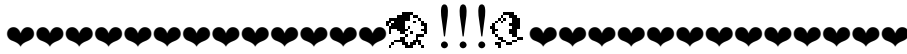
All of these above renewals are spearheaded and galvanized by the Pro-Life movement. The sight of Catholics and others going to jail—side by side—in America—for what we believe was a wake-up call to this nation, all Christians, and to all people of good will. Nothing wakes up the Church like a good persecution—which we are presently under. When members of all these

renewal movements heard I was a representative of Franciscan University of Steubenville, I was almost knocked over by their love. As they embraced me, I knew they weren't just embracing me; they were embracing *you*—all of us—the Franciscan University family. They see us, look to us, and *depend* on us as a sign of hope. I have seen God's word to me on that lonely day in St. Mary's Chapel at Boston College being fulfilled across the United States and Canada. Maybe "this place" He referred to was not just that campus as I thought, but our whole nation—continent—hemisphere—and, as we have seen Communism fall—our world. And behind it all shines the beautiful face of Mary. God is bringing us all together through a Mother's love, and many of Our Mother's children are looking to us in Steubenville for hope and new blood. All of these renewal movements consist of charismatics and other renewed Catholics working together as *one Church*. We recently prayed the Octave of Christian Unity. Unity begins at home. Let us not fall for the scandal of false division. I congratulate those who brought the issue up; it took courage. There are already too many tigers in the basement around here. Now we must deal with it. Repentance is not just a word. With God's help and Our Mother's prayers, I have every confidence we will succeed.

# 16

## St. Valentine, Pray for us!

February 13, 1992



*“The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.” —C.S. Lewis; *The Four Loves**

**R**omance is dead. The “Sexual Revolution” killed it. The delicate dance has been stomped into the mud under the heel of sin. But wait a minute. There is redemption. Romance is a breath of air that still retains a trace of a sweet scent from before The Fall. It doesn’t seem to be able to be stomped out completely. It has a resiliency like grass that grows up through the sidewalk. But right now it is badly damaged.

Women are puzzled that men seldom ask them out. Many men feel that women don’t trust them, or in some cases don’t even like them, or are afraid to be alone with them, for fear that it might place them in a compromising situation—and it all too often happens. A man who doesn’t take no for an answer may deserve to have his face slapped. If he persists or gets hostile beyond that, he may deserve to be arrested. Such men are ruining it for everyone, as are those Christian men who twist St. Paul’s teachings on marriage to support their own sin of chauvinism.

In any case, we are under a *malaise*. The same forces that are destroying the family in today’s society are also destroying what precedes and leads up to family—namely romance. A college campus ought to be a place exploding with romance; but we too often find fear, isolation, and resignation instead. This is part of our dysfunctional society. A Catholic campus ought to be especially romantic, because God is very romantic. God is the author of romance. He made the Springtime, Summer nights with sparkling Steubenville fireflies, Autumn leaves, and first snowfalls. Furthermore, God is a flirt. The current estrangement and strain between the sexes has nothing to do with God and everything to do with sin. It is an effect of sin. Christians are not called to be reactionaries to the World’s libertinism by becoming prudes, Christians are called to light the way on the road of Reality. Catholic Teaching is the Roadmap of Reality.

There can be no real or sustained romance without purity. Chastity intensifies romance and impels it towards marriage. It inspires the desire to commit oneself in love. “Commitment Phobia” is an effect of sin—sexual sin which squanders the self till there is nothing left to commit. And, like any sin epidemic it also affects the innocent. Many students come to Franciscan University wounded. Older students and younger students alike. Many are victims both of our own sins and those of others.

Romance is the aroma God uses to draw men and women together. It is a fountain of life. Its very intensity acts as a booster rocket to propel and sustain love into its lifelong journey. God loves love and God loves life. God delights in participating with husband and wife in creating more people to love. The devil cannot hurt God so he attacks what God loves—the results are all around us—loneliness, divorce, abortion, euthanasia.

Catholics love God, and therefore ought to be the most romantic people on earth. G.K. Chesterton spoke of “The Romance of Orthodoxy.” Franciscan University is one of the most Catholic places on earth. So where’s all the romance? Don’t be discouraged, during wartime they sometimes have to turn the honeymoon suites into hospital rooms, and I think that is what is going on. But then again, romance has a way of flourishing under the most impossible odds.

What shall we do? I propose a campus wide healing and reconciliation Mass and healing service for the hurts and wounds between the sexes. I recommend it be under that patronage of Saint Raphael the Archangel, and through the intercession of Saint Valentine—who knew about romance in time of war. The enemy, through his lies, has hijacked romance by binding it up in the lives and minds of many with sin; thus killing it. We must take it back and show the world what it means to love, and shine like the stars of the sky, in the midst of a twisted and depraved generation (Philippians 2: 15). A very romantic idea. Maybe it will start to catch on. May you have a holy and romantic St. Valentine’s Day. And guys—c’mon, buy her some flowers.

# 17

## Saint *You*

March 12, 1992



**T**here is always, thank God, much discussion on this campus about God's call on our lives. The answer is basically very simple: His call on each of our lives is sainthood. What varies is the path to that end. Each one of us is a creative expression of God, a work of art from the Father's heart. Jesus is His paintbrush and prototype. Each one of us, as a thoroughly unique expression, has something totally unique to teach the world about the nature and heart of God. He has conveyed to each of us a secret of His being that no one else has. The saint is one who is the most transparent to the showing forth of God through his life. But it is a unique beam of light for each of us. For example, I am not called to be St. Francis or St. Lawrence, or whomever, but St John; (and likewise with you, dear reader, fill in your own name. I don't have their gifts, nor do I live in their time, and neither do you).

Francis and Lawrence have successfully accomplished their respective missions to be God's gift of "Francisness" and "Lawrenceness" to the world. While we need heroes, and imitation of the saints is laudatory, and highly recommended by the Church, it should lead us to find our own gifts. We each have our own challenge in the depths of our essence. The process of sanctification is that of becoming more and more ourselves—that is, who God created when he had the idea of us. Minus sin—which was never His idea for us. (Also, our being in union with the Church should go without saying.)

As a sculptor once said, the statue is already in the marble—his job is to chip away all that is not the true image. Someone else said, "the only tragedy is not to have been a saint." Not to be a saint is to be other than what God made us to be—it is to be a subtraction from ourselves. The diamond metaphor has been used to illustrate that each one of us is a facet showing a different side of God. Christ is the One in whom we find the image of our true selves and only in union with Him do we live it out.

# 18

## When the Trouble with Men Becomes the Trouble with Women

Published in *The Observer of Boston College*; February 1990



**T**here is a great deal of suspicion and mistrust between the sexes on our campus and in our society today which I am afraid is creeping ever closer, in some circles, towards outright hatred. I would propose that the reason for this is permissivism, and the increase of casual or recreational sex. It is an age old complaint by women against men that men are only interested in “one thing”—namely sex. Some women today claim it as a victory that now women are able to enjoy that “one thing” just as freely as men traditionally have. What is forgotten is that this behavior in men was always seen as despicable. The availability of birth control and even abortion as a back-up if necessary, are credited with giving women this new found freedom. But is it freedom? Was it ever a freedom even when it seemed that only men could enjoy it? I would say no. I would say it is like any other addiction that leads its victim further into its clutches while satisfying less and less. Sexual satisfaction demands much more than a genital orgasm to be truly satisfying. Our sexuality penetrates the deepest core of our being. If the heart and soul is left unsatisfied while the genitals are repeatedly satisfied, a tension is bound to develop. The genital pleasure will only serve as a shot of novocaine covering up the deeper aching needs of our heart to be loved, cherished, and belong. Our hearts cannot be fooled. Resentment will begin to grow as the candy of casual sexual pleasure diminishes our capacity to sit at the table of committed love and partake of the truly nourishing food of that our souls long for.

