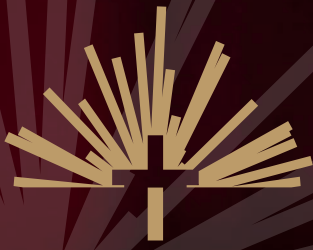


BOSTON COLLEGE

C21



RESOURCES

THE CHURCH IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CENTER

SPRING 2015

A background image showing a close-up of hands clasped in prayer at a table. The hands are in the foreground, with a blurred background of other people's hands and plates, suggesting a communal meal or prayer service.

**CATHOLIC  
FAMILIES**

CARRYING FAITH FORWARD

The Church in the 21st Century Center is a catalyst and resource for the renewal of the Catholic Church.

*C21 Resources*, a compilation of critical analyses and essays on key challenges facing the Church today, is published by the Church in the 21st Century Center at Boston College, in partnership with featured authors and publications.

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**ON THE COVER**

Family prays before dinner.

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**FROM THE C21 CENTER**

Few would disagree that in the brief time since his election, Pope Francis has given new hope to the Catholic Church worldwide, emphasizing the life-giving message of the Gospel and reaching out anew to those in the margins of society. It was in this spirit that he announced in October 2013 that the following year there would be an extraordinary general assembly of the synod of bishops on the family and evangelization, and that this extraordinary general assembly would be followed by an ordinary general assembly of the synod of bishops in October 2015.

The family is the community where Catholics first experience the joy Christ brings to the world. His love surrounds the children through the love and care and affection that parents lavish on their sons and daughters. Today we all know this idyllic “first community” can be disrupted by the attractions and distractions of a fast-paced secular society.

This issue of *C21 Resources* is clearly responding to Pope Francis’s call to reflect on the Catholic family. “Catholic Families: Carrying Faith Forward” was edited by Stephen Pope, professor in the Boston College theology department. It seeks to both promote deeper Catholic understanding of the family and to explore the realities that can compromise the search for this ideal.

We remain grateful for our readers’ interest in the mission of the Church in the 21st Century Center to be a resource and catalyst for the renewal of the Church.

Robert R. Newton  
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**STEPHEN J. POPE** is a professor of theology at Boston College. His research interests include Christian ethics and evolutionary theory, charity and natural law in Aquinas, and Roman Catholic social teachings. He has written *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love* (Georgetown, 1994) and *Human Evolution and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, 2007), and he has edited *Essays on the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Georgetown, 2001). Pope's latest book is *A Step Along the Way: Models of Christian Service* (Orbis, April 2015).





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Sacred space: Burns Library lawn  
memorial labyrinth dedicated to the 22  
BC alumni lost in the 9/11 tragedy.  
#BCFamilyC21

Photo courtesy of Office of Marketing Communications





# A PLACE FOR EVERYONE: PASTORAL CHALLENGES to the FAMILY

*Stephen J. Pope*

**M**arriage and family play a central role in the Catholic understanding of the Christian life. Marriage has the status of a sacrament that expresses the unbreakable bond between Christ and the Church. Children are the tangible embodiments of the love of husband and wife. Described as a “domestic church,” the family is the first experience of discipleship for children and an apostolate of love for all. The practices that are shared in a Christian household, my colleague Richard Gaillardetz has argued, provide a necessary foundation for family members’ emotional health, moral and spiritual growth, social commitment, and ecclesial identity.

All over the world, the last 50 years have seen massive changes to the family. In American society, the category “family” now includes single parents raising children, unmarried couples with children, adult couples living with elderly parents, and same-sex couples raising a child. In Europe and the United States, almost four out of 10 babies are born to unmarried parents. Catholics in these countries, at least for the most part, no longer think of a family only in terms of heterosexual married couples with children.



The family does not—and never has—come in only one form. Catholic cultures have historically appreciated the value of the extended family, the network of aunts and uncles, grandparents, in-laws, and cousins. The ancient Western unit of the household respected bonds and responsibilities that were not always based on marital relationships. The Church regards marriage as one of the officially designated seven sacraments, but Catholic cultures have often appreciated the sacramental meaning of families as (at least potentially) networks of relationships constituted by daily, tangible, and usually unspoken practices of loving and being loved.

Contemporary families are much

more complicated than is captured by the normative paradigm of the family promoted by popes for the last hundred years or so. As Herbert McCabe's article in this volume suggests, the portrait of the Holy Family in popular church art does not communicate the messy nature of the full biblical narrative. If the Church, as Vatican II suggests, is called to "read the signs of the times and respond to them in light of the Gospel," then these changes in the family present a major pastoral challenge to the Church.

Despite significant changes to the institution of the family, and especially to marriage, most people want to belong to a loving, healthy family. Theologian Werner Jeanrond calls family the "first among the institutions

of love." Families are often the source of our greatest challenges, but also our greatest joys. Parenthood is an extremely difficult responsibility, particularly in our time.

We have all heard the expression, "It takes a village to raise a child," but it is also the case that it takes a village to be a family. Children need help, but so do couples, parents, and other caregivers. This is especially the case as our market competition, technological innovation, and the culture of consumerism erode the bonds of neighborhood, civic organizations, extended families, and other forms of social capital that used to give crucial social support to people who are raising children or caring for other family members.

“THE CHURCH  
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PROBLEMS.”

~ Pope Francis,  
*The Joy of the Gospel*

## POPE FRANCIS AND THE EXTRAORDINARY SYNOD

Pope Francis called the extraordinary synod, a gathering of bishops from around the world, as one important stage in a Church-wide process of pastoral discernment. It is important for us to keep in mind the global nature of Catholicism. American Catholics constitute only 7 percent of the worldwide Church. So when the pope calls an extraordinary synod to discuss the “pastoral challenges to the family,” he is referring not only to struggles of families in San Francisco, San Antonio, and Philadelphia, but also to those in Manila, São Paulo, and Hyderabad.

When the synod began, the pope encouraged the synod Fathers to speak boldly and not to be afraid to disagree with one another or even with him. He showed great courage in beginning a process that suggested that Church authorities do not have all the answers all the time. He trusts open and honest dialogue to generate new insights and pastoral initiatives. He does so knowing that dialogue can generate contention and alienation as well as creativity and consensus.

The extraordinary synod closed with a report that will provide the basis for a worldwide Catholic discussion in preparation for the ordinary synod next October. Archbishop Bruno Forte, the special secretary to the synod, expects bishops to discuss the report not only with their fellow bishops, but also with the priests and laity of their own dioceses. Pope Francis wants the discussions of the next synod to play a major role in his formulation of guidelines for the pastoral care of families. He says that he wants the synod to involve “real, not ceremonial consultation.” What this really means, in concrete terms, remains to be seen.

## DISPUTED QUESTIONS

Three “hot button” issues at the synod got the most attention from the Western media and all bear directly on the state of the family in the Church in the United States: the reception

of communion by Catholics who are divorced and remarried without an annulment, cohabitation, and same-sex marriage.

First, most ordinary Catholics don’t see the reception of communion as presenting any insuperable difficulties. They resonate with the pope’s description of the Eucharist as “not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.” Cardinal Walter Kasper proposed that the Church begin a discussion about developing a process that would allow Catholics in nonsacramental marriages to be admitted to communion. Some influential cardinals rejected his suggestion as doctrinally impossible. The final report of the synod did endorse making the annulment process more efficient and accessible.

Second, cohabitation is widely practiced by Catholic couples. In fact, the majority of young Catholic couples in the United States now cohabit before they are married. They do so for a variety of reasons that run from “testing the waters” to financial efficiency and practical convenience. Some cohabiting couples intend to get married, but others do not. More and more women are waiting until the age of 30 to have their first child and do not feel it is necessary to marry much before that time. Cohabitation is often not seen as a watershed moment because the majority of long-term relations, including among church-going Catholics, already involve sexual intimacy. Pastoral care here has to help people see how these relationships can be contexts of growth in grace. The synod’s midway document even suggested that cohabitation might have positive values for couples.

