

March 19, 2012 – The Feast Day of St. Joseph

Dear Catechetical Leaders,

As we journey deeper into the season of Lent, I hope and pray that you are finding the blessings of the gift of reconciliation. This week's series of articles and websites offer several opportunities to reflect on the gift of prayer for others, the importance of religious freedom and the blessings of confession.

Peace,

Anne

Anne Frederick, Ed.D.

Pope Benedict XVI: Mary Invites Us to Pray for More Than Ourselves

Benedict XVI shifted the focus of his catechesis series on prayer by turning to teachings on prayer as found in Acts of the Apostles and the writings of St. Paul. He began his reflections with a look at Mary's prayer. "If the Church does not exist without Pentecost, neither does Pentecost exist without the Mother of Jesus, since she lived in a wholly unique way what the Church experiences each day under the action of the Holy Spirit," the Pope said in the general audience.



He considered Mary's prayer at the beginning of Jesus' life up through the beginning of the Church and beyond. "Because of her inner attitude of listening, Mary is able to interpret her own history, and to humbly acknowledge that it is the Lord who is acting," the Holy Father said in reference to the Annunciation. "In visiting her relative Elizabeth, she breaks forth into a prayer of praise and joy, and of celebration of the divine grace that filled her heart and her life, making her the Mother of the Lord (Luke 1:46-55)," he continued. "Praise, thanksgiving, joy: in the canticle of the Magnificat, Mary looks not only to what God has wrought in her, but also to what he has accomplished and continually accomplishes throughout history. In a famous commentary on the Magnificat, St. Ambrose summons us to have the same spirit of prayer. He writes: 'May the soul of Mary be in us to magnify the Lord; may the spirit of Mary be in us to exult in God.'"

The Pontiff reflected that the mention of Mary's presence with the Eleven following Christ's ascension into heaven is not a "simple historical annotation regarding a thing of the past; rather, it assumes a meaning of great value, for she shares with them what is most precious: the living memory of Jesus, in prayer; and she shares this mission of Jesus: to preserve the memory of Jesus and thereby to preserve His presence."

"Often," he noted, "prayer is dictated by difficult situations, by personal problems that lead us to turn to the Lord for light, comfort and help. Mary invites us to expand the dimensions of prayer, to turn to God not only in times of need and not only for ourselves, but also in an undivided, persevering, faithful way, with 'one heart and soul. ...human life passes through various phases of transition, which are often difficult and demanding and which require binding choices, renunciation and sacrifice," The full text is available at www.zenit.org/article-34458?l=english

Bishops Urge People Of Good Will To Serve As Peacemakers



Moved by the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, the U.S. bishops stand with Pope Benedict XVI and the bishops of the region as witnesses against violence and appeal for peace "for all peoples and nations in the Middle East," according to a statement issued by the Administrative Committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"While we have special bond with the suffering Christians throughout the Middle East, our care extends to all peoples of every faith and every nationality," said the bishops. "We urge a change of heart and mind on the part of all those who sow division and hatred. We plead with leaders of nations to show respect for the rights and dignity of all the citizens of their respective countries. We insist that peace, which is ultimately a gift of God, must be made the goal of every nation not only internally but in consort with all the nations and peoples of the region."

The bishops said Catholics, other Christians and all people of good will "must reach across the divisions that have separated them and become peacemakers" and refuse to be caught up in hatred, violence and death. Full text of the statement can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/news/2012/12-047.cfm>.

Bishop Urges Religious Education Leaders to Nourish Hope



Recently, Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of Tucson, Ariz., urged religious education coordinators and others to support one another and be hopeful even when the going gets tough. "Hope is the necessary breath of our ministry," he said. Bishop Kicanas, chairman of the board of Baltimore-based Catholic Relief Services, encouraged the hundreds gathered to be proud of their Catholic faith and the hope that only Jesus Christ can give. "The work you do is tough, it can be discouraging, [but] you are the rainbows of life. We are trying to work in a world that is craving hope, yet seems so far from an encounter with Jesus Christ," said Bishop Kicanas.

