

St. Agnes Catechetical Review

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From Sabrina's Desk

Christmas in a Nutshell

The angel's words broke through the haze
of sin that hovered on the world.

The passion of a woman's heart
beat with an echoing *fiat*.

Gestation took the common course:
Nine months of loving nurturance:
A lowly virgin giving birth;
Forgiveness has the upper hand.

Each year we celebrate this Gift;
Redemptive Love takes hold our hearts.
Our growth in love is unwrapped more,
becoming richer with our years.

Salvation is God's precious gift
to bring us back to his pure Heart.
Consent is realized in our lives
by birthing Christ anew each day.

Sabrina Schmidt

Holy Humor

From *The Mammoth Book of 10,000 Zingers* by Geoff Tibballs:

Is being a telephone operator a job or a profession? Actually it's more like a calling.

How can you tell when your computer's getting old? It loses its memory.

I can hear music coming from my printer. I think the paper's

jamming again.

Why did the idiot take his computer to the shoe shop? Because he had been told to re-boot it.

What is a cursor? Someone who is having problems with his computer.

Your ideal computer comes on the market about two

days after you bought some other computer.

Did you hear about the man who took his laptop for a run so he could jog his memory?



FROM THE CATECHISM

Baptism signifies and actually brings about death to sin and entry into the life of the Most Holy Trinity through configuration to the Paschal mystery of Christ (#1239).

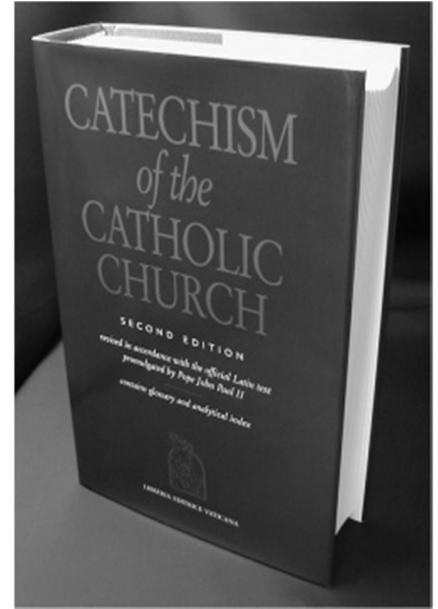
The anointing with the sacred chrism, perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, who has become a Christian, that is, one “anointed” by the Holy Spirit, incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king (#1241).

The white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has “put on Christ,” has risen with Christ. The candle, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In him the baptized are the “light of the world” (#1243).

The catechumenate, or formation of catechumens, aims at bringing their conversion and faith to maturity, in response to the divine initiative and in union with the ecclesial community (#1248).

Baptism is the sacrament of faith. But faith needs the community of believers. It is only within the faith of the of the Church that each of the faithful can believe. The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop (#1253).

The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation (#1257).



COME TO THE FEAST!

December 6 is the second Sunday in Advent:

Readings:

First: Baruch 5:1-9

Psalm 126

Second: Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

What good work might Paul praise in you? How will God bring it to completion? Are you able to proclaim the Gospel as John the Baptist did? If not, what is stopping you?

December 8 is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception:

Readings:

First: Genesis 3:9-15, 20

Psalm 98

Second: Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

What are you doing to keep improving yourself? How can Mary be an example or aid for you?

December 13 is the third Sunday in Advent:

Readings:

First: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Psalm Isaiah 12

Second: Philippians 4:4-7

Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

What in you will God sing about joyfully? What sins need some attention in your life?

December 20 is the fourth Sunday in Advent:

Readings:

First: Micah 5:1-4a

Psalm 80

Second: Hebrews 10:5-10

Gospel: Luke 1:39-45

Do you make an offering of yourself to God daily? If not, think about doing it. How do you do God's will? Look to Mary as an example.

December 25 is Christmas Day:

Readings:

First: Isaiah 52:7-10

Psalm 98

Second: Hebrews 1:1-6

Gospel: John 1:1-18

How do you spread the joy of Jesus' birth? May you have a truly blessed Christmas!!!

December 27 is the Feast of the Holy Family:

Readings:

First: 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28

Psalm 84

Second: 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24

Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

Say a prayer of gratitude for your parents.

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF POPES

From *Dominum et Vivificantem* by Saint Pope John Paul II:

The "image of God," consisting in rationality and freedom, expresses the greatness and dignity of the human subject, who is a person. But this personal subject is also always a creature: in his existence and essence he depends on the Creator (36.1).

The Holy Spirit, who in the words of Jesus "convinces concerning sin," is the love of the Father and the Son, and as such is the Trinitarian gift, and at the same time the eternal source of every divine giving of gifts to

creatures (39.3).

The conscience is "the voice of God," even when man recognizes in it nothing more than the principle of the moral order which it is not humanly possible to doubt, even without any direct reference to the Creator (43.1).