Third, same-sex marriage is a major political and social controversy in North Atlantic societies. The synod Fathers from Africa spoke about the need for pastoral guidelines in dealing with polygamous families, coerced marriages, and child marriages. They do not see the pastoral urgency of same-sex relationships.

There is a more fundamental responsibility incumbent on Catholics

everywhere to build a consensus that gay people possess the same human dignity and receive the same unconditional divine love as everyone else. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (No. 2358) teaches that gay people “must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.” This is a point of evangelization as well as morality.

Catholics are often more deeply shaped by their cultural and political circumstances than by the Gospel. Archbishop Lewis Zeigler of Monrovia recently declared that God sent Ebola to Liberia as a punishment for “homosexuality.” Nigeria just passed a law that imposes 14-year prison sentences on anyone caught in a homosexual relationship and it assigns other harsh punishments for lesser offenses. Passage of the law led to a wave of violence against gays. Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Jos, speaking on behalf of the Catholic hierarchy in Nigeria, praised the law as a “step in the right direction” in defense of the sanctity of marriage. Catholic leaders backed a similar law in Uganda. More humanely, a newspaper sponsored by the bishops of South Africa, Botswana, and Swaziland criticized the Nigerian law and called on Catholics “to stand with the powerless” and “sound the alarm at the advance throughout Africa of draconian legislation aimed at criminalizing homosexuals.” While homophobia is increasing in some countries, it is sign of progress that bishops are willing to challenge one another in the public forum for the sake of justice and human dignity.

### CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS

A number of commentators have made suggestions for the next synod. The pope seeks to build a consensus of wisdom within the Church that can help families carry their burdens, love one another, and grow closer to Christ. To do so, he wants to develop pastoral practices in light of real-life experience of lay people and clergy. This approach is grounded in his vision of the Church as a community of the faithful called by the Holy Spirit to journey together to

Christ. The synod process reflects the pope’s desire to enhance collegiality and to empower the bishops to be leaders in their own right after a long period of centralization.

The practical wisdom of the next synod could be enhanced significantly by expanding the range of its participants to include more lay men and women. Families are comprised mostly of the laity. If the pope wants pastors and lay people to see themselves as travelling together as fellow pilgrims, then lay people ought to be given a much greater role next year.

Previous popes have spoken in glowing terms about consulting the laity, but they usually only consulted people who are considered very “safe.” Unfortunately, the more than 250 participants at the synod only included 14 couples and most of them were from Church-focused organizations like Engaged Encounter, Focolare, and the Natural Family Planning Advisory Board. The synod would benefit from a much richer participation of the laity and especially lay people from a wider variety of Catholic backgrounds.

Second, the next synod would benefit from much greater participation by women. The pope acknowledges the Church’s need to involve women more generally in the decision making of the Church, but this did not happen at the synod. Only 25 participants were women and none of them were allowed to vote. In an interview before the synod, Cardinal Kasper said, “A Church without women is like a mutilated body.” He suggested that “women be called forth and listened to beginning right now.” His advice was not followed last October, but it could be next year.

Commentators have also suggested that the next synod’s agenda be expanded beyond what was discussed this year. While one meeting cannot discuss everything relevant to the family, it is worth noting a few major concerns that the synod did not take up in any detail.

First, demographic changes in American society are generating the

largest percentage of retired people in our history. Seniors have better health and are so more capable than ever of contributing to the well-being of their families and wider communities. Our fascination with technological innovation and cultural creativity needs to be balanced with an appreciation of the wisdom that we can gain from our elders, and particularly within our families. How can the Church help our families become more hospitable to their own elders, both the healthy and retired and those in declining physical and mental health? How can the Church help seniors play a positive role in nurturing younger generations?

Second, if the Church wants to support families, it can help families think more about their responsibilities to their wider communities. Many Americans think of the family as a self-enclosed, walled-off “lifestyle enclave” protecting its members from outsiders. Yet if shaped by the Gospel, we cannot strive for a nuclear family focused only on our own welfare. We have to cultivate, as Lisa Sowle Cahill puts it, the “socially transformative family that seeks to make the Christian moral ideal of love of neighbor part of the common good.”

Third, if the Church wants to help families, it needs to increase its advocacy for economic justice. Though a pacifist, Dorothy Day said that poverty is an even greater cause of human suffering than war. Pope Francis shares her concern: “Inequality is the root of social evil.” Single-parent, female-headed families have five times the poverty rate of two-parent families. Wealthier and more educated Americans tend to have higher rates of marriage, lower divorce rates, and lower rates of out-of-wedlock births. Certainly poverty is the main cause of suffering among millions of Catholic families around the world. Cardinal Wilfrid Napier of South Africa raised this issue, and one can hope that it receives greater attention at next year’s synod.

Fourth, the synod Fathers did not discuss the Church’s ban on artificial birth control, despite the



Eric Liwanag '94 with wife Joanna and family at the BC Reunion Weekend 2014. #BCFamilyC21

fact that it is widely practiced among North Atlantic Catholics and has a major bearing on responsible family planning. Unsustainable population growth has a major impact on the global consumption of land and water and is a significant driver of ecological destruction, mass migration, epidemics, and war. Though it continues to ravage families in many parts of the world, HIV/AIDS was not discussed.

Finally, many Catholics grow up experiencing violence in their homes and all too often replicate that violence when they become parents. Most domestic violence often comes from men who think they have a right to control and abuse women (young, unmarried women are at the greatest risk). Many men feel entitled to take out their frustrations on their spouses or partners and children, often after drinking too much alcohol. We are becoming more aware of the problem, but it continues to afflict millions of families throughout the global Church. In Bolivia, for example, one survey found that over 80 percent of children are victims of domestic abuse. Though not on this scale, domestic abuse continues to be the source of enormous pain for many Catholic families in this country.

The next synod could help families by providing guidelines for how local

churches can provide educational and practical means for preventing violence in the home, especially by helping men become more self-aware, be less dependent on alcohol, and learn to deal with their anger in constructive ways. Parishes could help by teaching all parishioners the value and skills of nonviolent conflict resolution. The Gospel has a lot to say to ordinary people about empathy, mutual understanding, and “speaking the truth with love” (Eph 4:5). The next synod could help families by discussing guidelines to prevent domestic abuse, to get protection for vulnerable people, to work for the rehabilitation of perpetrators and healing of their victims, and, where appropriate, to reintegrate families on the basis of respect and safety.

### CONCLUSION

The greatest pastoral challenge facing the Church is to speak a word of hope. Catholic baby boomers who are alienated often see the Church as censorious and judgmental. Catholics under 30 are not particularly resentful, but many are not particularly interested in what the Church has to say either. The best moral theologians today have urged the Church to provide resources that could help Catholics shape our

consciences in accord with the Gospel and to exercise responsibility for one another and our communities.

American popular culture often treats relationships as instrumental and commitments as negotiable. The Church offers a countercultural witness in local communities of compassion and hospitality that accompany people leading imperfect and sometimes messy lives. The Church, Pope Francis wrote in *The Joy of the Gospel*, is “called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open... [and] where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.” ■

STEPHEN J. POPE is the guest editor of this issue of *C21 Resources*.

PHOTO CREDIT: Pages 2–3: St. Andrew the Apostle Church in Milford, Ohio.

Watch several C21 videos featuring Stephen Pope. Visit: [www.bc.edu/c21family](http://www.bc.edu/c21family)

### DID YOU KNOW...

There are about 75 million Catholics in the United States, making up 7% of all Catholics in the world.

Pew Family Study, July 17, 2014





# The PLAN of GOD for MARRIAGE & FAMILY

*Pope John Paul II*

**T**he family, which is founded and given life by love, is a community of persons: of husband and wife, of parents and children, of relatives. Its first task is to live with fidelity the reality of communion in a constant effort to develop an authentic community of persons.

The inner principle of that task, its permanent power and its final goal is love: without love the family is not a community of persons and, in the same way, without love the family cannot live, grow and perfect itself as a community of persons. What I wrote in the Encyclical *Redemptor hominis* applies primarily and especially within the family as such: “Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”

The love between husband and wife and, in a derivatory and broader way, the love between members of the same family—between parents and children, brothers and sisters and relatives and members of the household—is given life and sustenance by an unceasing inner dynamism leading the family to ever deeper and more intense communion, which is the foundation and soul of the community of marriage and the family....