Bishop Kicanas urged the faithful to remember that "hope isn't just wishful thinking, hope is not frivolous, it is not mere optimism. Hope is what we live on, trustworthy hope that doesn't disappoint," Bishop Kicanas said. "Our number one hope is Jesus Christ." Bishop Kicanas

encouraged his audience to “remember that you are called and chosen, loved and blessed and if you hold onto that, you can never be discouraged, you can never lose hope.”

Bishops Promise ‘Vigorous Efforts’ Against HHS Violations Of Religious Freedom



The U.S. bishops are strongly united in their ongoing and determined efforts to protect religious freedom, the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) said in a March 14 statement. The full statement can be found at www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/upload/Admin-Religious-Freedom.pdf and www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/march-14-statement-on-religious-freedom-and-hhs-mandate.cfm

The bishops noted that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate that forces all private health plans to provide coverage of sterilization and contraceptives – including abortion-inducing drugs – called for an immediate response. Of particular concern, they said, are a religious exemption from the mandate that the bishops deem “arbitrarily narrow” and an “unspecified and dubious future ‘accommodation’” offered to other religious organizations that are denied the exemption.

The bishops said this dispute is not about access to contraceptives but about the government’s forcing the Church to provide them. Their concerns are not just for the Catholic Church but also for “those who recognize that their cherished beliefs may be next on the block.”

The Church has worked for universal healthcare in the United States since 1919, they added, and said the current issue “is not a Republican or Democratic, a conservative or liberal issue; it is an American issue. ...If this definition is allowed to stand, it will spread throughout federal law, weakening its healthy tradition of generous respect for religious freedom and diversity.”

The bishops said the government’s foray into church governance “where government has no legal competence or authority” is beyond disturbing. Those deemed by HHS not to be “religious employers,” the bishops said, “will be forced by government to violate their own teachings within their very own institutions. This is not only an injustice in itself, but it also undermines the effective proclamation of those teachings to the faithful and to the world.”

The bishops also called the HHS mandate “a violation of personal civil rights. They called for the Catholic faithful, and all people of good will throughout the nation to join them in prayer and penance “for our leaders and for the complete protection of our First Freedom – religious liberty.”

Controversy: It’s Time to Consider Quitting the Catholic Church

It was a full page ad in the *New York Times*, which by the way, made the advertiser, the Freedom from Religion Foundation, change the headline from *It’s Time to Quit the Catholic Church*.

Charles Lewis of the National Post wrote that this ad was proof “that anti-Catholic attacks are fair game.” He offers some great evidence to counteract the charges in the ad. [Charles Lewis](http://life.nationalpost.com/2012/03/09/charles-lewis-new-york-times-ad-proof-anti-catholic-attacks-are-fair-game/) (<http://life.nationalpost.com/2012/03/09/charles-lewis-new-york-times-ad-proof-anti-catholic-attacks-are-fair-game/>).

Bill Donohue, head of the U.S. Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, stated that “Never has there been a more vicious anti-Catholic advertisement in a prominent American newspaper than the one in today’s New York Times by Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). The demonization of Catholicism is palpable.” [Frontal Assault on Catholicism](http://www.catholicleague.org/frontal-assault-on-catholicism/) (<http://www.catholicleague.org/frontal-assault-on-catholicism/>)

America magazine critiqued the ad with these words: “The implication is that Catholics only stay because they haven’t had the smarts to see how their loyalty is “enabling” the church’s benighted and pernicious errors. The ad, with crude cartoon caricatures, presents its own panoply of errors. First off, there is the simple minded identification of the church with the hierarchy. Absent from consideration are worship, scripture, spirituality, prayer, theology, saints, works of mercy and the social gospel. God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ, the reality of the church’s life, are ignored or dismissed as remnants of “ideas uttered long ago by ignorant men.” [Quit the Church?](http://www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?entry_id=4984) (http://www.americamagazine.org/blog/entry.cfm?entry_id=4984).