A result of an upright conscience is, first of all, to call good and evil by their proper name (43.3).

We know that conscience not only commands and forbids but also judges in the light of interior dictates and prohibitions. It is

also the source of remorse: man suffers interiorly because of the evil he has committed (45.1).

In the depths of its divine-human mystery, conversion means the breaking of every fetter by which sin binds man to the whole of the mystery of iniquity. Those who are converted, therefore, are led by the Holy Spirit out of the range of the "judgment," and introduced into that righteousness which is in Christ Jesus, and is in him precisely because he receives it from the Father, as a reflection of the holiness of the Trinity (48.2).



VIA VATICAN II

From the *Introduction to the Rite of Anointing of the Sick and the Pastoral Care of the Sick (Hominum dolores)*:

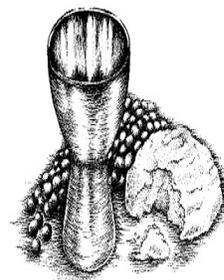
Christians, like other people, suffer illness and pain, but their faith helps them to achieve a better understanding of the mystery of suffering and to bear their pain with greater fortitude. Christ's words show them that illness has a meaning and a value for their own salvation and that of the world (#1).

While sickness is closely connected with man's sinful state, it would be wrong to see it as punishment on man for his sins (#2).

It is part of God's plan that we should combat all illness and should prudently seek the blessings of good health. We will thus be able to play our part in secular society and in the Church. However, we should always be willing to complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the

salvation of the world, as we look towards the liberation of all creation in the glory of the song of God (#3).

The sacrament of anointing is the prolongation of the concern which, as the gospels tell us, our Lord himself showed for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the sick and which he commended to his followers. Christ is the source of the sacrament (#5).



MYSTICAL MEANDERINGS

Besides our mystics, there are others, some Protestant, who have written about the virtues. Here are some of their thoughts:

The unthankful heart discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and, as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings (Henry Ward Beecher).

Blessed are those who can give without remembering and take without forgetting (Elizabeth Bibesco).

Each day comes bearing its own gifts. Untie the ribbons (Ruth Ann Schabacker).

Trouble is only opportunity in work clothes (Henry Kaiser).

God brings men into deep waters not to drown them, but to cleanse them (Aughey).

Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy (Abraham Heschel).

Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating; there is really no such thing as bad

weather, only different kinds of good weather (John Ruskin).

He who limps still walks (Stanislaw Lec).

He is a man of sense who does not grieve for what he has not, but rejoices in what he has (Epictetus).

Happiness always looks small while you hold it in your hands, but let it go, and you learn at once how big and precious it is (Maxim Gorkey).



How Can We Recognize a Typical Child Molester? By Sharon Doty

Many of us like to think that we would recognize a potential child molester if he or she were walking toward us on the street. We like to think that the people who sexually molest children are easily identifiable by some special characteristics—some demented look in their eyes, or the crazy way they dress or act.

For the general public, child molesters are perverts, monsters, or disgusting creeps—at least until the person accused is *their* neighbor, *their* minister, or a trusted member of *their* family. When the person accused is clearly not the stereotypical monster, pervert, or disgusting creep, many would rather believe that the child is lying or confused rather than to confront the truth about child molesters.

Unfortunately, most child molesters look just like the person next door, the coach, the teacher, the minister, or a trusted member of the family. They don't seem to be different from the rest of us. They can be valued employees, trusted volunteers, loyal friends, and responsible members of the community. Aside from their propensity to have sex with children, they otherwise may be law abiding, responsible citizens who make a difference in other people's lives through many aspects of their own lives. They may have a spouse and children of their own. They may be well liked and respected in the community. They have genuine skills working with people and, particularly, working with children. They may be kind and generous and able to inspire trust from the adults around them. The problem is that these people are not like other people—they have sex with children. We must learn to recognize the traits of child molesters so that we have a fighting chance in the effort to protect our children from abuse.

Child molesters are consummate liars. They know how to manipulate the conversation and the situation so that they dispel any concerns about their behavior. They use their manipulation skills to groom children, parents, and the community. They convince others that concerns about their behavior are insignificant and unimportant.

In order to recognize a typical child molester, adults in the community must develop a healthy suspicion about each and every adult who spends time with children. We must be alert to the signs that some adults might represent a risk to the children in their care. Adults must be willing to speak up when they notice that an adult:

- Always wants to be alone with children.
- Always seems more excited to be with children than adults.
- Gives gifts to children without permission, and encourages them to keep secrets from their parents and guardians.
- Lets children do things their parents would not allow them to do.
- Thinks rules don't apply to them.

The typical molester is no easier to identify by sight than the typical doctor or the typical parent. Because there is no "typical" child molester, adults must be alert to the warning signs that indicate they are potential risks to children. There are no easy answers. Preventing child sexual abuse demands much of us. It requires that we *know the warning signs and take action* to intervene when we have concerns about the safety of a child.