The Christian family is also called to experience a new and original communion which confirms and perfects natural and human communion. In fact the grace of Jesus Christ, “the first-born among many brethren” is by its nature and interior dynamism “a grace of brotherhood,” as St. Thomas Aquinas calls it. The Holy Spirit, who is poured forth in the celebration of the sacraments, is the living source and inexhaustible sustenance of the supernatural communion that gathers believers and links them with

Christ and with each other in the unity of the Church of God. The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason too it can and should be called “the domestic Church.”

All members of the family, each according to his or her own gift, have the grace and responsibility of building, day by day, the communion of persons, making the family “a school of deeper humanity”: this happens where there is care and love for the little ones, the sick, the aged; where there is mutual service every day; when there is a sharing of goods, of joys and of sorrows....

Family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. It requires, in fact, a ready and generous openness of each and all to understanding, to forbearance, to pardon, to reconciliation. There is no family that does not know how selfishness, discord, tension and conflict violently attack and at times mortally wound its own communion: hence there arise the many and varied forms of division in family life. But, at the same time, every family is called by the God of peace to have the joyous and renewing experience of “reconciliation,” that is, communion reestablished, unity restored. In particular, participation in the sacrament of Reconciliation and in the banquet of the one Body of Christ offers to the Christian family the grace and the responsibility of overcoming every division and of moving towards the fullness of communion willed by God, responding in this way to the ardent desire of the Lord: “that they may be one.” ■

From the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World), nos. 18, 21. For full text, visit [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

PHOTO CREDIT: Page 7: Vatican City, May, 10 1980. Pope John Paul II holding a child. © Vittoriano Rastelli/Corbis

# The Genealogy of Jesus

Herbert McCabe, O.P.

John, of course, begins his introduction to Jesus with the cosmos itself: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.” Luke has a narrower but still universalist scope—he traces Christ back to Adam, if you remember. Matthew gets much closer down to earth and puts the family of Jesus in the particular context of the history of Israel; and of course the closer you get down to earth, the earthier you get.

One aim of Matthew is to show that Jesus really was tied into the squalid realities of human life and sex and politics....

We start with Abraham, the man of faith, because the whole thing starts with faith and depends on the promise to Abraham—initially the promise of children. Then when Abraham was an old man, Isaac was born “out of due time” in consequence of God’s promise.

The faith of Abraham meant that Isaac very nearly had his throat cut by his father at an early age, but he survived to be the father of Jacob, an unscrupulous but entertaining character who won *his* position in the line that leads to Christ by lying and cheating his old blind father.

He was cheated himself, however, slept with the wrong girl by mistake, and became the father of Judah.

Judah slept, again by mistake, with his own daughter-in-law Tamar: She had cheated him by disguising herself and dressing up as a prostitute.... [W]hen Judah heard that his daughter-in-law had prostituted herself and become pregnant, he ordered her to be burnt alive. He was disconcerted when he discovered that he himself had been the client and that the child, Perez, was his.

Well, all that is what Matthew was referring to when he said “Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren; and Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar.”

Then we get a list of people we know nothing about—

they are just names from the book of Chronicles: Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon—and then we come to Boaz. We know about him from the Book of Ruth.

Boaz didn’t exactly sleep with Ruth by mistake but he was surprised in the middle of the night to find her sleeping at his feet. (Though unconventional behavior by women ought not to have surprised Boaz, for according to Matthew, his mother was Rahab, and commentators seem to assume that he must have meant Rahab the prostitute in Jericho who entertained and hid the secret agents of Joshua and betrayed her city and her people to be massacred.)

The story of Ruth with its fertility symbolism of the barley harvest and of Bethlehem, the House of Bread, is one of the most charming and lovely stories in the Old Testament (though a little obscure because of all the stuff about the law of real estate), but one thing that stands out is that Ruth, a pagan foreigner, is impelled, as Tamar had been, by a strange passionate urge to carry on the line at almost any cost. It was the line that led to David and on to Christ. Ruth’s son Obed was the father of Jesse who was the father of David.

The thing, of course, to notice is that God’s plan worked out not in pious people, people with religious experiences, but in a set of crude, passionate, and thoroughly disreputable people.

That first section of the genealogy concentrates on sex; from David onwards the accent is more on violence.

David fell in love with a girl he chanced to see bathing naked one evening; he arranged for her husband to be murdered, slept with her, and became the father of Solomon, the next in the line of succession toward Christ our savior.

The whole story of David, the ruthlessly and highly successful bandit, who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, got control of a whole confederacy of tribes, is, of course, full of intrigue and murder—successful intrigue and murder. But Solomon’s son Rehoboam lost most of David’s gains through high-handedness and greed. The section of territory he was left with, Judah, was badly misruled and, according to the Bible, he encouraged pagan cults and sacred male prostitutes.

Abijah, his son, was no better, though *his* son and grandson Asa and Jehoshaphat had some idea of what the call of Yahweh meant.

The Book of Kings at this point concentrates most of its attention on the kingdom next door, the other bit of territory, Israel, where Ahab and Jezebel were having a more colorful and depraved time in spite of the prophet Elijah.

Meanwhile, in Judah, the son of the good Jehoshaphat, the next in the line, Jehoram (or Joram, as Matthew calls him) tried to reunite the two territories by marrying the sister of Ahab, and he instantly took to Ahab’s evil ways. *His* son Ahaziah was (like so many people at the time) murdered by Jehu, a particularly bloodthirsty sort of ninth-century Cromwell—a sadistic mass killer who did it all to purify the land for the sake of Yahweh.



Matthew skips over this, together with the next man who as a baby was rescued in the nick of time by his aunt while his grandmother, the appalling Athaliah, was systematically murdering his brother and sisters.

He *was* assassinated in the end though—by a junta of colonels who put his son on the throne. When the son was safely on the throne I need hardly say that he had the colonels put to death, and so we move on through Uzziah the leper down the line that leads toward Christmas and the angels and the shepherds and the crib at Bethlehem.

I shall not burden you with further details, but I assure you that it goes on like this through Jotham and Ahaz and Hezekiah (who was a rare good exception) through Manasseh who used to burn babies alive and his son Amon (Matthew calls him Amos) who did the same, through Josiah who tried to reform things, too late, and invented Deuteronomy, and so on down to the exile and the end of the kingship, and a good thing too, you might think.

After the exile, things seem to improve a bit, partly because there aren't any kings but mainly because most of the names aren't mentioned in the Old Testament at all (and for all I know Matthew made them up, to bring his numbers up to 14—Luke mostly has different ones)—and

so we come down to Joseph of whom Matthew says that he was “a just man”—a fact worth noting when you think of the family he came from.

And Jesus belonged to the family of Joseph. Of course, as Matthew himself tells us, Joseph wasn't the physical father of Jesus; but the Jews were not hung up on genetics—people could belong to one family, be brethren, without worrying about the exact biology of it all.

Well, that is the Book of the Generation of Jesus Christ. The moral is too obvious to labor: Jesus did not belong to the nice, clean world of Angela MacNamara or Mary Whitehouse, or to the honest, reasonable, sincere world of the *Observer* or the *Irish Times*, he belonged to a family of murderers, cheats, cowards, adulterers, and liars—he belonged to *us* and came to help *us*, no wonder he came to a bad end, and gave *us* some hope. ■

HERBERT MCCABE, O.P., was a Dominican priest and theologian who lived and preached in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Selection from *God Matters* (Templegate, 1991), 246–249.  
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PHOTO CREDIT: Page 9: Icon by Nicholas P. Papas. [www.facebook.com/Nick.Papas.Studio](http://www.facebook.com/Nick.Papas.Studio)

# The Pastoral Care of Hispanic Families

*Gelasia Márquez Marinas*



In spite of extensive literature on intercultural adjustments and psychosocial development, we still lack a theoretical and conceptual framework for working with newcomers and immigrant families. During my years of study, research, and practice working with immigrant Hispanic families, I have developed the following scheme. It is intended as a frame of reference for the design and development of programs for the pastoral care of these families. Basically, I see the process of transition as involving three separate but interrelated components.