I am about to explode a male myth. The truth is that men don't just want that “one thing”. It is just that our society has disallowed them from risking the vulnerability of seeking to nourish the deeper hunger for love. Men are starved for love. They merely *settle* for sex. What is alarming now is that women, ironically, are becoming more like men in this regard. The increased availability of the casual sex that they always thought men enjoyed has caused them to put up the same walls that have kept men in for so long. Unfortunately, it is one of those apparent injustices of nature that whenever this illusion of sexual freedom appears it is inevitably the women who suffer more. Birth control methods have been shown to have troublesome side effects, when they work, and even the most committed advocate of legalized abortion will acknowledge that it is a very grim option indeed. (The fact that it lacks the emotional neutrality of, say, an appendectomy, ought to teach us

something.) In other words, as someone once said, “The sexual revolution was the worst trick ever played on women by men. And they bought it hook, line and sinker.” It was a blessing for women that they were always more in touch with their own relationality and deeper needs, especially expressed through sexuality. That this sensitivity should be lost to the world today would be a terrible loss for all humanity. Perhaps the fatal loss. It would be sad if the women’s movement, which has rightly pointed out so many of men’s habitual flaws, should result in women falling into the same traps themselves as a result of the great deception that we can divorce our sexuality from the rest of our being. Women have always known we cannot, and were very good at reminding men of it through their love. If women forget this vital fact, life on earth will soon start resembling a “Road Warrior” movie.

Sexual intercourse was designed by our Creator as an act of total self giving. The suspicion, mistrust, and potential hatred which has been growing between the sexes is the result of too many people getting “taken”. Chastity is misunderstood. It is not puritanical restrictiveness and frustration; it simply the honesty of keeping one’s physical relations in pace with the level of maturity and emotional commitment in the relationship. Sex is not a game; it resounds in our deepest levels. The act of sex involves giving from those deepest levels. The level of maturity and emotional commitment, which signifies readiness for that level of mutual giving, is sealed in marriage. A public commitment freely and happily made before God and the community signifies a readiness and willingness to embrace all of the joys and responsibilities that sex involves in its fullness. Without this commitment of marriage one may be writing a check that will bounce, leaving one partner bankrupt and the other cheated. As some wise person said about sex, “Be careful not to write a check with your body if you can’t back it up with your life.” This may sound “oppressive” to some, but it is an honest statement of the facts of authentic human living. Deep down, men are not, and have never been, happy by seeking after that “one thing”. Neither are women. Instinctively we know it is settling for less than we were made for. The God who made us wants us to have it all—not only what satisfies the body for the moment but what satisfies the heart for a lifetime. It is worth waiting for, worth saving one’s self for, and worth sacrificing for. And, with God’s help it is never too late to start over.

# 19

## Welcome Survivors: Class of '94

Published in *The Observer of Boston College*; October 1990  
*Vita: American Collegians for Life Newsletter*; September 1990  
*Voice: Life Issues Magazine*; Volume I, Number 1



On Wednesday, June 16, 1990, *The Boston Globe* carried this lead headline: “The College Pool Dwindles: New England schools resorting to unfamiliar measures to attract incoming freshmen.” The story described a new crisis which institutions of higher learning have been mysteriously and abruptly confounded with: a sudden drop-off in college applications for the class of 1994. *The Globe* went on to describe the need, out of economic necessity, to lower academic standards and accept students who previously would not have measured up.

This past Spring, Boston College’s Vice President for Human Resources, Leo Sullivan, told a gathering of BC support staff that nearby Northeastern University had to cancel all staff pay raises for the year because they were 700 hundred students short of filling their freshman class. He went on to say that the problem at BC was not that severe but that applications were down to 12,000 from 13,000 the previous year. Several years ago BC could boast of an applicant pool of 15,000, and the luxury of admitting students who were in the top five or ten percent of their high school graduating classes. It appears that those days are gone.

The questions arise, “What happened? Where are all those students?” The answer is deceptively simple: they are dead. The college graduating class of 1994 is the first generation born to come of age since *Roe v. Wade* became the law of the land in 1973. If you were conceived a few months before January 22, 1973 and are here to tell about it, consider yourself a survivor. A huge number of your would-be classmates were not so fortunate.

Since the orgy of selfishness commonly known as the “sexual revolution” was in high gear, we know from statistics that from 1973 to the present there has been no dearth of conceptions, but rather a stark drop-off in live births. Where are those “*concepti*”? They had to go somewhere. The truth is they ended up in the heavy duty “garbage” disposals of the abortion mills, or as rat food in the dumpsters of Planned Parenthood and their co-conspirators.

We invite the members of the class of 1994 and all other interested parties to contemplate these facts. Contemplate also the friendships that will never be made, and those people we could have come to know and fallen in love with, but who are not here. Contemplate the fact that *it could*

*have been you* if you are 18 years old or younger. We invite college administrators—many of whom seem to be moved by little else—to contemplate the tuition dollars that will not be received.

Furthermore, we should bear in mind that if *Roe v. Wade* were reversed today, there would still be 18 more years of phantom classmates who should have been among us, and that if their absence is causing an economic crisis for the universities they should have lived to attend, imagine the effects of their missing contributions into the Social Security system when the current generation of 30-50 year olds is ready to retire.

The solution—already in the wings—to this problem, from those of the same mentality that brought us *Roe v. Wade*, (which so closely resembles that of the architects of the Third Reich) is simple, and right around the corner: more death. Euthanasia is well on its way down the pipeline. It follows that the mindset that found Junior too inconvenient to be born may also find Grandma too inconvenient too keep around. Some of these notions are even being floated by faculty members of Catholic universities. (See “BC Law’s Friends of Death”; *The Observer of Boston College*; April/May 1990.)

In any case, it is our hope that the survivors of this present genocide will join those of us already fighting in this battle, with surprisingly little support even on many Catholic campuses. We hope that these survivors, now arriving on our campuses will join us, for the sake of their departed classmates, and the sake of our own survival as the human race.

# 20

## The Culture of Pornography & Commitment Phobia

Published in *The Observer of Boston College*  
April 1992



Everyone today has heard of the problem of “commitment phobia.” That is, a situation where a couple goes out together for a long time until it seems that it would be logical to take the step of engagement and marriage; but one of the parties, usually the man, starts to claim that he isn’t ready yet, or can’t make a commitment. The woman, of course by now has made quite an investment already and can hear her “biological clock” ticking away. She would like to have children and the security of marriage, but he just gets cold feet—or a cold sweat—whenever the topic comes up. The problem seems quite vexing but I think the reasons for it are quite clear: It is the logical outcome of living in a pornographic culture—a culture of so-called “free sex” which has created a great deal of isolation, until it is basically a culture of masturbation. I will never forget the pathetic scene created a few years by a group of BC feminists led by a condom dispensing male professor when they attempted to disrupt a lecture by Professor Janet Smith of the University of Dallas, who was speaking on the evil of artificial contraception from the context of the beauty of human love. When Professor Smith spoke about the spiritual riches to be mined in the life of a marriage from periodic abstinence within a program of Natural Family Planning, this tragic mob howled, as if from the pit of Dante’s inferno, “What about mutual masturbation? What about mutual masturbation?” —as though they were being deprived of food and water. Nor shall I forget the desolate sadness and introspection on these women’s faces when Professor Smith went on to speak of Pope John Paul’s vision of the beauty of tender committed human love. They’d never heard it before. Up till then they’d been sold a bill of goods. (See *The Observer of Boston College*; January, 1990)

Without love, and without marriage, sexual activity is out of its workable context and becomes an insatiable addiction. The stages of psychological development freeze at the point an addiction sets in. That is why so many men in our society have remained in adolescence far beyond their teenaged years. Most men in our society have grown up with the idea that any form of sexual activity, including promiscuity, and masturbation, supported by soft-core pornography, is something good, something healthy, now that we’ve been “liberated” from all those old fashioned mores, and silly tales of going blind or growing hair on the back of one’s hands. Also, there is the matter of

the exaggerated guilt which accompanies this subject resulting from poor pastoral practice—and then exaggerations about poor pastoral practice itself.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the actions we perform play a large role in the way we are formed. Sex, by its very nature is the fountain of life, and the center of human union, union being the chief desire of the human heart. Therefore, any kind of sexual activity affects us profoundly to our very depths. This affects us in many ways, not the least of which are developmental, emotional, spiritual, and psychological, in the formation of our world view and how others fit into it. So the man who begins a fantasy sexual life in his early adolescence, as so many men of today have, with the use of soft-core pornography, such as *Playboy* magazines, gets a habit deeply ingrained in his psyche linking a false idea of female perfection with an ideal fantasy harem. None of the members of his fantasy harem has any qualms about his fantasizing about another woman, and even seem to approve, because that is all the woman's eyes in those photographs ever communicates. She is all approving, all understanding, and lovingly naked—for him. His stable of concubines is a big happy family who exist all and just for him. If one has rounder breasts, or another a cuter face, or another a firmer derriere no one minds! No one gets hurt or jealous. Hence he is free to always search for that more perfect woman—each month. But always has the old ones to fall back on and they never mind.