FREE Professional Development Webinar – Tuesday, March 29



Ave Maria Press, in partnership with the **National Conference for Catechetical Leadership** and the National Association for Lay Ministry presents a series of free, online workshops on professional development for parish ministers. For a

complete listing of professional development webinars in this series please visit www.avemariapress.com/webinars

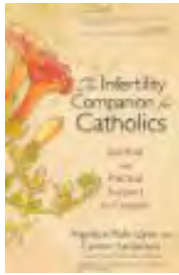


Infertility: Spiritual Care and Practical Support for Catholic Couples

This FREE webinar will be held on Tuesday, March 29 at 3:00 PM EDT. Infertility is a cross that affects one in six couples in the United States. Amid all of the emotions that come with experiencing infertility, Catholic couples face additional confusion, worry, and frustration as they explore the medical options available to them. As women who walked this road for years, authors Angelique Ruhi-López and Carmen Santamaría know firsthand the importance of having the support of the Church community. They will explore how parishes and dioceses can provide much-needed information and spiritual support to infertile couples and those who have experienced miscarriages.



SIGN UP!



Laura Flaherty, Founder of *Hannah's Heart Catholic Infertility Support Group* writes that "*The Infertility Companion for Catholics* provides a well-thought-out, comprehensive, and sensitive manual for Catholic couples struggling with the difficult cross of infertility."

You can purchase [*The Infertility Companion for Catholics: Spiritual and Practical Support for Couples*](#)

Step to stronger faith with five easy steps

This is an interesting reflection from Pastor Ron Branch who writes for the Daily Sentinel.

mydailysentinel.com While he has some good points, especially three and four, it definitely comes from a perspective other than Catholic. I have included a few excerpts. If interested, you can read the entire piece at http://www.mydailysentinel.com/view/full_story/17888376/article-Step-to-stronger-faith-with-five-easy-steps?instance=popular.

The common complaint among many in the Church is that their faith seems so weak so much of the time. These often point to Christians who exhibit great faith, and say something to the effect, “I wish I had the strong faith they have.” ...Utilizing the Scriptural evidence found in Romans 4, five easy steps for stronger faith are clarified.

1. The first easy step for stronger faith is simply this — remember your salvation experience.
2. Second, reciprocate God’s open plan for every Christian to have strong faith.
3. The third easy step calls on you to simply reflect on the heroes of faith. Ruminates on Abraham, who “was strong in faith.” Read Hebrews 11, which contains the Bible’s version of a Faith Hall of Fame.
4. Fourth, stronger faith is easily attained when you refer to the promises of God. After all, Paul points out that Abraham “staggered not at the promise of God.” God gives us so many promises you cannot beat it with a stick.
5. The fifth easy step for settling the concern for stronger faith simply calls on you to rehearse the passion of Christ, “who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.”

October Baby – Opens March 23



Eric Groth from *Outside da Box* posted this note and video clip.

In *October Baby*, Hannah (played by Rachel Hendrix) discovers she was adopted after surviving a failed abortion. On a journey, she encounters a former nurse (Jasmine Guy) who was in the hospital the day Hannah was born. Watch this scene now ...

http://youtu.be/cbw_JQoP1PM

How To Be Alone



This 4 ½ minute video pays tribute to the happy wholesomeness of being alone. Tanya Davis recites her poem about the ways of solitude, gently cataloging all the places where aloneness can bring freedom and healing.

Whether at a lunch counter, park bench, mountain trail, or on the edge of a dance floor - all you have to do is love yourself enough, to love being alone.

*It is only when we silent the blaring sounds of our daily existence
that we can finally hear the whispers of truth that life reveals to us,
as it stands knocking on the doorsteps of our hearts.*

- K.T. Jong -

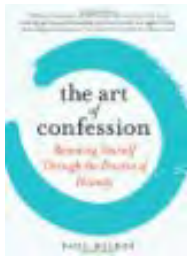
Face to Face



Some things are best said face to face. This is Outside da Box March 2012 Video Download of the Month. This four (4) minute video can be a useful Sacrament of Reconciliation conversation starter. Check it out at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GuNK6SjkEo>

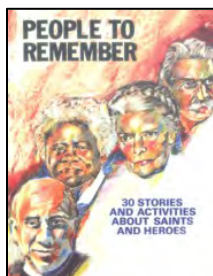
The Art of Confession

In the last few weeks I have found myself in waiting rooms with a TV tuned to one of the “*Judge* programs” and was amazed at what people were sharing about their lives. There was no shame, no embarrassment. So it is not surprising that the following blurb from Paul Wilkes’ latest book caught my attention. “*The Art of Confession* is an antidote to our age of oversharing, where we happily broadcast the minutest details of our lives in public, yet never find the time to discover the risk, relief, and ultimately the renewal that real, considered self-reflection offers.”