1. The “culture” of the family. An understanding of the functioning of any family requires not only knowledge about the family’s internal structure and processes but also attention to the larger political, governmental, and economic situation that touch family members directly. For this reason, we need to give attention to the “culture” of this family and how that

cultural environment shapes the family structure and its external activities and projections.

Every family belongs to a defined cultural community, for every family identifies itself with a common group, whether this be in terms of race, religion, nationality, or some mixture of these categories. This community serves as a social and psychological referent and, through historical circumstances, creates a sense of being a people.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between the family and its cultural community involves mutuality and reciprocity, social articulation and recognition. It creates a sense of belonging and historical continuity for the family and for its members....

Consequently, through the process of socialization parents instill in their children culturally specific ways or preferred modes of perceiving and relating to others and of understanding the verbal and nonverbal symbols

essential for communicating, remembering, and thinking, as well as for problem-solving and for the use of meaning and logic. Similarly, this inculturative or socializing process shapes the children’s self-concept and self-esteem while they “absorb” the culture of their parents and “locate” themselves within their first society, their home, and its sociocultural expectations.

2. Adaptation to the new culture. Immigrant family members have been conformed, shaped, and socialized by their culture of origin, which had provided the context and the original content of their personality development. Consequently, migration ruptures the continuity of experience present in the immigrants’ previous sociocultural context. To migrate is therefore to be born again, not only because of the social nature of human personality and its inextricable relationship to the cultural

environment in which a person gains his/her identity, but because the person has to restructure his/her cognitive and affective abilities—introducing new meanings, gestures, and words to function effectively and developing the coping mechanisms required for life in the new place. In addition, the immigrant Hispanic family must undergo change collectively—as a small society—so that it can (1) continue to be the matrix of its members’ psychological development; (2) accommodate itself to the new society and its culture; and (3) ensure some continuity with its own culture. This process of learning a new set of coping mechanisms must be done over time in such a way that family continuity is maintained while making restructuring possible.

3. The need for continuity in a changing family. The process of transition or progressive cultural change from one culture to another is possible only through continual interaction with the new culture. Various stages are required before the immigrant feels a sense of belonging to the new environment. Additionally, during the transition from one culture to the other, the immigrant couple must repeatedly adapt to the demands of the new culture. Their personal identity must be continually reformed, not only for their personal adjustment, but also so that their children might achieve a sense of dignity, worthiness, and acceptance. When this transition is slow, regardless of the cause, the behavior of the immigrant family—still out of step with the new culture—may appear aberrant to members of the new society.

In sum, the members of the immigrant Hispanic family are immersed in a threefold process: (1) each family member’s own personality and psychosocial development process as child, adolescent, or adult; (2) each family member’s process of adaptation and adjustment to the new sociocultural environment through the adaptation to the new culture; (3) societal changes in family structure

- The average age of Hispanics in the United States is 27. About 55 percent of all U.S. Catholics under the age of 30 are Hispanic.
- According to the March 2013 Current Population Survey (CPS), 61 percent of Hispanics are U.S.-born. 37.3 percent of Hispanics 30 and older are in this category. Yet more striking is the fact that 93 percent of all Hispanics under the age of 18 are U.S.-born.
- Two-thirds of parishes with Hispanic ministry have developed initiatives for Hispanic parents to get involved in their children’s religious education programs.
- Particular attention is given to adult faith formation initiatives as Hispanic families pass on the faith to the largest sector—more than half—of the Catholic population in the United States in our day.

*National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry (2011–2013), conducted by Boston College professor Hosffman Ospino.*

for the continuing fulfillment of the family’s own functions to ensure some continuity with the culture of origin and family traditions....

What [therefore] would be the overall goal of Hispanic family ministry? Based on the previous statements, one must first assist Hispanic families in their struggle to be contributing members of the U.S. Church and society, as well as encourage Hispanic families in their efforts to maintain their Christian and cultural sense of self, meaning, and worth while they cope with a new and radically different environment. Two possible objectives for fulfilling this goal are: (1) to help families and their members in the development of a new sense of self by allowing them the possibility of reconciling a variety of internal issues in a coherent and acceptable identity; and (2) to support immigrant families in the process of changing their internal organization and structure by allowing them to explore alternative ways of relating as a family....

None of this can take place in a vacuum. One favorable setting for intercultural adjustment is the parish where bilingual, bicultural liturgies, programs, and activities bring together members of different ethnic groups who share the same Catholic identity. “It was the (parish) community who gave the immigrants of the last century the strength and

stability to move steadily into the mainstream...[I]n a strange world it was the basis of their identity, their social satisfaction, their security, their strength.”<sup>22</sup> One integrates, however, from a position of strength, not from a position of weakness. Therefore, some circumstances must be carefully planned. For example, contact between the members of the various ethnic groups must be fostered in a manner that establishes respect and equal regard. One example would be presentations at a bilingual parish that are delivered in both languages....

In working with this conceptual framework as a frame of reference for developing the pastoral care and ministry formation of those who are going to work with Hispanic families, we hope that we might affirm, support, and welcome Hispanic families to the Church and to the U.S. society. ■

GELASIA MÁRQUEZ MARINAS is a clinical and school psychologist who has helped thousands of immigrant Hispanic families transition to life in the U.S.

Selection from *El Cuerpo de Cristo: The Hispanic Presence in the U.S. Catholic Church*, ed. Peter Casarella and Raúl Gómez (CSS Publishing, 2001), 252–255, 257.

<sup>1</sup>M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>2</sup>J. Fitzpatrick, “The Hispanic Poor in a Middle Class Church,” *America* (July 11–13, 1988).

PHOTO CREDIT: Page 10: © Chris Bunker. [www.chrisbunker.com](http://www.chrisbunker.com)



# ALL in the FAMILY

*Michaela Bruzzese*

It takes a village to raise a child. This proverb gained pressing relevance for me when my husband and I embarked on our journey of parenthood. Even though my husband was as involved with the care of our infant daughter as I was, it quickly became clear that we were not up to this adventure alone—at least not with our sanity intact. We needed help. We needed a village.

Luckily, our family in Santiago, Chile, along with wonderful babysitters, helped us through our firstborn's infancy and then the birth of her sister. But when we moved to Brooklyn four years ago, that all changed. Despite stellar neighbors and exceptional friends, we struggled with the physical and emotional challenges of parenting our now three young girls full-time.... After three years of swimming upstream just to stay afloat emotionally, financially, and socially, we decided to move back to my hometown of Albuquerque, New Mexico—in search of a village.

The decision to *move* was based on our desire to live near family. The decision to actually *move in* with my parents was driven primarily by finances: Our stay in Brooklyn on one nonprofit salary was subsidized by MasterCard and other creative financial arrangements that would horrify Suze Orman.

Living with my parents for a year would allow us to repay debts and save for our own place. Fortunately, my parents were not only supportive but encouraging of the proposal—long stays with them in the past had gone well, and while we knew that the multigenerational household would mean adjustments for all of us, we looked forward to being together.

Our first year was up last July. We're still here. The reasons are still financial, but only in part. We expected the real challenges of living in a multigenerational household. But we've all been surprised by the new richness we've found as a result of this experiment. Born of necessity, it just might be continued out of desire, intention, and gratitude.

Our living arrangement is actually part of a growing national trend. The most visible example is in the White House, where three generations of the Robinson-Obamas live together. According to a 2010 Pew Research Center study, in 2008 49 million Americans lived in multigenerational housing (defined as “at least two adult generations or a grandparent and at least one other generation”). This is a 33 percent increase in the share of all Americans living in such households since 1980. Although this is partly due to a rise in immigration, the stagnant economy is also significant—between 2007 and 2008 alone, the number of Americans living in multigenerational housing grew by 2.6 million.

