NOTES FROM THE CHAPLAIN

In an academic speech on September 12th, Pope Benedict XVI quoted from a conversation held in the 1390s between the Christian emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated, but unnamed, Persian scholar on the subject of Christianity and Islam and the truth of both. Here is what the Holy Father said (as reported by the BBC):

“I was reminded of all this recently, when I read... of part of the dialogue carried on—perhaps in 1391 in the winter barracks near Ankara—by the erudite Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both.

“In the seventh conversation... the emperor touches on the theme of the holy war. Without descending to details, such as the difference in treatment accorded to those who have the ‘Book’ and the ‘infidels,’ he addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general, saying: ‘Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.’

“The emperor, after having expressed himself so forcefully, goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul. ‘God,’ he says, ‘is not pleased by blood—and not acting reasonably is contrary to God’s nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats.’”

What the emperor was doing was throwing the ball back in the Muslim’s court. A response might have said “yes, your perception is correct and we must both deal with that” or “your assessment is wrong and here is how it is wrong” or, “your analysis is correct but we are different now (or we are changing now) and here is what we are now doing.” Perhaps there was a Muslim response in the 14th century, which we do not have.

In reaction to the Pope’s speech, after Friday prayers Muslims around the world took to the streets, demanding apologies, burning an effigy of the Holy Father, and using all manner of vituperative language. Parliaments enacted resolutions condemning the Pope and ambassadors to the Vatican were recalled. A nun was murdered and churches were vandalized. Now it may be that a pure and peaceful Islam has been taken hostage by 21st century thugs. There are people trying to make that point. But on the face of it the reaction to the Pope’s speech seems to support the assertion that the 14th century Manuel Paleologus was right.

In its statement regarding the controversy over the Holy Father’s speech, the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone sought to assure Muslims, and everyone else, that “the position of the
Pope concerning Islam is unequivocally that expressed by the conciliar document *Nostra Aetate.* And the statement, as translated into English and picked up by the Catholic press in this country, quoted the Vatican Council document as saying “The Church also regards the Muslims with esteem. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in himself, merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men.” I do not possess the Vatican II documents in Latin, or with Latin and English on facing pages. The translation I have of *Nostra Aetate* is from an edition recommended to me at the time I was preparing for ordination. It was edited by Austin Flannery, OP. But it says something different about the God Muslims worship: “The church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, etc.” *Nostra Aetate* either says “they adore the one God, or “they worship God, who is one.” It is also possible the official text says something else! But the whole question of just what kind of God the Muslims worship has once again been brought into tragic focus by recent events. In April, 1991 I wrote the following in my parish paper.

“We have wondered about this. Is the God of the Old and New Testaments the deity of all monotheistic religions? Romans 1:19-20 shows some awareness of the eternal power and divine grace of God as possible to any human being through the created order. This awareness underlies many religious faiths. But Romans 1:18 and 21-23 speak of how man has suppressed the truth of the general revelation through creation, and created gods of his own. Saint Paul specifies idols in this passage, and elsewhere in his epistles he condemns them as demonic. Is it correct to identify God with Allah as understood by the Muslims? I think not. Islam deliberately denies the Trinitarian nature of God as revealed in the New Testament. It also deliberately denies a concept of God requiring atonement through the Cross of Christ. And of course Islam is not alone in doing this. From a Biblical viewpoint, Islam has, in effect, created a deity of its own based on a conscious rejection of God’s complete revelation in Christ. To reject the full revelation of God in Christ and, in effect, to create a deity of a different nature, even in a monotheistic context, is surely idolatrous from a Biblical standpoint.”

Perhaps it should only be added that given the long-standing practice of Islam to inflict capital punishment on those who seek to convert to Christianity, the official position of Muslims is that Allah is indeed a different god.

Is there a way forward? Pope Benedict thinks there is. At a meeting with the ambassadors to the Holy See from Muslim countries (the ambassadors all rose to their feet and warmly applauded the Pope, a fact which may have been missed in the secular American press) the Holy Father said “respect and dialogue require reciprocity in all spheres, especially in that which concerns basic freedoms, more particularly religious freedom.”