Now, translate this mindset, firmly formed, and deeply linked to this man's patterns of needs into the real world of real women and real love affairs. At first he is all hearts and flowers, candy, cards, presents, dinner and dancing, until she starts to like it and believes he really cares for her—and he does. But can he commit to just one? To her alone? Or is he always scanning the horizon for something (as opposed to someone) "better"? Is he capable of truly loving a woman or merely addicted to adolescent romantic fantasy linked to sexual gratification—which is now unquenchable by one woman? He will weep with sincere frustration that she can't tolerate his desire for more and others. He is accustomed to the unquestioning sweetness and acceptance of his paper harem, and genuinely can't understand himself, and feels guilt over the sense that he is using this real live woman, unconscious though it may be, in the same way. She's fed up, he's in terror, facing more rejection, shame, and terrible loneliness, doesn't know what happened, and can't help himself. Such is the way of sin.

This process is not merely limited to the all-too-common chronic masturbator. The same principles also carry over to the Don Juan—the promiscuous male (or female) for whom the term "dating" is equated with sex. Either way, it is still a fantasy world of concubinage that destroys one's ability to love, and creates a cynicism towards trust—which is obviously a necessary component of loving commitment. The so-called sexual revolution has liberated no one, but rather has thrust us deeper into isolation and loneliness and cynicism and has left many of its adherents to

grow old alone. And women have paid the highest and most conspicuous price, as they always do when sexual mores are loosened.

The preventative to this gloomy prospect has always been found in the traditional Catholic Teaching on sexual morality, rightly understood in all its metaphysics, mysticism, spirituality, anthropology—and beauty—in the context of the order of creation. It is these teachings that are in accord with the way we were made, and the way the world works. We are whole beings, and our sexuality cannot be split off from the rest of our instincts for permanence, love, and family, for the sake of temporary pleasure without tragic results—any more than the procreative aspect can be split off from the unitive aspect of our sexuality without damaging that very union. A fragmented self cannot commit, much less give.

Some misguided theologians have wrongheadedly located Catholic sexual morality within an arbitrary context of guilt, instead of viewing it in its proper light as an expression of God's loving concern for our well-being and happiness, worthy of attendance and self control in our own best interest. Any "punishment" incurred by violation (provided it is not a matter of cold, knowing, willful rebellion) is simply a matter of the damage we are doing to ourselves by pushing ourselves into an evermore pathetic state, that cannot help but damage others as we hurt ourselves.

Just as the preventative is in the Church, so is the cure, in the recognition that rebellion against creation is sin. Regardless of the guilt incurred, damage has been done. And that there is healing in the Blood of Christ. We are washed by it in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and nourished and strengthened by it in the Eucharist—which is also the sacrament of union—with Christ our Bridegroom, and with others in His Body the Church. To sin is to become a victim, a slave; when God created us to be free. Free of isolation, free to love, free to enter into the freedom and joy that commitment brings in the bond of the sacrament of the Matrimony. Freedom that is lost in sexual sin.

# 21

## The Spirituality of Unrequited Love

October 14, 1993



Unrequited love feels like death. In fact, there are times when death would seem preferable to the unrelenting pain and frustration. There are those, even in the Church, who would seek to minimize or make light of this most unique agony: “Oh, don’t worry about it! Women (or men) are like street cars, there’s another one along any minute!” Like Hell. I don’t think there is any other pain quite like that of unrequited love, especially when rejection is involved, although that might even be preferable to being strung along with hopes raised and dashed with punishing regularity. “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a wish fulfilled is the tree of life.” (Proverbs 13:12)

Even the death of a loved one has a clean finality to it, and, normally, is not a deliberate choice on the part of the other to be free of you. Advice from others all sounds cliché. Especially from those well meaning but insensitive vocational terrorists who zoom in with, “Well, maybe God wants you for himself! Have you considered that possibility?” As if you haven’t. Besides, someone heartbroken from rejection, grief, and loss is in no mood to have the joys of celibacy preached at them. The subject of vocation is holy ground where we take off our shoes and tread softly, not go charging in with golf cleats and glib answers. Especially when it’s someone else’s vocation. Unrequited love is real valid agony. And no one has a right to rob you of it so cheaply, especially if they’re stacking false guilt over “not following God’s will” on top of it. It must be endured. And can be.

Unrequited love is the very pain of God. The Crucifix is a snapshot of unrequited love. God doesn’t minimize this pain. Suffering it can be a profound identification with Christ’s pain over the lack of appreciation He receives from His Bride. Suffering can be an expression of love and profound sanity. Without love all is demonic chaos. In *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis said he never imagined grief felt so much like fear. And so it should. Grief follows separation and echoes the ultimate calamity of separation from God. As the unity of man and woman in one flesh mirrors the image and likeness of God, so too the separation of man from woman conjures the cruelty and fragmentation of Hell. But some loves must die, if they are not from God they are not really loves anyway, but still it hurts, like Hell. All death hurts like Hell, because God did not make it. (See Wisdom 1:13-14) But He did redeem it by entering into our separations.

# 22

## I'm "Discerning..."

October 21, 1993



*Three things are too wonderful for me, yes, four I cannot understand: The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden.—Proverbs 30:18-19*

*One does not take this honor on his own initiative, but only when called by God as Aaron was. —Hebrews 5:4*

**T**his one is for the men. (Well, now I know I've got the women's attention anyway.) "I'm discerning..." These words which describe a sacred process have become the butt of jokes among the women on campus and perhaps rightly so. Why? Because in many cases its use has come to be a euphemism for "I'm procrastinating" or "I'm looking for Miss Right and you're not her" or "I don't know *what* I'm doing!" Sometimes it's plain old commitment phobia, understandable in these untrustworthy times. Now, all of these are not dishonorable states to be in, so we don't need to bring in all this spiritual stuff to validate them. It's actually *okay* for people of college age not to know what their going to do for the rest of their lives. Most people don't, it takes time, and for most people their life happens to them before they figure it out.

The great Catholic novelist Walker Percy often wrote about the malaise young men face in modern times. (In fact, a woman wishing to better understand today's man would do well to read Percy's novel, *The Moviegoer*.) Anyway, Percy writes in his novel *The Last Gentleman* about his main character Will Barrett: "...he had to know everything before he could do anything... until this moment he had lived in a state of pure possibility, not knowing what sort of a man he was or what he must do, and supposing therefore he must be all men and do everything. But... his life took a turn in a particular direction. Thereafter he came to see that he was not destined to do everything but only one or two things. Lucky is the man who does not secretly believe that every possibility is open to him."

We men have grown up in an age of terrible confusion and mixed messages about what it means to be a man. Society tells us that we're superfluous and irrelevant, but this is another lie we must not accept. We men have a God-given responsibility to care for the women in our lives. All of them, not just girlfriends. Chivalry may be thought of as protecting women from ourselves, our weak and baser nature. This doesn't just apply to the sexual sphere, but we must also guard against

using them by sponging off them emotionally while we wallow in indecision. This is what our male households are for. I'm convinced that many men run into problems with women because they are seeking from women what they should have gotten from their *fathers*—not their mothers as is commonly thought. But we can get that support from other men in the appropriate setting, like households.