Though the trend is apparent for all ages, research shows that the elderly and the young are overrepresented. The physical decline of aging baby boomers and cuts to health and income benefits means that some parents cannot care for themselves financially, physically, or both, and must

move in with their children. Lack of jobs, credit card debt, and high student loan payments have forced new college graduates to “boomerang” back to parents whose houses, income, or jobs are more secure....

Multigenerational living has increased in every racial demographic since 2006, though Latinos (22 percent) African Americans (23 percent), and Asian Americans (25 percent) are still more likely to live with multiple generations than are Caucasians (13 percent).

Many people who move in with relatives fully intend to move once they are able. For others, including elderly parents, the stay will be longer and will require long-term planning to meet increasing needs.

Whatever the specific situation, many of us are living together (again). And many are not only making it work, but, like my family, finding unexpected benefits and blessings that may make intergenerational living a choice, even when finances allow other options.

In our household, for example, meals have taken on a sacramental quality, with the entire family sitting down together most evenings. When I’m not working, I start dinner and help the girls with homework while my mom (a family therapist) sees her last clients and then joins me in dinner prep. Eventually my sister, who lives one block away, comes home from work, my niece in tow, and also chips in. After homework, the girls feed the dogs and help their grandfather with gardening or the other cooks with dinner, until the coveted video time (kids) and wine time (adults)—30 or so minutes before dinner when we unwind together and catch up on the day’s news. After dinner, the men do the dishes and parents get the kids to bed, often with the help of a grandparent, auntie, or older cousin.

The obvious benefits start with the financial savings. Utilities, food, rent or mortgage, and other household bills are much lower per person when shared. It is cheaper to buy and prepare food in bulk, and more hands mean more energy for household chores. Parallel to the financial benefits are environmental ones—resources and space are used more efficiently and effectively in a shared household.

Living with relatives also has emotional benefits, especially in the form of support for parents—and kids and grandparents, too. The pressures on families from work, school, and activities mean that even two parents (let alone one!) truly struggle with how to meet everyone’s needs on a daily basis. On-site grandparents can help parents with the constant physical and emotional energy needed to raise kids, and elderly parents get help with the house, transportation, and finances.

Beyond the tangible financial, ecological, and practical benefits, my family is especially grateful for the emotional blessings of multigenerational living. Since my childhood nuclear family lived far from both sets of relatives, I never knew the joyful chaos of birthday parties or holidays with grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. To watch my daughters forming special and unique relationships

with their grandparents is a privilege and a blessing for all involved....

The emotional benefits extend both ways.... My mom concurs; in her words: “Because we share the same values, and because I know that I am loved and appreciated, I have more energy, support, and help thinking through issues than if I were alone.” This is not insignificant in a culture in which loneliness is so pervasive that Mother Teresa once called it “the leprosy of the West.”...

Multigenerational living is not, of course, all fun and games, and it is certainly not for everyone.... For us and for many other families in the same situation, defining and respecting the boundaries of all the roles and relationships (couple, parent, grandparent) is a must. My husband and I are clear that we assume all responsibility for the kids and never expect my parents, sister, or niece to help out unless we secure their help beforehand. My parents have been careful to schedule alone time in the form of “date nights” a couple times a week, as well as monthly getaways. When my husband and I are not as diligent about our own need for couple and small-family time, we pay a price in our ability to communicate and our identity as a couple.

Open communication is the second requirement for successful extended-family living. Talking about expectations, dividing responsibilities, and checking in on a regular basis about financial and other logistical agreements has minimized tensions for us.

Once together, however, surprises, changes, and challenges that come from living in close quarters with different people are inevitable, no matter how much preparation has taken place...

#### **WHICH IS WHERE FAITH COMES IN...**

Whether one’s multigenerational living situation is by choice or not, religious benefits may help give both the vocabulary to describe the experience and the lens through which to interpret the highs and lows that come with living in close quarters. My understanding of Christian discipleship and its emphasis on community has greatly influenced my desire to make this situation work. Christianity, by definition, begins and ends with community. As my mom put it, “What more could one ask? Aren’t we meant, as humans, to be in loving relationship with one another?” ■

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#### **DID YOU KNOW...**

**In 2012, 57 million Americans (18.1% of the population) lived in intergenerational households.**

Pew Family Study, July 17, 2014



# Second Marriage:

## An Opportunity for Spiritual Growth?

*Timothy J. Buckley, CSsR*

“It is to peace that God has called you” (1 Cor 7:15). There is a fundamental Gospel imperative that Christ’s saving presence can reach into every situation. Paradoxically, experience often demonstrates that in the midst of the greatest pain and sadness we discover new depths of love and compassion, perceive new and broader spiritual horizons. My research bears out the truth of this among the separated and divorced. Often the dreadful pain that accompanies the breakdown of marriage can prove to be the catalyst for new spiritual growth: for some it is achieved in simply coming to terms with what has happened, for others it is only discovered in the warmth of a new relationship that reveals God’s love to them....

Below is part of the moving account of Andrew, someone who attended one of my many group interviews. He began by explaining that he had

spent several years in a monastery, but, troubled by doubts, had decided not to proceed to final vows. In the course of time he married, but after 17 faithful years he was confronted with the terrible dilemma of his wife’s affair. He went on to say:

The loving thing in this situation was to let Margaret go, which was the first thing I did... But then I went through a period when I thought: “The Church disapproves of me: God somehow must disapprove of what I have done.”...

I will always believe in God. And to me the way through it was to concentrate on my perception of God... So I clutched to a God point of view rather than a Church point of view. I felt somehow the Church, by its insistence

on rules and regulations in the early stage, had placed an insupportable burden, which I couldn’t carry and which I didn’t want to carry...

If I did get involved in a relationship I would have to look at this question of whether I want an annulment... I honestly feel I had a valid marriage and that somehow for somebody to turn round and say to me, years later on, “your marriage was null and void,” would almost devastate me... I would find it easier to live with the fact that I have come to terms with what happened about my marriage.

I have come to terms with my relationship with God. I am accepting responsibility for my life as it is now, and if I thought I could grow in a loving relationship, then



I would have no qualms about entering into one. In fact, I have made it almost a criterion for judging whether I trust God enough.<sup>1</sup>...

I thought that Andrew made a very telling point in his testimony when he spoke of what he judged to be the “insupportable burden” placed on him by the Church’s “rules and regulations in the early stage”: a burden that he said he “couldn’t carry” and “didn’t want to carry”... What I would draw attention to is the fact that when a marriage breaks down it is likely that we will be confronted with broken human beings. As one Association of Separated and Divorced Catholics member so astutely observed: “I think sometimes the Catholic Church doesn’t realize we are human as well as Catholic.” The first ministry such people require is the comfort of an understanding community, reflecting the compassion, hope, and forgiveness of Christ, not a reminder of the rules and regulations surrounding divorce and remarriage....

Just like Andrew, many priests are weighed down by the rules and regulations as they understand them. They want to reach out to the human person in pain but are fearful that by not administering the law they will be unfaithful to God. Again I can illustrate this by quoting from one of the clergy. That very morning he had officiated at a funeral in the parish. The woman’s son had come to him in the sacristy, asking if it would be possible on this one occasion to receive Holy Communion in spite of his irregular marriage situation. The priest felt unable to give his blessing to this and told him to come forward for a blessing, but he realized the son left the sacristy “broken-hearted.” This led the priest to ponder on the injustice of it all. He reflected that most of the young children who had come from the school to sing at the Mass were not regular churchgoers and that a few years ago he would have been unhappy about them going

to Holy Communion en masse. He went on to say:

The same rules and regulations that are binding me I was able to ignore regarding children—and I think 99 percent of people would ignore them. But on the other hand, I could not bring myself to ignore the one about the divorcee. And I just felt it is all a sham... I really felt I had let that man down when he needed me most, when he needed Our Lord most of all. And in the same Mass I just could see there has to be a better balance, there has to be a fairness in applying Our Lord’s sacraments to people...