In the gospel, when Our Lord Jesus says “how much more will your Heavenly Father give us? “He is making what in logic is called an “a fortiori” argument. “A fortiori” means “for a still stronger reason.” If imperfect people give good things to their children, Jesus says, how much more will our Perfect Father in Heaven give good things to all of us?

It is part of Catholic teaching that Divine relationships are the foundation of human relationships. We are made in the image and likeness of God, Who is a Holy Trinity. Our relationships with each other are the earthly symbol and expression of the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There are human fathers and mothers because God is creative, and we can have friends because God is our friend.

Relationships are meant to be tested. Otherwise, what good are they? We have a saying: “a friend in need is a friend indeed.” If a father has a son who is in trouble we’ll soon see what kind of a father he is. God has so designed us that a boy should naturally turn to his father for sympathy and understanding. Only in a sinful and therefore perverse and distorted world does this not happen.

You and I count on the Sacraments not because we say the words carefully following a particular formula with precision. We depend on the Sacraments because of our belief in the character of God Who promises to come to us in this way. The whole sacramental system has its foundation in the belief that God knows His children’s needs and His love supplies what we need. Christians are necessarily wondering what kind of a character Allah is.

Maybe we can’t, and shouldn’t, talk about religion with the Muslims. Pope Benedict was not disparaging Islam. But he was saying that Christians and Muslims have to be able
to talk without people taking to the streets. The discussion can be about living peacefully, side by side, unless the Muslims don’t want that either.

Father Bradford

INTRODUCER TO CHRIST

Saint Andrew was among the first to be called by Jesus to be a disciple. We know very little about Andrew, and what we do know, from the Bible, and even from the legends, does not describe a spectacular but an average person.

Two things stand out as qualities in Andrew, qualities which our Lord Jesus saw in choosing this man to be one of the Twelve. First, Andrew had a keen interest in things which seemed trivial to others. And second, he had a concern for people as individuals.

You will remember that when Our Lord tested St Philip asking how they could feed five thousand, Philip saw only the size of the crowd and could offer no suggestion. Andrew saw the crowd as individuals, and thereby was able to point out the boy with the five loaves and two fish. With that, Jesus fed the multitude.

Then again there was the earlier episode when Andrew found Jesus. The first thing which occurred to this new disciple was to tell his brother Simon Peter about the Lord.

Too often we live and act in the age of the big gesture. Everything must be spectacular or we disregard it. We fail to recognize the importance of the small and the ordinary, even though the scriptures tell us that God often works by placing inconspicuous opportunities before us. When the Three Wise Men arrived in Jerusalem, the smart money said they had come to the right place. But the Christ Child was in Bethlehem, and it took a while to figure that out.

We can become so involved in world-sweeping issues that we forget the small matters such as the lack of faith in our next door neighbors, social acquaintances, and sometimes even under our own roof. We want to speak in terms of numbers and volume and fail to give thought to our relationships with individual persons.

Andrew is the perfect antidote for all that. After he met Christ, Andrew didn’t think of the grand world-sweep of the Christian religion. He thought of his own brother. And in a small detail, he found the place where God was willing to work a miracle.


SHORT NOTES

Thank you to Fr James O’Driscoll who joined us for St Michael’s Day and was deacon at the Mass. He also attended our Anglican Evensong at Stonehill College in late September. Fr O’Driscoll is now parochial vicar in Holy Family Parish in Rockland.

Thanks too go to Eva Murphy for organizing a reception after the St Michael’s Day Mass, and to all who brought refreshments.

Confirmation Classes have been offered for Thursday evenings at 7:00pm in the rectory. A syllabus is available.

An Every Member Canvass is underway. Pledge cards have been sent to every member and to our parish paper readers. In most years our readers at a distance contribute about $2000, for which we are grateful.

Thanksgiving Day is Thursday November 24th. Mass is at 10:30am in the Convent Chapel.

Advent Sunday is December 3rd. It is the start of a new church year. We begin lectionary cycle “C” which takes its Mass gospels primarily from the Gospel of St Luke. Now is the time to purchase Advent wreath supplies/candles/calendars. The Magnificat Advent Companion will be for sale at $3.00 in mid-November, available in the rear of the chapel.