We can see at a quick glance around our society that this chivalry has gone out the window: the “feminization of poverty,” struggling single mothers abandoned to raise and support their children alone, abortion, and the resulting rage known as feminism. We men have dropped the ball. We need to pick it up. And since few people will teach us how, our generation is left to rediscover manhood almost on our own. God can't wait to teach us, and we can help each other. The Pope has taken on the burden of being father to the whole world because of this crisis, so you can't get a much better example. The women can help us too. I actually wrote an article on how they can do that but it was too big for *The Troub*, and was published in *Hearth: the Magazine for the Authentic Catholic Woman* (Spring 1993, in the current periodical section in the library. It actually was written for this campus. Someone told me it's been making the rounds. It's called *The Dating Dearth: a Man's Perspective*.) [See below] Anyway, the question at hand for most of us is not whether I'm going to be a priest but whether I'm going to be a *man*. The rest falls into place. If we're called to priesthood God will tell us by putting that *desire* into our hearts. In the meantime we have a vocation for *today* and don't need to worry about tomorrow's. We don't have to sit around scratching our heads. (See Matthew 6:34.) Cardinal Law advises young men that if they think they're called to priesthood the proper place to discern it is *in the seminary*, where there are trained people to help you discern. He advises them not to worry, if you don't belong there they'll let you know.

After three years of careful investigation, research, and observation I've come to the conclusion that the women at Franciscan University are the most beautiful women in the world. They are also the nicest and the friendliest—no small thing, that—and that's part of their beauty. I can have several different crushes on any given day just walking across campus. Whenever I write about women being beautiful someone writes an angry letter assuming my criteria of beauty is superficial. It isn't. The natural God-given beauty of a woman in full flower is intensified by the supernatural beauty of the indwelling Holy Trinity in her soul. That is what I find in the women here. If there is a non-beautiful woman—of any age—on this campus I've yet to see her. Nowhere else on earth is there such a concentration of eligible Godly womanhood. We men need to wake up.

# 23

## Ero-Phobia

October 28, 1993



**F**or all the jokes we hear about how clueless we men are, not asking women out, commitment phobia, and so on, my years of experience in the post-sexual revolution culture have taught me that when the average modern woman is presented with the *real* thing (i.e. love) she is *absolutely terrified*. Let's call it ero-phobia—fear of Eros. (There probably is a *real* name for it, but this will do for now.) There are several women who are going to be furious with me when they read this, because they will think I am speaking about them personally and telling their secrets, but I am not. This problem is another modern-day epidemic. (C'mon, girls, if the guys could take it last week, so can you!)

If men have commitment phobia, the female corollary is ero-phobia. There is much healing needed here. I could retire if I had a dollar for every woman I have heard say, "I have a hard time with men" or who simply don't trust men—not no way, not no how. Or, who don't know how to receive love from a man when it's offered. They're just plain scared. And they have good reason to be. If the last 30 years have left men clueless, they have left women victims. Women today constantly experience sexual and emotional betrayal, being used, sexual harassment and abuse, date-rape, and untold indignities we men know not of. We might as well just come out and consider all sexual intercourse outside of marriage to be rape, whether the woman consents or not. It is the taking (or giving away) something that doesn't belong to us. (See 1 Cor. 6:20)

I must admit I have been startled by stories Christian women have told me about even Christian men pushing themselves on them. Pressure is not the way to a woman's heart, and if it's not her heart you're after, leave her alone and go to confession. There may be a place for gentle persistence while wooing a woman—a nice old fashioned word, eh?—but in a sexual context no means no. And even if it doesn't, take it as such. A man should not pressure a woman that way. A woman has her ways of letting a man know when she's ready to be kissed, and a gentleman must know *his own* limits. Abuse is *always* out of the question. But enough preaching.

Catholic women seem especially susceptible to ero-phobia. Women in our society are very susceptible to perfectionism. Combine that with a reactionary scrupulosity over the noble Catholic ideals of purity and the cult of the virgin martyr, together with the above mentioned culture of abuse,

and you've got some real conflicts. In fact, this kind of perfectionism and scrupulosity probably lies beneath male vocational terrorism too—the old “If-I-want-a-woman-I'm-letting-God-down” routine. Gee. Do you think God can handle it?

Fortunately, most responsible vocation directors and directresses can spot this stuff now. May God vouchsafe to deliver us from those vocations who think they are doing God a favor. The sharp-eyed Mother Superiors also know that the convent is not a place to be used as a hiding place from the world of men and love. Christianity is no place to hide from love. Promiscuity, however, *does* make a great place to hide from love—God knows you won't find any there. It is also out of the question for the Christian, who is called to love and part with denial, sinfulness, and fear. We have to try to see our souls as they are. Eek! That's only bearable with God's loving healing grace.

Falling in love with an ero-phobic woman is a real adventure in purification. It might be a *vocatio* to a white martyrdom (or a sign that you need counselling—don't ask me) because one must be willing to love much without much thought of having it returned, at least until it gets through to them that they *are* lovable. For some dysfunctional reason I tend to find them extremely so. The scary part for ero-phobic women is that the only cure for ero-phobia is love—God's love first, and then human love in manageable doses. The object of the fear is the cure. But consider the alternative: As C.S. Lewis said, “The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.”

## 24

# What Men Wish Women Knew About Men but Would Never Dream of Telling Them

November 4, 1993



**T**his one is for the women. (Men, pay attention.) In our ongoing reflections on the campus “dating scene” I would like to continue by mentioning some of the self-defeating attitudes women are prone to when it comes to this question.

**Self-righteous “purity”:** If it’s self-righteous, or comes out as moral superiority, it ain’t purity. It is very easy for Christian women, especially younger ones who have been spared the horrors of the sexual revolution, and have been faithful to the Lord from an early age to slip into self-righteousness on this topic. Men have struggles in this area that women know not of. As reflected in God’s marvelous construction of the body, it is more difficult for this issue to be “out of sight out of mind” for a man. Men can be assaulted by violent temptations against purity by the most sudden, unbidden, and ridiculous things. A man could, theoretically, sire thousands of children and nature has prepared him to do so to insure continuation of the species. Therefore his mind (or perhaps his body) instinctively and quickly (and even involuntarily) responds to sexual stimuli. Of course, Original Sin does not make discipline any easier.

A woman may be disgusted by, for example, a given man’s attraction to pornography, and rightly so. But the real question is, can she see or have compassion for the terrible aloneness that may have driven him to it. Perhaps he has more experience of women’s disgust—which is terribly painful—than of women’s kindness and understanding. (Which may well be the cure, along with God’s grace.) This is not to excuse sin, but Christian compassion requires the recognition of the pain which is what often propels people into habitual sin.

In the same vein, it is not uncommon to find this self-righteousness in young Christian women who are obsessed with what they think is purity out of fear rather than inspired to it by virtue. There is a spiritual disease called “angelism,” which is a desire or attempt to deny the body, and with it one’s sexuality, to flee from it as if it were evil; which of course it is not. (Denial here is used in the dysfunctional sense, not in the proper ascetical sense of balanced self-denial—it is the difference between unhealthy repression and healthy, balanced suppression.) This denial can lead to the heresy of Gnosticism, and the diseases of scrupulosity and frigidity which can destroy a

marriage. Purity is in the heart before it can be in the body, and spiritual pride can be a far more serious impurity than that of one who honestly struggles to discipline his sexuality. Catholicism is an incarnational religion and celebrates the body and seeks to discipline it properly, not deny its existence.

**Women’s cynicism and sarcasm:** If your only topic of conversation with your girlfriends is how clueless men are because they don’t ask you out, maybe they’re not so clueless. There is a legitimate place for blowing off steam and frustration with humor, but it must be checked to see that it does not turn into a habit, and indeed the very corrosive and self-defeating vice of cynicism. Last year some women friends of mine who were roommates recognized that almost all they talked about around the house was men and their frustrations with them. As a discipline they gave up talking about men for Lent and it became a fruitful, healthy, temporary form of fasting.