I draw your attention to two points. Firstly, the priest’s dilemma is the same as Andrew’s: How do I cope with rules and regulations that conflict with what I believe is the just and loving Gospel response? Second, the question surrounds the reception of the Eucharist. Although for some the fact that they cannot have a church ceremony to celebrate their new union is a cause of sadness, the great distress for most people results from their being banned from Holy Communion. The fact is, that for all that the teaching Church insists that people in these irregular situations should “not consider themselves as separated from the Church, for as baptized persons they can, and indeed must, share in her life,”<sup>2</sup> to be deprived of the Eucharist is for them tantamount to being excommunicated.<sup>3</sup>...

[I]t is in this sphere that Catholics often have insoluble spiritual problems because they look to authority for definitive decisions. The priest who agonized over the son at the funeral pleaded with me to make clear in my report to the bishops the desperate struggle priests were experiencing. He was looking for someone else to make the decision and free him in conscience. Andrew struggled for years

but was finally coming to a kind of freedom that few Catholics enjoy: He was actually able to say that a decision not in conformity with official Church policy—i.e., that he would have no qualms about entering a loving relationship in which he could grow—was the criterion whereby he would judge whether he trusted God enough.

I submit that this one single statement amply demonstrates the potential for spiritual growth in these situations. It is not that Andrew did not care or was kicking over the traces or believed that divorce should be readily accepted in every situation by the Church. Throughout his painful struggle he sought the loving solution, which is surely the Gospel solution. That kind of maturity can only be reached by individuals opening themselves to the mercy of God and “trusting enough” to love. ■

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From *The Way* 37, no. 4 (1997): 314, 315–316, 318, 320–322. [314–324]. Reprinted with permission. [www.theway.org.uk](http://www.theway.org.uk)

<sup>1</sup>This is a transcript from a tape recording of his spontaneous statement at the meeting and is published with his permission. Andrew and his wife’s name, Margaret, are pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup>Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio* (1981), 84.

<sup>3</sup>It is worth noting that while no formal excommunication has ever been imposed here in Britain, in the last century the bishops of the United States of America did impose this censure on those who were married “outside the Church,” albeit that they subsequently modified it with the clause “out of defiance.” Interestingly, it was formally rescinded only in 1977. See Bary Brunsman, *New Hope for Divorced Catholics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 3–4.

## DID YOU KNOW...

**Divorce among Catholics represents more than 11 million individuals.**

**Catholics who marry people of the same faith have a lower divorce rate than Catholics who marry non-Catholics.**

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, September 2013 report.

# Pastoral Challenges Regarding the Family



*Pope Francis*

“The synod will be on the family, the problem it is facing, its assets and the current situation it is in. The preliminary report presented by Cardinal Kasper contained five chapters, four of which outlined positive points regarding the family and their theological foundation. The fifth chapter was to do with the pastoral problem of separation and the annulment of marriages and the administration of communion to divorced people who marry a second time, comes into this. What I didn’t like, was what some people, within the Church as well, said about the purpose of the synod: that it intends

to allow remarried divorcees to take communion, as if the entire issue boiled down to a case.

“We know that today the family is facing a crisis, a global crisis, young people don’t want to marry or they live together. I wouldn’t like us to fall into this question: Will it be possible for communion to be administered or not? The pastoral problem regarding the family is vast. Each case needs to be looked at separately. I would like to return to something Benedict XVI said on three occasions: The procedures for the annulment of marriage must be looked into, the faith with which a person enters marriage must also be examined, and we also need to make it clear that

the divorced are not excommunicated. So often they are treated as though they have been excommunicated. Choosing the theme for the synod on the family was a powerful spiritual experience, the discussion turned slowly toward the family. I am sure it was the Spirit of the Lord that guided us to this point.” ■

*From Interview of Pope Francis with Journalists During the Return Flight from the Holy Land (May 27, 2014). Reprinted with permission. For full text, visit [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)*

PHOTO CREDIT: Page 17: Pope Francis arrives for a morning session of a two-week synod on family issues at the Vatican, Monday, Oct. 13, 2014. AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia.

# Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons

*Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*

There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family. Marriage is holy, while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law. Homosexual acts “close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.”<sup>1</sup> (no. 4)

In those situations where homosexual unions have been legally recognized or have been given the legal status and rights belonging to marriage, clear and emphatic opposition is a duty. One must refrain from any kind of formal cooperation in the enactment or application of such gravely unjust laws and, as far as possible, from material cooperation on the level of their application. In this area, everyone can exercise the right to conscientious objection. (no. 5)

Every humanly created law is legitimate insofar as it is consistent with the natural moral law, recognized by right reason, and insofar as it respects the inalienable rights of every person.<sup>2</sup> Laws in favor of homosexual unions are contrary to right reason because they confer legal guarantees, analogous to those granted to marriage, to unions between persons of the same sex. Given the values at stake in this question, the State could not grant legal standing to such unions without failing in its duty to promote and defend marriage as an institution essential to the common good.... Legal recognition of homosexual

unions would obscure certain basic moral values and cause a devaluation of the institution of marriage. (no. 6)

Homosexual unions are totally lacking in the biological and anthropological elements of marriage and family.... Such unions are not able to contribute in a proper way to the procreation and survival of the human race.... As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development. This is gravely immoral and in open contradiction to the principle, recognized also in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that the best interests of the child, as the weaker and more vulnerable party, are to be the paramount consideration in every case. (no. 7) ■

*Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons* (2004), nos. 4–7. For full text, visit [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>1</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2357.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II.95.2.

# A GAY PARENT LOOKS at His Church

An interview with novelist Gregory Maguire

*Commonweal* associate editor Daria Donnelly interviews prominent novelist Gregory Maguire.

**DONNELLY:** How did your family come together?

**MAGUIRE:** For a long time I had wanted to adopt. That desire arose from both needs and capacities born in my own childhood. My mother, a convert to Catholicism, died in 1954 while giving birth to me. My early years included time in the care of relatives and the St. Catherine Infant Home in Albany. My family was restored and reshaped when my Irish Catholic father married my mother's best friend, the daughter of an Irish Catholic immigrant.

In my stepmother, I have a powerful model. She took on four motherless children and a husband in frail health and managed a family of nine with unstinting fairness and levelheaded Irish tenacity and moral conviction. She raised us as Catholics. In my mother, I also have a model of sacrifice and love. Her gift to me was life itself. Also, through her death, I experienced early losses and bewilderments that make me honor and seek community and family.

So when I first met Andy I raised the idea of adoption. He too had considered it. Ten months after we met, when his own mother was dying of cancer, he turned to me and said, "I'm ready."

We adopted overseas, one child at a time: two boys from Southeast Asia and a girl from Central America. The children now are five, three, and two. Were I younger I'd happily adopt one or two more.

One at a time, we brought them to be baptized. Our family photograph appears in the parish directory. We take the Maguire-Newman kids to Mass when we think we might make it through the Epistle.

**DONNELLY:** Underlying the CDF's (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) critical statement about gay partnerships is the idea of the complementarity of the sexes, and the idea that for same-sex couples to raise children violates God's plan and law. Do you at all credit or wrestle with this idea? For example, do you feel the need, as your boys and girl grow, to supplement family life with mothers?

**MAGUIRE:** Questions of sexual complementarity—of what would be ideal for a child—are well worth asking. Certainly, Andy and I are in the vanguard of this (we hope noble and not morally dubious) experiment of charity: a family headed by same-sex partners. As such, we feel a profound interest in making explicit the value of women, of mothers, aunts, neighbor ladies, grandmothers, nuns, and godmothers (each of our children has three godmothers). But since we haven't the capacity to change our genders—nor would we if we could—the more significant question to us is: Given where

Andy and I are, capable adults in need of loving children in a world where children are in need of capable loving adults, how much might be sacrificed if we placed the idea of sexual differentiation and complementarity above all other concerns?

Same-sex parents who adopt children aren't in danger of significantly dwindling the stock of abandoned, destitute, or orphaned children. The supply well outpaces demand. No married heterosexual couple that wants to adopt will go home empty-handed because we have adopted. Ought children be left in the streets and minimally staffed orphanages because we worry about complementarity?