The Age of the Anti-Catholic Catholic

The Archbishop of Denver, Colorado, His Grace Charles Chaput, recently made an observation on the dynamic of anti-Catholicism in the United States today. “A new and peculiar kind of Catholicism,” he called it. “Some of the worst anti-Catholics are angry disaffected Catholics” (Quoted in “No Limitations”, Catholic World Report; May, 2006).
Looking at the scene here in “Catholic Boston”, Archbishop Chaput’s opinion would seem to be born out. Among the elected Catholic officials and their entourages, the Catholics who work in the social service agencies, the Catholics who are in the media, it seems that there is no shortage of individuals who still insist on identifying themselves as Catholics even as they reject the very basis for being a Catholic.

What is going on here? Defectors from the church for another religion or “lapsed Catholics” have always been a feature of the Catholic experience in the United States, particularly in areas with a heavy Catholic population such as Massachusetts is. Nobody is forced to remain a Catholic who no longer believes in the religion and wants to disassociate himself from it. Anti-clericalism has always been a reality, although historically much less here in the U.S. than in some of the Catholic countries of Europe. But the anti-Catholic Catholic is a new breed.

The anti-Catholic Catholic declares that he will define for himself what it means to be a good Catholic, usually in the vaguest humanitarian terms of “helping people like Jesus told us to”. He will assert that the real religion has nothing to do with what the official Catholic Church teaches is good or evil, moral or immoral. An extreme example of this can be found in the answer which a Catholic teen-aged boy gave to the authors of Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers; he told them that the Church has no teaching on human sexual behavior (Hmm. How did he ever get that idea?).

The anti-Catholic Catholic might even be very attached to a particular parish or quasi-parish church "community", but often such loyalty is to the character of the particular group running that parish and does not extend beyond it to the larger church. In fact the anti-Catholic Catholic might even contrast his “vibrant parish” to the rest of the (to his mind) “dying” church, as a validation of his opinion. Finally, the anti-Catholic is fond of the metaphors of organic growth and evolution; e.g., he has grown beyond the old, narrow-minded religion of past generations; people who are “fundamentalist” Catholics are in an infantile spiritual state - they refuse to “grow up” and have an “adult” (that is, the anti-Catholic) kind of “Catholicism”.

This new kind of anti-Catholicism from the anti-Catholic Catholic is going to be a huge problem for the foreseeable future. It diminishes the impact of the pro-life Catholic witness to society because it is undermined by, “Well, I’m a Catholic too and I don’t agree at all with that!” But eventually it will be clear once again that there are certain ideas and lifestyles which one cannot at all hold and still be a good Catholic.

FR. CHARLES J. HIGGINS
Fr Higgins is Parochial Vicar in St Theresa of Ávila Parish and frequently visits the Anglican Use as our celebrant or preacher. This article appeared in the July, 2006 issue of the newsletter of The Helpers of God's Precious Infants.

“As in heaven Thy will is punctually performed, so may it be done on earth by all creatures, particularly in me and by me.”

ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY

ALL SAINTS' DAY
Wednesday, November 1, 2006
Holy Day of Obligation
Procession, Solemn Mass & Sermon
7:30pm
Convent Chapel

THE BRITISH MARTYRS

OVER the years 200 men and women have been beatified for their heroic witness to the Catholic Faith in the British Isles during and after the Protestant Reformation. Here we continue brief mention of some of these individual martyrs.

BLESSED EDWARD BURDEN
Priest and Martyr (1540-1588)

After studying at Oxford University’s Trinity College, Edward Burden, of County Durham, England, journeyed to the continent to
Prepare for the Catholic priesthood. He was ordained in Douai, France, in 1584 and set out for England two years later. But after spending the following two years serving Catholics in Yorkshire, Father Burden was arrested by the Protestant Elizabethan authorities. While awaiting his fate in a York prison, he saw a fellow Catholic priest incarcerated with him, (Blessed) Robert Dalby, led away to be put on trial. Envious of the latter’s prospects of imminent martyrdom, Father Burden complained, “Shall I always lie here like a beast while my brother hastens to his reward? Truly, I am unworthy of such glory as to suffer for Christ.” But it was not long before Father Burden was himself tried and condemned to death for his priesthood. On November 29, 1588, he was executed by drawing and quartering in York.