**When men don’t take the lead:** This is a problem. In today’s world where so many men have been raised by single mothers or passive fathers, many men are used to keying off the woman, and fear rebuke when they make a mistake. Some women are all too ready to come down hard on a man’s mistakes. In fairness, many a man cannot even find *the opportunity* to take the lead because the women beat them to it by *telling* him to do it before he even has a chance. She demands he take the lead while refusing to relinquish control. A wife’s submission to her husband is *part of her self-gift* to him.

A decent sensitive man today wants to avoid being domineering, but his attempts at headship are often short-circuited by women who *give him orders* to be in charge. Not exactly submissiveness. These women, too, grew up all too often with the example of mom being the boss, while dad, (if he was there) was in retreat discouraged from being constantly overruled and viewed as incompetent, or, shall we say, “clueless.” The best and most concise treatment of this situation for women who want to overcome it appears on pages 194-195 of Sheldon Vanauken’s book *Under the Mercy*. It is required reading for frustrated bossy Christian women.

# 25

## What Women Wish Men Knew About Women but Would Never Dream of Telling Them

November 11, 1993



*Give no woman power over you to trample upon your dignity.—Sirach 9:2*  
*Better is an open rebuke than a love that remains hidden.—Proverbs 27:5*

**I** have never met a woman who wasn't looking for a man who wouldn't take her nonsense. Before the feminists break out the tar and feathers, let me explain. If a woman is going to give herself to a man, bear and nurture children, she needs a man who can provide the shelter where she can build the nest—emotionally as well as materially. She needs a man who “is like a tree planted near running water” (Psalm 1: 3a): firmly rooted and not blown around by the winds of emotion—especially *her* emotions. Women's emotions can blow around sometimes, especially once a month. A recent illness has given me a new appreciation of how body chemistry can affect the emotions: profoundly. But it's only juices in the brain. Then there is the physical pain women endure every month, not to mention at childbirth—whew! It is a biological imperative that women seek stability in a man. Sometimes women subconsciously “test” men for this and it drives men crazy, but I think the women really want to see what he's made of. How does he react when things are tough? On a subconscious level she may be watching to see his reaction. If he panics, or goes into a tailspin, she may think, subconsciously, “Oh, my God! If he's thrown by *my* little outbursts, or gets moody or feels rejected on account of my silly moods, how will he hold up in the *real* trials of life, when I need him?”

Scripture says, “Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church... Husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. Observe that no one ever hates his own flesh; no, he nourishes it and takes care of it as Christ cares for the Church—for we are members of his body.” (Ephesians 5: 25a, 28-30) Too many men stop before they get to this part of this chapter.) So what does this all mean? As we all know, we, the Church, give Christ a lot of nonsense, but he remains unshaken by it. He is the Rock. The Lord. The Head. What a relief! So, if a man is head of his family he is to be like Christ, in this stability, what a relief to his wife! She needs him to be firm—not harsh—not a stone which is thrown, but a rock to be leaned on.

Sounds simple enough, so what's the problem? Well, picture this: Junior's hair is standing on end because he witnesses mom losing it and throwing a tantrum. He doesn't know anything about hormones or monthly cycles, or that grown-ups are human too. This is all terrifying until he sees dad come on the scene, give mom some love and then tell frightened Junior, "Son, that's women!" with a gentle smile and an arm on his shoulder. Junior is thus reassured that everything is under control and identifies with dad's stability. This is not a put-down of women, but conveys to the child a lesson about love, understanding, and forbearance. Junior learns that mom's temporary hysterics are not the end of the world, *nor are they his fault or responsibility*. It's okay. Dad can take care of things. Hurray for dad!

But what if there is *no dad there to teach this lesson*? This problem is epidemic in our society. Junior remains terrified of female outbursts. He gets older, and his only model of relating to women is as son to mom, not loving strong husband to wife, so he is terrified should his girlfriend occasionally go berserk. Because when you are a child with only one parent—one source of stability—and she goes bonkers, the whole universe is terrifying! The one the child depends on for stability is temporarily out of control, it seems, and life is one big anxiety attack. The child is terrified of doing (or that he did) "something wrong" and of losing security, which is everything to a child. So as grown men they become horribly "nice"—scared to death of doing anything to offend (and therefore, they think, lose) their girlfriends, (i.e. love and security). This drives women crazy and leaves the man with a whole pile of repressed anger he never dared express to her for fear of losing her. But it is *not normal* never to get angry at someone you love. The woman is then exasperated because he suddenly needs reassurance just when she was needing it from him! "Oh!" she cries, "Men are such babies!"

A woman needs to know her man won't collapse without her, or if she collapses, he won't. She needs to know she can't abuse him and take him for granted. It gives her security. She will not respect a man who will let her trample on his dignity. Who would? This was Adam's sin: uxoriousness. He had more fear of his wife than fear of God. A woman wants a man upon whose chest she can pound her fists when she's mad, who will smile and embrace her when she gets it out of her system. She also wants a man who will tell her off when she pushes him too far, unafraid of how she will react.

Gordon Dalby in his excellent book *Healing the Masculine Soul*, calls this "holding up the sword of truth" and it is a man's duty to the woman he loves. Dalby stresses that the solution to the fatherless man's problem is found in his "Abba Father" *sonship* with the Heavenly Father to restore what the locusts have eaten. It is required reading for men who have become too "nice" for their own good—or for the good of the women they love.

# 26

## On Modesty in Dress

(Previously Unpublished)



I was never big on the Modesty Police, but I can tell you that no immodestly dressed woman ever escapes *my* attention. I have never been very good on custody of the eyes, but one such spectacle (at Mass, no less) a few years ago gave me occasion to reflect on my own responses and the virtue of modesty in dress. If I were in a conversation with an immodestly dressed woman it occurred to me that in my distraction I would find myself not conscious of her as a person, first and foremost, but rather, I would be thinking of her anatomically—as an assembly of body parts with varying degrees of attractiveness to me according to size and shape. This is not because I am “sexist,” but because I am male. Next, I wondered what different effect a modestly dressed woman would have on me—all things being equal—same face, same figure, same woman. It occurred to me that I would perceive her and her various physical attributes as comprising a *whole person*, and I would be more conscious of her as a person whose beauty inclined me to respect and reverence her, and be more interested in *who she is* than what she looks like. My eyes would be more likely to want to look into hers in a spirit that would heighten my own sense of dignity rather than roving and darting and having me feel debased worrying about being caught “gawking.” In other words, *she* would be focus, not *parts* of her.

There is a lesson here about the meaning of virtue and about the four Cardinal Virtues and their opposites: the Seven Deadly Sins. Virtue works out of, and leads to, integration and wholeness helping us to realize our dignity as human beings made in God’s image. Sin works out of, and leads us to disintegration and fragmentation of ourselves and to forget our dignity as human beings.

Any one of the Seven Deadly Sins have an element of idolatry in them. They take something basically good and turn it into a god which in turn enslaves us—as all false gods do. But we end up not only sinning against God and others, but against ourselves in a very poignant way. We take something that is merely part of ourselves and let it take control and dominion over our whole selves. This can, if unchecked come to rule and obsess our whole lives.

Sexual attraction, a very good thing, becomes lust, a very bad thing, because personhood is subtracted from the situation. When a beautiful person is reduced to an assemblage of attractive body parts, that is fragmentation. We do not fall in love with isolated body parts, however obsessed

we may be with them. We fall in love with and marry persons. Immodesty in dress distracts from a woman's personhood as well as that of the man who finds himself evaluating her body parts instead of engaging her personality.

Virtue, in the ancient Greek sense, referred to the essence and fullness of what something is in its fullest potential. The lack of reverence for human dignity through traditional virtue explains why loneliness is a greater epidemic today than AIDS. This is due to the prevalence of the fragmentary colliding of bodies which obscures the engaging of personalities which leads to love.