To me, the moral question is one about the just application of resources and one's talents. We can provide a good home for otherwise "at risk" children. A good home implies presenting the nontraditional conditions of our family life openly to our children. They already know they have, or had, mothers abroad, and now they have no "mommies." We're obliged to inform our children of the heterosexual norm and to be direct—more direct in time, as they grow—about how and why our family developed as it did...

**DONNELLY:** What do you most wish for your children?

**MAGUIRE:** Above all, I want them to be good. If they can be healthy and happy, I also hope for that.

The English novelist Jill Paton Walsh (author of *Knowledge of Angels*

and *Lapsing*) once concluded an essay by saying that children “stand differently in the flow of time, and nothing is more certain than that they will survive us. They will inherit the earth; and nothing that we value will endure in the world unless they can be freely persuaded to value it too.”

I must share with my children my faith, its dramatic promise and possibilities, its murky history and contradictions, the guidance it can lend, and the challenges it must pose. Andy and I will tell them—when they’re old enough—about the courage it took to adopt them in this climate, about the heartache the Church from above can sometimes provoke, and the help that the Church from below sometimes can provide. We will choose not to whitewash the complications, and will hope the children see us as brave and devout, not craven and hypocritical.

That is what I wish for my children: not to be indoctrinated, but to question, and perhaps to be persuaded to value the Gospel message as I do....

**DONNELLY:** You mentioned the pain and anger you felt at the CDF statement. How do you manage those feelings?

**MAGUIRE:** I manage them by believing that, in enduring “in house” instead of outside the Church, I’m living out the Gospel of love for others to see. A friend of mine, a nun nearing retirement, phoned me in the wake of the CDF release and said, “I’m so glad you and Andy are in my life. It helps me make sense of my own vocation, my life of 40 years of service to the Church, to see you strong enough to stand up for what you believe.”

Now here’s the Church as I understand it: My friend’s life of service inspired me to be brave in my own life; my life is now giving her courage and comfort. Isn’t that what a community

of believers is for? Isn’t that one of the valid definitions of the Church?

When Andy did agree to adopt children with me, the first words out of my mouth were, “Of course they will have to be raised Catholic.” Andy said, “Of course.” He didn’t say, “Of course, unless the CDF or another governmental body issues a proclamation so difficult to live with that we must leave the Church and take our children with us.”

I sometimes feel the Vatican says of the fringe members of the Church: “The Church: Love It or Leave It.” I stay in the Church because I must, because it is the mystical body of Christ; it is the most palpable metaphor or nexus in which my frail human spirit and frailer body can know itself to be at home. In the Church, when I take Communion, I am joined by my dead father, by my dead mother, by the unremembered relatives who passed their faith along through the centuries. I am joined by the children of my children, by everyone who cherishes the Gospel of love, and who strives, however inconsistently, to put others before one’s self.

And I deal with the pain, in part, by continuing to be a Catholic as an act of defiance as well as an act of faith (and are they different things, even?). ■

GREGORY MAGUIRE is a novelist who has written more than a dozen books for children, as well as *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*.

Article originally published in 2004 in *Commonweal Magazine*. © 2014 Commonweal Foundation, reprinted with permission. For more information, visit [www.commonwealmagazine.org](http://www.commonwealmagazine.org).

PHOTO CREDIT: Page 19: © Tim Pannell/Corbis



# Agape Latte®

## On Faith and Family

Fr. Michael Himes, theology professor at Boston College, spoke to an overflow crowd at the popular C21 student speaker series Agape Latte about the power of faith and family. Here's an excerpt from the talk:

the point where we couldn't leave her alone for a moment. She would wander off. And so she went in to a nursing home. For the next seven years, I went every night to that nursing home and fed her, because they found it hard

evening. She seemed really very distracted. She didn't know she wasn't recognizing anybody. And I said to her, "Now, dear, do you know who I am? Do you remember who I am?" And she really scrutinized me. And then she said, "I'm sorry, I don't know that I could remember your name, but I do know that you're someone I loved very much."

Well, I've always said to my brother Ken (a Franciscan friar) that Mother was the best theologian in the family, that the two of us were just amateurs

most fundamental of all activities, not being loved, but loving.

That's what family gives us an intimate chance to do, in circumstances that may be very supportive or very painful, that we have the opportunity to give ourselves, to learn how to give ourselves to one another wisely and courageously and with tremendous forgiveness and deep acceptance.

If you learn that, you've learned everything that you need to know. If you learn everything else and you

“My father died a number of years ago, and my mother was living alone for years. We knew that she shouldn't be alone any longer, and so she decided to come and live with me, which I was absolutely delighted by. We had about 12 great years together here in Boston. My mother was an avid theatergoer and concertgoer, so we went regularly to the Boston Symphony and to theater here in Boston, and she'd show up at lectures at Boston College and at other universities because she just was interested in all sorts of things.

Finally, Mother began to show the signs, the unmistakable signs, of dementia, probably Alzheimer's caused. Eventually, it came to

to get her to eat unless it was me feeding her. I would hold her hand and just talk about anything that popped into my head until Mother dozed off for the evening, and then I would head out.

About a year before she died—she passed away a year ago last January—Mother said she was having a particularly bad

compared to her, because she got it exactly right. You may forget everything else, everything else in your life may disappear. You may forget even who loved you and how they loved you. But you never totally forget having loved someone else. You may forget being loved, but you never forget loving, because it is the most central, the most important, the

never find that out, you've missed what it is to be a human being, because human beings are called to be the people who do what God is. God is agape, and we get to enact it. That is the most extraordinary statement about being a human being that I know.”

Watch the full video: [www.bc.edu/c21family](http://www.bc.edu/c21family)



*Fr. Michael Himes speaking at Agape Latte with students on the topic of family, November 4, 2014, at Hillside Cafe.*

# C21 SPRING EVENTS

**Will My Kid Have Faith? A Conversation on the Challenges Families Face**

*February 23, 2015 | Luncheon*

Presenter: Daniel Ponsetto  
Director, Volunteer and Service Learning Center

Location/Time: Gasson Hall 100, Noon

Sponsors: The C21 Center's Advisory Committee and Office of Mission and Ministry

**Pastoral Challenges to the Family**

*February 26, 2015 | Lecture*

Presenter: Stephen J. Pope  
Professor, Theology Department

Location/Time: The Heights Room, Corcoran Commons, 5:30 p.m.

Sponsors: C21 Center and Theology Department

**CATHOLIC FAMILIES:  
CARRYING FAITH FORWARD**  
Video Series Release:  
March 15, 2015

**My Jesuit Family: Living Faith and Social Justice**

*March 23, 2015 | Lecture*

Presenter: Jeremy Zipple, S.J.  
Documentary filmmaker, America Media

Location/Time: Murray Function Room, Yawkey Center, 5:30 p.m.

Sponsor: C21 Center

**Keeping Hispanic Immigrant Families Together: Catholic Perspectives**

*March 30, 2015 | Panel Conversation*

Facilitator: Hosffman Ospino  
Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Education

Location/Time: The Heights Room, Corcoran Commons, 5:30 p.m.

Sponsors: C21 Center and STM

**Finding God in All Relationships**

*April 9, 2015 | Panel Discussion*

Presenters: TBA

Location/Time: The Heights Room, Corcoran Commons, 5:30 p.m.

Sponsors: C21 Center, Office of Mission and Ministry

**#Faith, #Family and #Future**

*April 14, 2015 | Student Conversation*

Presenter: Mary Troxell  
Assistant Professor,  
Philosophy Department

Location/Time: The Heights Room, Corcoran Commons, 6:00 p.m.

Sponsors: C21 Center, Philosophy Department

**Experiences with Dialogue at the Edge of Auschwitz**

*April 16, 2015 | O'Brien Lecture*

Presenter: Manfred Deselaers, Director,  
Auschwitz Center for Dialogue and Prayer

Respondent: Rabbi Daniel Lehmann,  
President, Hebrew College

Location/Time: Yawkey Center, Murray Function Room, 5:30 p.m.