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BLESSED NICHOLAS POSTGATE
Priest and Martyr (1597-1679)

The son of devoutly Catholic parents, Nicholas Postgate, of Egton Bridge, England, was ordained to the priesthood in Douai, France, in 1628. Returning to England two years later, he spent the next forty-nine years ministering to the Catholics of Yorkshire. He is credited with having converted nearly a thousand people to the Catholic faith. When he was in his early eighties, Father Postgate was betrayed to the English Protestant authorities by an informer. Condemned to death for being a priest, he was subjected to a brutal execution by drawing and quartering.

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Holy dying: the sinner, having confessed, and trusting in the sacrifice of Christ, commits his soul (the tiny naked figure emerging from the head) to the angels, while frustrated demons howl with disappointment: Paris, 1493.

All Souls’ Day
Thursday, November 2, 2006
Solemn Requiem Mass
7:30pm
Chapel of St Theresa of Ávila Church
West Roxbury

The devotion to the memory of the dead is one of the most beautiful expressions of the Catholic spirit.

BLESSED JOHN XXIII

Solemnity of Christ the King
Sunday, November 26, 2006
Solemn Mass & Sermon
10:30am
Convent Chapel
Solemn Evensong & Benediction
5:00pm
Chapel of St Theresa of Ávila Church
The Rev. Thomas J. Powers, preaching
Pastor, St Maria Goretti Parish, Lynnfield

CHRIST THE KING

Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified son of a carpenter, is so intrinsically king that the title “king” has actually become his name. By calling ourselves Christians, we label ourselves as followers of the king, as people who recognize him as their king. But we can understand
properly what the kingship of Jesus Christ means only if we trace its origin in the Old Testament, where we immediately discover a surprising fact. It is obvious that God did not intend Israel to have a kingdom. The kingdom was, in fact, a result of Israel’s rebellion against God and against his prophets, a defection from the original will of God. The law was to be Israel’s king, and, through the law, God himself. . . . But Israel was jealous of the neighboring peoples with their powerful kings. . . . Surprisingly, God yielded to Israel’s obstinacy and so devised a new kind of kingship for them. The son of David, the king, is Jesus; in him God entered humanity and espoused it to himself. If we look closely, we shall discover that this is, in fact, the usual form of the divine activity in relation to mankind. God does not have a fixed plan that he must carry out; on the contrary, he has many different ways of finding man and even of turning his wrong ways into right ways. We can see that, for instance, in the case of Adam, whose fault became a happy fault, and we see it again in all the twisted ways of history. This, then, is God’s kingship—a love that is impregnable and an inventiveness that finds man by ways that are always new. For us, consequently, God’s kingship means that we must have an unshakable confidence. For this is still true and is applicable to every single life: no one has reason to fear or to capitulate. God can always be found.

POPE BENEDICT XVI


SAINT OF THE MONTH

St. Charles Borromeo (1538-1584)

November 4th

Charles Borromeo was an influential bishop, reformer, and educator. Drawn to a religious vocation and influenced by Benedictines in his early education, he pursued studies in law (civil and canon) in Milan and Pavia.

In 1559 his uncle Pope Pius IV (his mother’s brother Cardinal Gian Angelo de’ Medici) appointed him as administrator of the diocese of Milan and as his secretary of state, before Charles Borromeo was even ordained a priest!

He convinced his uncle to reconvene the Council of Trent in 1562 and took an active role in its work of reform, in the Catechism, liturgy, and sacred music. He later convened provincial councils and diocesan synods to effect these reforms. He was ordained a priest in 1563 and shortly thereafter, consecrated Bishop of Milan. His administrative responsibilities under his uncle required his residing in Rome, but after Pope Pius IV’s death in 1565, Charles Borromeo secured permission to live in Milan.

He had come from a wealthy family of nobility (Count Gilbert Borromeo and Margaret de’ Medici, of the area near Lake Maggiore). In later life he adopted a rule to live simply and give generously to the poor. In the 1570s during a period of famine and plague, he worked tirelessly and even went into debt to provide relief for victims. He also helped to establish seminaries to educate future priests and a confraternity to encourage catechesis for children.