So virtue, far from being a path to prudishness, is the outline of health and human happiness—wholeness—being fully human—i.e. holiness. Virtues are the signposts at various crossroads of human nature just as the Ten Commandments are the Owner's Manual for the human person. They indicate how we are made so we may realize and become what we already are.

It is this spiritual principle of fragmentation in lust versus union in love which lies at the heart of all Catholic teaching on sexual morality. For example, in pre-marital sex, the marital act is fragmented due to the lack of God's sacramental blessing in marriage which accomplishes the union of two souls so they can become one flesh. In the case of artificial birth control, the marital act is cut off from God's creative participation by refusing Him free access to use us and our love to bring new life into the world. The married couple united in love is the image and likeness of God the Holy Trinity—not only an image of what God *is* but what God *does*. There is a circumincession of love from which proceeds a whole new person. God loves so much He just wants to keep on creating new souls to love. Artificial birth control effectively places a "keep out" sign in front of God preventing our marriage from being His playground. Our love suffers as a result. Less replaces more, fragmentation replaces union.

The modestly dressed woman is usually more attractive and stimulating for a man to behold because she inspires an attraction which stimulates an Eros of the heart, rather than lust of the eye and body. This allure of womanly mystery draws the man to the *whole* woman, and is infinitely more delicate and exciting because she excites the *whole* man in a high and beautiful way that evokes respect for her and God's creative power, as opposed to a fragmented and debased attraction of which, whether he admits it or not, a man feels vaguely ashamed.

# 27

## On Friendship

(Previously Unpublished)



**F**requently I hear people speak about *working on* their friendships. This is nonsense. The very essence and joy of friendship is *not* having to work at it. It works or it doesn't. We don't have to try to "get closer." We have to work at our courtships, marriages, getting along with our relatives, bosses, and colleagues, but the great gift and uniqueness of friendship is that it is a welcome break from all that. We don't *have* to work at it. Friendship is based on mutual delight. It is like a Sabbath from the draining rough and tumble (or warp and woof, if you prefer) of human affairs where one must watch one's step and measure words. This also explains why real friendships are so few and far between. Friends are people we choose to be with because we like them and they like us, not out of tedious obligation. One of the most endearing qualities of our friends is that under normal circumstances they can get along fine without us. But should they need us we will gladly be there and vice versa. But there is no moral imperative to spend time together. To retain its delight it remains free of demand, except, as noted, in special times of need.

There is often a fallacy that takes root among the spiritually naïve, that we all *must* be friends, since we are Christians. While it may be true that we are brothers and sisters in the Lord, and we are commanded by the Lord to love one another, we are not, mercifully, commanded to necessarily *like* one another. That we may choose to do according to the mysteries of human chemistry. It is false to point to brotherhood or sisterhood to indicate a higher or deeper quality of friendship. I do not deny the profundity of the blood bond—on the contrary—but it will be noted that siblings don't automatically always get along well. If you doubt that, ask any mother of several children under the age of ten. Siblings, either spiritual or by blood, tend to fight a lot. If you doubt that, ask any bishop. I may be obliged to snatch a brother or sister from the path of an oncoming train, at great risk to myself, but I am not obliged to have lunch with them the next day. Now of course, the more people we like, the better, and if we don't like *anybody* perhaps we need to go to confession or seek out some sort of counselling. But normally friendship is a free gift from God where we have freedom to pursue our preferences.

Friendship is relatively self maintaining. One must work at maintaining a marriage, although the better friends the spouses are the better, and less work. That is the ideal. Friends are not

immune to sinning against each other, nor having fights and disagreements, but the genuine mutual liking tends to overcome that. The mutual humiliation of asking and giving forgiveness, and weathering storms only strengthens it. But at the same time there is no moral imperative against letting a friendship end. There may be a serious moral obligation to end a friendship in some cases. It is okay to have former friends, people we no longer like, so long as it is not an occasion for resentment, grudge holding, and unforgiveness. We are obliged to forgive even if only in the silence of our hearts, and to love when affection has died. Sometimes distance and surrender of an unhealthy friendship is a supreme act of love. Besides, the degree of the unhealthiness is the degree to which it was not a genuine friendship. But prayer is also an act of love for a person we may no longer like, or must, in prudence, avoid, so long as it does not feed unhealthy obsession. When friendship becomes too much like work it is strained. And strain is precisely one of the things real friendship delivers us from.

## The Dating Dearth: A Man's Perspective

Published in *Hearth: the Magazine for the Authentic Catholic Woman*  
Spring 1993



“Why don’t the men ask us out?” This question and lament is one frequently sounded by women on many college campuses. I was discussing this issue last year with Mrs. Dale O’Leary, a Catholic writer from Rhode Island who does a lot of writing and speaking on Pro-Life issues and is active in the cause of Authentic Catholic Womanhood. She is very intelligent, feminine, and a lot of fun. Being a single man with a vested interest in the topic, I offered her some of my thoughts on the matter, knowing that she often gives talks to single women and hoping she might pass on an involved man’s perspective. I said, “Dale, these women are not giving us any *cues* that they *want* to be asked out, and without some indication or encouragement that he might be well received, a man is not going to risk the rejection—which men are far more sensitive to than women evidently realize.” She thought for a moment and said, “When I was college age, and I was at a party, and there was a certain fellow that I wanted to come talk to me, there was just a certain way I could *stand*, and he would be over within minutes!” I responded, “Well, Dale, that’s gone.” She became very grave, “Really? Oh that’s terrible... but these are the little things we learned at our mother’s knee... you mean you don’t see women doing these little unspoken things, that interest a man?” I said, “Nope. In fact, many men have come to think women don’t even *like* men, because of the way women react to their initial overtures yet, the women wonder why men aren’t asking them out, they’re either not saying yes, or they’re not sending the signals.” Dale said, “Oh dear, this is serious, I have to talk to some of these women; something basic to our culture is being lost. No wonder so many women are so unhappy.”

I told her that one of the rarest qualities to find in a young woman today—at least towards eligible men—was kindness. So many men are simply starving for kindness from a woman but so often find sarcasm and cynicism instead. One man commented to me on a climate nowadays of a *prevailing hostility* among women towards men. It is easy for a man to feel that some women are actually *looking* to find fault, ready to pounce on him at the slightest ill-chosen word or misspoken comment. In Christian women this can manifest in self-righteousness, or a kind of assumed moral superiority over men—often unconscious on their part. Men complain that they often feel around women that they cannot win, or say or do anything right. Such women *drive* men away.

Perhaps women today may have good reasons for these attitudes, but they are very wounding to a man, especially to an interested man who is serious, sincere, and sensitive. Such a man will not ask such a woman out. He simply doesn't want to be around it. I understand that in today's world it can be imprudent and even downright dangerous for a woman to be too kind too soon to a man she doesn't know well, and even then there still is chance of betrayal. The Sexual Revolution has ruined it for everyone as far as trust goes, but sarcasm and cynicism towards men have become epidemic in our society, and it has become so ingrained, so second-nature, that most women are not even conscious that they're being that way—but the men are. And they go the other way.

In terms of the risk factor, Mrs. O'Leary said that traditionally it has always been up to the woman to control how far things went and how fast, and, if she liked him, still keep the man captivated. I said that in the confusion of the day that was perhaps one more thing that was lost, or at least severely damaged. What has been lost, Dale felt, was an ancient womanly wisdom that women in previous ages had always intuitively known, on how to "handle" (not manipulate) a man—that is, how to anticipate him and keep him happy. A modern woman might interpret this sort of thing as "game playing" but it is not. It is a deadly serious business that holds civilization together. Quails and pelicans have their mating rituals and dances and so do humans. According to the encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Castii Connubii*, the wife can and ought to claim the primacy of love in the home, as the husband claims primacy of authority. The heart must balance the head and vice versa. So, far from playing games, the maintenance of this delicate and glorious dance between the sexes is all important, and often calls for special wisdom, the shrewdness of love, from the woman. For women interested in this, Mrs. O'Leary recommends a book called *Fascinating Womanhood* by Helen B. Andelin (Bantam Books). This book attempts to explain to women how men view love relationships, what they really want and need out of them. I have been reading this book and as a man I can say from what I've read so far she's exactly right.