This is a secular book and while it may help someone recognize the grace of our sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation, it’s purpose is to remind people of the importance of taking inventory of your life. Fr. James Martin, SJ, who addressed those attending the NCCL Conference and Exposition last year, wrote that “Wilkes shows how confession can help deepen our relationship with God, heal our relationships with others, and move us toward becoming the people we are called to be.” If interested in this small and easy to read book with spiritual exercises and meditations, go to [*The Art of Confession: Renewing Yourself Through the Practice of Honesty*](#).

Revised Edition of *People to Remember*



Each of the chapters has a story about a person you will want to remember, an activity, a prayer and questions to ponder. Skillfully written by Janaan Manternach and the late Carl Pfeifer and revised by Joyce A. Crider. This book is intended to be enjoyed by middle school youngsters and to be used by all catechists and parents as a tool for teaching how selected saints and heroes have put their faith into action. Permission to copy activity pages is given. Visit

www.vdpublishing.net for more information, samples pages and to order copies.

9 year old Autistic Social Entrepreneur – *I want to be able to help...*



This is just a good story about “loving your neighbor as yourself.” Kent Melville's father was skeptical when his son first said that he wanted to use the profits from his successful summer lemonade stand to start his own soda company. Aaron Melville, who teaches business classes at a local college, did not believe his 9-year-old autistic son was ready to run his own business. Kent was determined to do something to help others with autism, however, which inspired his father to reconsider. Aaron

described on a [Facebook page](#) for the organization, why he decided to help his son start Kent's Soda after initially encouraging him to wait until he was older.

Kent pondered that for a minute. He then looked at me and said "Dad, I have everything I need right now, but there are lots of other kids with autism that can't do the things they want or need. I want to be able to help them get some of the things they want with the money we earn. Can't we start now? I don't want to wait." I had never been prouder. With a tear of gratitude in my eye, I agreed.

Though he has enlisted the help of his parents, students at a local community college, and members of the faculty, [The Caledonian Record](#) describes how the young entrepreneur is taking charge of his business.

Kent has chosen the flavors himself, and they currently include root beer, orange, lemonade, raspberry limeade, grape, strawberry and cream soda. Kent plans to add an additional flavor each year. The first one will be root beer mixed with orange.

He has come up with a marketing plans that will include a giant root beer volcano, and rejects others ideas when he doesn't agree with them. One proposal suggested targeting a market of soda pop buyers in an age group from 13 to 24. Kent's response was, "What? Are you stupid? That would mean I couldn't drink my own soda." The story was originally published by *Huffington Post*, [Original Story](#), Mar 15, 2012

Sublimation and the Sublime – Ron Rolheiser



I identified with much of what Fr. Ron wrote about this past Sunday. In fact, the other evening at dinner, I noted how we have so few things that are associated with various seasons. We can get almost all fruit during any time of the year. Someone did mention that the fruit may not be as delectable during the “off season.” I noted how delighted I was that I had seen kumquats in the grocery store and so I knew that Easter was on its way. This fruit is one of the few remaining items that I can only purchase

around Easter time and I so appreciate it. Here are some excerpts from his reflection. To read the entire column, you will need to go to Fr. Ron's website at www.ronrolheiser.com.

...Many of our feasts fall flat because there hasn't been a previous fast. In times past, there was generally a long fast leading up to a feast, and then a joyous celebration followed. Today, we've reversed that, there is a long celebration leading up to the feast and a fast afterwards.

...Traditionally the build-up was towards the feast, celebration came afterwards. Today the feast is first, the fast comes after. We are poorer for that. Without a previous fast there isn't much sublimity in the feast.