In 1578 he established a religious order, the Oblates of St. Ambrose (a well known bishop of Milan); it is now the Oblates of St. Charles (est.1848).

He died on the night of November 3-4, 1584 and was buried in the cathedral of Milan. He was canonized in 1610 by Pope Paul V.

Pope John XXIII chose St. Charles Borromeo for special devotion, in part because he had edited some of the saint’s writings during his years as a scholar and historian.

SAINT CECELIA

Virgin and Martyr

Like so many Christian ladies of her time, Saint Cecilia had taken, in imitation of our blessed Lady, a vow of perpetual virginity. . . . It would be hard to estimate, I think, how much of its unpopularity in Roman society the Christian faith owed to its tradition of virginity. You know the horror the world
feels when somebody becomes a Catholic, you know the horror the world feels when somebody goes into a convent: combine those two, and transplant them into a society which is heathen and regards the Christian religion as a dangerous and debased cult and you will realize what the pagans thought of a resolution like Saint Cecilia’s.

Virginity is an ideal which the pagans had no right to misunderstand. For, in theory, they, too, honored it, and it should have commended itself to their heathen instinct for sacrifice. For the point of a sacrifice is that the victim should be spotless, the best of its kind. You must offer not what you can well afford to spare, but what will cost you something. The victim must be young, not old; perfect, not mutilated; pure bred, not of inferior stock: it is the fairest flower that must wither in front of the statue. That is the pagan idea of sacrifice, and the Christian idea of sacrifice is based on the same principle. In order to give up something to God, we forgo, not the sinful pleasures which we have no right to, in any case, but the lawful pleasures which he has given us to enjoy if we will. And it is not broken hearts or wasted careers that produce vocations to the religious life. It is the young, the attractive, the brilliant, those who have the fullest life and the highest hopes before them, who make the perfect sacrifice when they devote themselves to almighty God in holy religion.

**APOSTLE OF UNITY**

In designing his Church God worked with such skill that in the fullness of time it would resemble a single great family embracing all men. It can be identified, as we know, by certain distinctive characteristics, notably its universality and unity.

Christ the Lord passed on to his apostles the task he had received from the Father: I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. He wanted the apostles as a body to be intimately bound together, first by the inner tie of the same faith and love which flows into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, and, second, by the external tie of authority exercised by one apostle over the others. For this he assigned the primacy to Peter, the source and visible basis of their unity for all time. So that the unity and agreement among them would endure, God wisely stamped them, one might say, with the mark of holiness and martyrdom.

Both these distinctions fell to Josaphat, archbishop of Polock of the Slavonic rite of the Eastern Church. He is rightly looked upon as the great glory and strength of the Eastern Rite Slavs. Few have brought them greater honor or contributed more to their spiritual welfare than Josaphat, their pastor and apostle, especially when he gave his life as a martyr for the unity of the Church. He felt, in fact, that God had inspired him to restore worldwide unity to the Church and he realized that his greatest chance of success lay in preserving the Slavonic rite and Saint Basil’s rule of monastic life within the one universal Church.

**Conrad the Second**

Concerned mainly with seeing his own people reunited to the See of Peter, he sought out every available argument which would foster and maintain Church unity. His best arguments were drawn from liturgical books, sanctioned by the Fathers of the Church, which were in common use among Eastern Christians, including the dissenters. Thus thoroughly prepared, he set out to restore the unity of the Church. A forceful man of fine sensibilities, he met with such success that his opponents dubbed him “the thief of souls.”

**Pope Pius XI**

From the Encyclical Letter Eleusinam Dei. Josaphat (1580-1623) was archbishop of Polotsk, one of those places in white Russia that over the course of history changed hands numerous times. Josaphat was a popular preacher in the cause of extending the union with Rome which had taken place at Kiev in 1595. But he also maintained the right of Byzantine clergy to keep local customs. Josaphat was martyred for the faith in 1623 and canonized in 1867. His feast day is November 12.

**The Congregation of Saint Athanasius,**

The Revd. Richard Sterling Bradford, Chaplain

Sunday Mass 10:30am
St. Theresa Convent Chapel
10 St. Theresa Ave.
West Roxbury, Mass.

Fellowship and Coffee in the Lounge after Mass

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