We all know that women have a need, especially in marriage, to be reassured that they are loved and cherished—they want to *hear* it. And a man who thinks that his love ought to be self-evident is thought to be rather obtuse in these matters. He should *tell* her he loves her often, as well as show it on every possible occasion. Yet, a man has a corresponding need for reassurance from the woman he loves, which society tends to ridicule, especially since the rise of feminism. His need is to be *admired*. It is the way men are made. A man needs to feel that he is a *hero* in the eyes of the woman he loves. It may sound corny, and most men may not admit it, but real life is corny, and it is true. It is from such admiration that a man derives his strength. The quest for this admiration, either in the eyes of a specific woman, or hoping to catch the eye of a woman, supplies him with inspiration and motivation to serve and accomplish in his world. I can hear

even some Christian women saying, “Well, he should get his strength from God!” This attitude, apart from being rather ungenerous, overlooks the facts of creation: that God did not say to Adam, “I’m all you need!” but rather, “It is not good for man to be alone, I will make him a *helper* like himself.” In other words, one of the main ways ordained and willed by God to give a man strength is through a woman’s love. There is no shame in this mediation.

It is not good for man to be alone, but I am convinced from what I see, and by the situation at hand, and by experience, that most women today have *no idea* how terribly alone *most men* feel in this area concerning appreciation, acceptance, and sympathy from women. There are women, thanks perhaps to the effects of feminism, who act as though there were some sort of anathema against showing a man admiration, as if to say, “I’m not going to feed his stupid ego!” But, perhaps if his ego were fed once in a while he wouldn’t be in the state of starvation that so diminishes a man as to prod him into the very ways that women find so intolerable. The result is a seemingly endless cycle of resentment and mutual punishment.

Many women appear to have unwittingly made it a point of pride to take an unhealthy (if unconscious) pleasure in denying men what they most need by reacting to them with sarcasm, cynicism, laughs at the expense of men, and a general attitude derived from the world, but certainly not from God. Many of these cynical attitudes towards men become self-fulfilling prophecies so discouraging to a man that he may start to live down to the belittlement, just as he would live up to praise were it offered. Male ego only becomes a problem when it is undernourished. Properly fed, it spends less time rebelling and trying to feed itself in unattractive and self-defeating ways. Properly fed, it causes a man to strive to be the best that he can be for the woman he loves and the society he serves.

Some women may take offense at what I’m saying here, as though I were placing the whole onus of the problem on women. I am not. It is important not to confuse the generalities of politics and rhetoric with the tender particularities of where we most essentially live. The question at hand is why women aren’t getting asked out more often. This is not an unimportant issue. It is important to remember that contemporary society is under a profound *malaise*, with everything good, pure, and holy coming under attack. One of the chief things under attack is the family, the home. And if family is under attack then it stands to reason that everything that leads up to family—namely how men and women find each other—is also under attack. It is not flesh and blood with whom we do battle. This attack is from the pit of Hell, and causing many lives to resemble this place of origin. God cares about this. Women have been terribly victimized in this struggle, and this outrage has been well documented. However, the bitterness and misunderstanding between men and women today is a spell that must be broken, and such curses can only be broken by a divinely graced willingness to examine one’s own contribution to the mess, repent where necessary, and forgive the centuries of hurt and sin that got us here. One may

object, “Men have to repent too, you know!” And I take this as a given. But my point here is to help women who have the willingness to do so relate to men in such a way that the men will *want* to repent. This is how Christ treats us—He being the most unjustly wronged, but most forgiving person of all history. (A little understanding, forgiveness, and love works wonders.) My intention here is not to “blame the victim” but to remind everyone that men are also suffering. There is a cycle that must be broken. Women generally have greater facility in relational matters and I am merely trying to point out to women, from experience *how men feel*. Something I think many women want to know.

In my research, I have noticed that most women do not have the foggiest idea how men feel, or what men feel, and most men feel too vulnerable to tell them. Some women are so embittered as to no longer care. They may be beyond my reach. In any case, the fact remains that I know men who have actually *given up* on women—who have, after so many rebuffs, come to the conclusion that women simply *don't like* men. Men are far more vulnerable to women than women can even imagine. Men are sensitive to things in women that women are not even aware of. The slightest bit of sarcasm from a women in whom he's interested can cause him to call off the whole pursuit. A woman who thinks this weak on the man's part simply doesn't know how men are built and what men are feeling these days. We live in a culture that sinfully exploits women, but many women have retaliated by vengefully *diminishing* men with their tongues and attitudes. There is much healing needed on both sides.

While not seeking a slavish dependence, a man needs to be *needed* by the woman he loves, yet the constant message sent (*ad nauseam*) by the modern woman is “I'm strong and independent! I don't need a man!” Of course, this is a hollow and defensive cry and betrays her bitter disappointment in men—otherwise she wouldn't need to announce it so much—but men hear it at face value and retreat. A man may admire a woman for her strong independent qualities, but let her start telling him of them often enough and what he hears is “Well, she doesn't need me then!” and his eye begins to wander in search of someone who does. A man may respect a women for her independence, but he will cherish and love her for appreciating and needing (and in so doing *bringing out*) his manliness.

If a woman were to ask my advice on how to get a man interested in her, I would tell her to *pay attention* to him. *Listen* to him. The world in which a man lives is very cold and competitive, and when a woman creates a safe place where a man may open himself up, it is usually irresistible to him. But this requires reverence. Should she show the *slightest* hint of ridicule over what he says, or take him lightly he will turn to stone. Listen to what is important to him, his hopes and dreams. Most men when they talk like this are rather admirable and if she admires him she should not hide it. She need not make a show of it—which he would see through—it must be *real*. If it is *authentic* it is not “game playing”, but honesty. If she were interested in him in the

first place that implies some admiration, doesn't it? It would be game playing *not* to admire him. The old saying that men are only interested in "one thing" namely sex, is cynical and false. Men who become that way do so because they have given up on love and the hope that a woman would really receive him if he did open up to her.

What does a man look for in a woman? In a word, a home. To a little child, a woman (usually its mother) is a *place*. This is not to say a *thing*. It is to say a *home*. And only a person can be a home. This is what a man looks for in the woman who would be his wife. This is not to say that it is her job to raise him—certainly not—but the shelter she provides for him emotionally, where he may be himself, generally makes him *better*, stronger, more of a man, and inspires him to provide for her and shelter her physically. Indeed, to the point of laying down his life. If a woman gives a man what he really needs—genuine interest, understanding, and acceptance of him as he really is, he will ask her out, and keep coming back for more.

# 29

## Feminism Is...

(Previously Unpublished)



**M**any people are thrown into confusion when it comes down to arguments of feminism and the Church. The problem lies in the fact that in dealing with feminism and the Church we are dealing with sets of premises that are diametrically opposed. Feminism is a Marxist based ideology. Marxist ideologies view reality in terms of class struggle, and the fundamental issue at hand is power. Reality is perceived in terms of power: who is the oppressed class and who is the oppressor. Power may here be defined as the domination and manipulation of others. Feminists perceive themselves, often rightly, to have been victims of such treatment from men, but somehow view the Church as a male power structure which, in conspiracy with all else that is male, condones and perpetuates it. In fact, the Church views such domination and manipulation of others as sin. There is, of course, sin occurring among those that make up the Church and Her hierarchy. There are, of course, men who will twist the teachings of St. Paul on male headship in marriage to support their own sins of chauvinism, and “lording it over,” which Our Lord expressly forbade. These things do indeed cry out for justice, but the feminist misperceives forgiveness as condonement.