A colleague of mine likes to say that our society knows how to anticipate an event, but not how to sustain it. That's only partially true. It's so much that we do not know how to sustain something; we don't know how to properly anticipate it. We mix the anticipation with the celebration itself because we find it hard to live in inconsummation and unfulfilled tension without moving towards resolving it. Longing and fasting are not our strong points, neither is feasting. Because we can't build properly towards a feast, we can't celebrate it properly either.

Celebration survives on paradox: To feast, we must first fast: to come to true consummation, we must first live in chastity; and to taste specialness, we must first have a sense of what's ordinary.

...I am old enough to have known another time. Like our own, that time too had its faults, but it also had some strengths. One of its strengths was its belief, a lived belief, that feasting depends upon prior fasting and that the sublime demands a prior sublimation. I have clear memories of the Lenten seasons of my childhood. How strict that season was then! Fast and renunciation: no weddings, no dances, few parties, few drinks, desserts only on Sundays, and generally less of everything that constitutes specialness and celebration. Churches were draped in purple. The colors were dark and the mood was penitential, but the feast that followed, Easter, was indeed special!

Perhaps this is mostly nostalgia speaking; after all, I was young then, naive and deprived, and able to meet Easter and other celebrations with a hungrier spirit. That may be, but the specialness that surrounded feasts has died for another reason, namely, we do not anticipate them properly anymore. We short-circuit fasting, inconsummation, and the prerequisite longing. Simply put, how can Christmas be special when we arrive at December 25th exhausted from weeks of Christmas parties? How can Easter be special when we've treated Lent just like any other season? How, indeed, can anything be sublime when we have lost our capacity for sublimation?

Today the absence of genuine specialness and enjoyment within our lives is due in a large part to the breakdown of this rhythm. ... to celebrate Easter without first fasting, to short-circuit longing in any area, is, like sleeping with the bride before the wedding, a fault in chastity. All premature experience has the effect of draining us of great enthusiasm and

great expectations (which can only be built up through sublimation, tension, and painful waiting).

It's lent. If we use this season to fast, to intensify longing, to raise our psychic temperatures, and to learn what kinds of gestation can develop within the crucible of chastity, then the feast that follows will have a chance of being sublime.

Prayer – A Poem Heard on The Writer's Almanac, Friday, March 16, 2012

Prayer

by Marie Howe

Every day I want to speak with you. And every day something more important
calls for my attention—the drugstore, the beauty products, the luggage

I need to buy for the trip.
Even now I can hardly sit here

among the falling piles of paper and clothing, the garbage trucks outside
already screeching and banging.

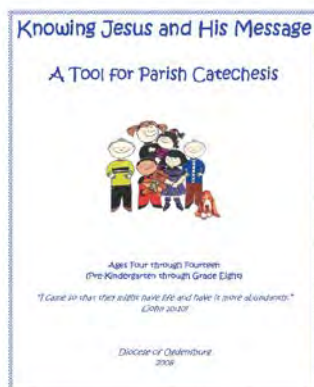
The mystics say you are as close as my own breath.
Why do I flee from you?

My days and nights pour through me like complaints
and become a story I forgot to tell.

Help me. Even as I write these words I am planning
to rise from the chair as soon as I finish this sentence.

"Prayer" by Marie Howe, from *The Kingdom of Ordinary Time*. © W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.

Knowing Jesus and His Message – Conociendo a Jesús y su Mensaje



This is an excellent resource. Immediately following the Learning Session on this resources at the NCCL Conference and Exposition in Atlanta, the NCCL Bookstore sold over twenty



(20) copies of the book in English and Spanish.

Based on the protocol used to evaluate elementary religion series, the book used fifteen standards for Pre-K and K through Grades 7 & 8. Included with the binder is a CD with all the materials available for duplication. This is an ideal help for any elementary catechist regardless of the series you might be using. Check out the following and use the Order Form.

- **PREFACE - Knowing Jesus and His Message** (<http://tiny.cc/nysql>)
- **EXPLANATION - Knowing Jesus and His Message** (<http://tiny.cc/xuvw8>)
- **Standards - Explained** (<http://tiny.cc/65wmc>)
- **Normas y Fundamentos** (<http://tiny.cc/zfrg2>)
- **ORDER FORM - Knowing Jesus and His Message** (<http://tiny.cc/9j0mb>)

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