Marxist thought is atheistic, but has a kind of Utopia, a pipe-dream of heaven on earth which, when striven for, often creates a hell on earth, as we have seen, revealed for all to see replete with gulags, totalitarianism, and ruthless oppression in the name of liberation. The hideous paradox was seen a few years ago in Tianimen Square when the “People’s Army” fired on the people. At least the Soviet Union had the grace to collapse under its own weight. The concept of Utopia, being atheistic, denies Original Sin and the struggle is never over but merely continues as oppressed become the oppressor in a pathetic cycle of rage as George Orwell so aptly illustrated in his little allegory *Animal Farm*.

So, while feminism is, as a Marxist ideology, based on the order of power, Catholicism, on the other hand, is based on the order of *Love*, fully recognizing human frailty and evil and offering the antidote to it—namely Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross where the all-powerful One willingly embraced powerlessness and where the divine Author of life itself became human and entered fully into the evil of death and established redemption as a fact and forgiveness as a model to follow. So, when speaking of feminism and the Church one is speaking of apples and oranges—two different

things. Like oil and water they cannot mix. The fundamental differences are between pride and humility. Pride grasps in desperation, Love lets go in surrender.

Feminists mistakenly perceive the ordained ministeries of priest and bishop, for example, as positions of power instead of the positions service that they truly are. When undergoing ordination a man surrenders all worldly power (which is the only kind Marxist thought recognizes) and places himself completely in God's hands as a servant under obedience to his bishop or religious superior. He receives, of course, supernatural sacramental power, which is of course unrecognizable and dismissed by Marxist thought, but which requires such self-surrender in imitation of Christ's own self-emptying to be properly used.

One of the main ways feminists accuse men of oppressing women is through the use of sex. In embracing celibacy a man surrenders even that. (Although, again the Catholic understanding of sex rejects its use as a power play as sinful and instead presents it in terms of love and self-donation.) Anyway, the very things the feminist scorns as oppressive or repressive, namely service, self-sacrifice, poverty, sexual self-discipline are the very things the priest willingly embraces through ordination. The leftist ideologue (feminists, Marxists, etc.) under the order of power, views these qualities in terms of oppressive "social control" while the Catholic under the order of Love views such things as virtues, their very freedom.

Leftist radicals childishly view morality and belief in objective truth itself as little more than a means of oppression leveled against them by some all-powerful oppressor (namely reality) to restrict their freedom. Thus the reality and sacredness of a child in the womb is considered fair game to be sacrificed on this all-precious altar of (false) freedom. Others must lay down *their* lives for *me*, is the inverse of the Christian ideal laying down one's life for others.

# 30

## Greedy for God

(Previously Unpublished)



**I** am greedy when it comes to God. If there's more God I want Him—and there is always more God. The so-called “traditionalist/charismatic” debate is entirely miscast. It seem to always devolve to something about superiority/inferiority. As if someone who has the gift of tongues has something that someone without the gift of tongues doesn't. Well, he does. He has the gift of tongues! It is not a matter of inferiority or superiority or the one without being less adequate than the other. But what I don't understand is how someone who considers themselves a committed Catholic would not *want* everything God had to offer. We are either sold out or we're not. I once heard of a priest in the early days of the Charismatic Renewal who was told about the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. He said, “I don't know what it is but if there's a way to have more God I want it!” I don't understand how a Committed Catholic can have any other attitude. To be traditional and reject the charismata is not to be traditional enough! To be Charismatic and reject tradition is not to be charismatic enough!

If a Protestant comes up to me and sees a Rosary in my hand and says, “I don't need that!” I say, “I'm sure glad I have it.” If a Catholic hears me praying in tongues and comes up and says “I don't need that!” I say, “I'm sure glad I have it.” I, for one, am not the best judge of what I need, and if God wants to give me something more I'll take it. It doesn't make me better than anyone else, but I don't understand any other attitude in the face of God.

# 31

## Common Misunderstandings about Charismatics

(Previously Unpublished)



1. Do I have to raise my hands? This question always struck me as odd. It is usually asked by a person invited or arriving for the first time at a prayer meeting. One wonders if they imagine that members of the Prayer Police are going to be patrolling the aisles, spot them and say “Hey you! Why don’t you have your hands up?” Also, at healing services newcomers turn to their friends and say “Do I have to fall down?” I was always proud to be able to reassure them as a Catholic charismatic that they didn’t have to do anything they didn’t want to do, or didn’t feel comfortable doing. Or if I was evangelizing someone I always had confidence that I could send someone to a Catholic charismatic prayer meeting and know that they wouldn’t be *bothered* if they just wanted to sit quietly in the back and observe, before deciding on any participation. They would be greeted or warmly acknowledged but left alone if that were their preference. I know I always felt uncomfortable at a Protestant service where I felt they wouldn’t let me out the door unless I promised to come back next week. I always liked the fact that Catholics have a healthy respect for another’s space during worship—except liberals, of course, when they are trying to force community, but then, they’re incorrigible anyway.

2. “Oh, that’s just emotionalism!” This one makes me mad. Says who? Does the speaker have a spiritual X-ray of the assembly? There are theologians went to one prayer meeting in 1971 to observe and now think they have the whole thing figured out. One of the most profound changes people report after experiencing the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a profound new love of contemplation, and a profoundly deepened interior life. The whole person is affected, which includes the emotions. What may appear to be emotionalism may be just the merest overspill of something going on deep inside. Sure, maybe there are some people there just faking it, or people who are mentally ill. So What? Where else can they go to be accepted and loved—and even healed—but to Christ who inhabits the praises of His people?

3. “Oh, I went through my charismatic phase.” Oh really? And what are you into now? Towards a theology of story based on a mythobiographical model of marxist/feminist hermeneutics

in a setting of neo-Atlantian ecopoec base communities rooted in pelvic liberation? Really, Darling, I just adore Marxist thought, especially since their stunning victories in Eastern Europe.

4. “Those charismatics are passing off this ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’ as some sort of quasi eighth sacrament!” This one makes me real mad. It is a lie. This false accusation about charismatics was recently pulled on me by two guys who had gone Tridintine after bad experiences with charismatic renewal. I told them that I never heard any Catholic charismatic ever attempt to say any such thing in almost ten years of hanging around renewal leadership. They became very sheepish when I demanded they tell me if they ever had either while they were in the renewal. If anything renewal leaders have bent over backwards in life in the Spirit seminars and elsewhere to explain this is *not* the case. There is a kind of traditionalist who makes himself and his own tastes the measure of orthodoxy, and is unmoved by either facts or reason. This is neither tradition or orthodoxy but rather *ignorance* of tradition and orthodoxy if not outright ideology and pride.

5. “Charismatics! Oh, they’re fundamentalists!” This is what we’ve come to expect from *The National Catholic Reporter* crowd (or, as it’s affectionately known around campus, *The National Catholic Distorter*). Actually, this is what they consider believers. Or, at least, those who believe it *all*. I spent years at a dissenting institution arguing that Catholic charismatics were not fundamentalists but simply believed what the Church taught. To them it was the same thing. That is one reason I get annoyed when charismatics actually do behave like fundamentalists. It is not what we are. We are Catholics.

### **About the Author:**

*John Mallon received his bachelor's degree in theology from Boston College in 1989. While there he often wrote articles in the student papers in defense of the Catholic Faith. During the 1989-90 school year he and a friend took over the conservative campus newspaper, The Observer of Boston College, and transformed it into an orthodox Roman Catholic student newspaper which received national acclaim. This brought him to the attention of officials at Franciscan University of Steubenville who offered him The University's Disciples of Christ Scholarship for a master's degree in theology, which he earned in 1993. His work has appeared in The Washington Times, OpinionJournal.com, WorldNetDaily, the Boston Globe, Catholic World Report, The National Catholic Register, Crisis, The Boston Pilot, and The New Oxford Review. The story of his conversion appears in the book Spiritual Journeys, published by the Daughters of St. Paul. From 1994 to 1997 he served as Director of Communications for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, and editor of the archdiocesan newspaper the Sooner Catholic and a columnist for The Daily Oklahoman. From 1997 to the present he has been Contributing Editor for Inside the Vatican magazine, and currently does public relations for Human Life International.*

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