Sponsors: Theology Department and C21 Center

**How Can Dante Save Your Life**

*April 23, 2015 | Book Lecture*

Presenter: Rod Dreher, writer, editor and blogger, *The American Conservative*

Location/Time: Fulton 511, Carroll School of Management, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Sponsors: Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life and C21 Center

Webcast videos will be available within two weeks following each event on [bc.edu/c21](http://bc.edu/c21)

**ABBREVIATIONS**

C21 Center: The Church in the 21st Century Center

STM: BC School of Theology and Ministry

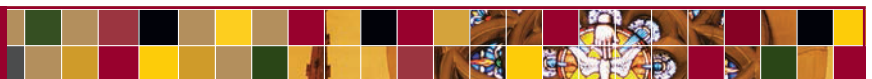
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# Five Things the Synod Did

*James Martin, S.J.*

What does the final report of the synod on the family mean for the Church? ...

[Canadian] Archbishop [Paul-André] Durocher believes that the overall tone of the “relatio” was more pastoral than could have been expected. So it represents a win for the Church. I agree. Also, finally talking about some things that had been largely taboo—new approaches to gays and lesbians, divorced and remarried Catholics, cohabitation—is another win....

So what might be the “takeaway” from the synod?

Here are five things the synod did:

**Dialogue:** The synod was an “authentic” synod, as Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn said the other day, in that it included actual dialogue. No one can doubt that. For many years Vaticanologists had speculated that such synods had been overly “managed,” that is, participants knew what they could and could not talk about, what they could and could not vote on, and more or less what the final outcome would be. This was clearly not the case at synod on the family. In his opening address to the participants, Pope Francis spe-

cifically asked the participants to speak freely, and prayed for the gift of *parresia* (a Greek term meaning, roughly, “openness”). Dialogue is now a part of the Church, at the very highest levels, and this is to the good.

[To me, this seems a rather “Jesuit” model of decision making. Jesuit superiors know, and explicitly say, that the Holy Spirit can work through everyone—both the superior and those men in his care. It is not simply a “top-down” method of governance. So in Jesuit decision making there is always a great deal of discussion and dialogue, which can often continue for a considerable length of time. At times, it’s uncomfortable....]

**Division:** There are fairly clear divisions in the Church on many of the issues related to the family (and sexuality), between what one cardinal termed those who focus on doctrine and those who focus on mercy. Of course, one could say that our doctrine is merciful and that mercy is part of our doctrine. But you know what I mean: Certain bishops favor a firmer application of laws already in existence (or a clearer explanation of them), and others prefer the “medicine of mercy,” as John XXIII had said at the opening of Vatican II....



These divisions spilled into the public forum, and then those divisions were taken up by various Catholics worldwide. Frankly, I was shocked at how vitriolic things became, particularly on social media. (For my part, I've never received more "hate tweets" than in the last two weeks.) At times even prelates moved beyond the usual politesse of the Roman *bella figura* that one associates with Vatican affairs. On the other hand, this is what the pope invited, and probably expected, when he called for openness.

**Transparency:** This synod brought us the following: lively daily press briefings with vigorous questioning from reporters, extremely candid comments from many bishops (remember Cardinal Wilfrid Napier's terming the interim report as "irredeemable," and Cardinal Reinhard Marx noting that "obviously" Church practice could change), an interim document that was made public, published notes from the working groups, and a final document published almost immediately after the voting—with the votes attached.

All this shows the pope's desire for transparency. And all this is good. It helps to clear the air of the scent of secrecy that attends many of these gatherings, increases the sense of accountability, and, also shows that the Church is less afraid of openness.

**LGBT:** One of the biggest issues in the media's coverage was the emergence of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) issues at the synod—which was, in the run-up to the synod, anything but a sure thing. That is, the synod participants could have avoided it. But from the day that a married couple spoke of their experience with another couple they knew who had a gay son, it was on the table. And to my mind, the media's focus on the change in tone in the interim "relatio," on these and other topics, released [after the first] week, was entirely justified. The first "relatio" included language about gays and lesbians that was new—dramatically new. ("Welcoming," "gifts and qualities," "mutual support," "precious," "partners," etc.) In addition, some bishops, like Cardinal Schoenborn, who spoke of an "exemplary" couple he knew, went out of their way to praise gays and lesbians. So it was indeed newsworthy.

The final document (in paragraphs that, again, weren't fully approved, but will remain topics of discussion) removed those words and, in essence, went back to the *Catechism*, which asks us to treat gays and lesbians with "respect, sensitivity and compassion." ...

Some will see that as a loss and may be disappointed. It's easy to understand why: The interim "relatio," which garnered so much attention earlier in the week, and which moved me deeply, spoke of "welcoming homosexual persons." Just the word "welcome" was refreshing. (By the middle of the week, the new English translation had "Providing for.") Now the synod speaks of "pastoral care of

the homosexual person." That is quite different. (Would you rather be welcomed or cared for?) Moreover, there is no mention of any "gifts or qualities" at all. But again, the topic of LGBT Catholics is now part of the discussion, and by insisting that those paragraphs were retained (even though they were not approved), Pope Francis is keeping them on the table.

**Beginning:** Lost in some discussions of the synod was that the last two weeks represented only part one. After this, the bishops and participants will return to their home dioceses and the worldwide Church will reflect on these proceedings until the next session, in October 2015. In the interim, the World Meeting of Families will take place in Philadelphia (with Pope Francis most likely attending) with similar topics being raised in talks, articles, homilies, and the like. So there will be further reflection.

Next October, the synod will meet again in Rome. (With some different bishops, by the way, for example, Archbishop Cupich, now of Chicago.) And, finally, Pope Francis will issue his apostolic exhortation on the synod, a document that enjoys a high level of teaching authority. Thus, while the synod is an important consultative body and Francis is very much in favor of "synodality," his is the final word on all these issues.

At times, when I was getting too involved in the daily press conferences, I reminded myself that, while these discussions are important and show the temperature of the Church on certain issues, the apostolic exhortation will be the most important document. When I read the documents of the Second Vatican Council, for example, I'm not that concerned about what Cardinals Ottaviani and Bea thought at the time, as much as I am with the final product. I'm more interested in *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* than one cardinal's particular "intervention" during one session of the Council.

All in all, the last two weeks have proven a very Jesuit "way of proceeding," as St. Ignatius Loyola would say. It's what we call discernment, which includes prayer, as well as much discussion, some division, and even some debates.

But in the end one person makes the decisions, and in this case it's the pope. At one point during his concluding speech to the bishops he said, playfully, "I am here and I'm the pope!"

Or as we say in the Jesuits, when it comes to the superior it's: "You discern, we discern, but I decide." ■

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is a Jesuit priest, author, and editor at large at *America*, the national Catholic magazine.

From *America Magazine* ([www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/fivethings-synod-just-did](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/fivethings-synod-just-did)). Reprinted with permission of America Press, Inc., (2014). All rights reserved.

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# VOICES *from* CAMPUS

What do young people think about family, relationships, marriage, and the future in relation to their faith and the Church? We asked a small group of juniors and seniors at Boston College in separate gender-based focus groups. Here are some of their responses:

## F E M A L E S

“I come from a big family, so I think I definitely picture having three or four kids at least, and chaos. I aspire to chaos. Friendly, happy, supported chaos.”

“Having two very loving, caring presences and parents in my life really shaped my idea of what I aspire [to] or what I want.... Hearing the statistics of divorce rates these days...I would hope for a loving marriage that’s grounded in faith and commitment, like my parents’.”

“I think that my view is a little bit different in light of... working at a crisis pregnancy center recently.... I really think that my definition of family has recently been increased to include anyone who provides a loving environment for kids.”

“I have never really ever totally completely pictured myself having kids, but I think that if I ever did, I’d probably be more inclined to adopt.... Especially with the classes I’ve taken here at BC, my world has just been opened up so much, and to just see all of the injustice and poverty—it’s something that I struggle with a lot, the luck of birth.... I think the ability to be able to hopefully provide better for kids who just wouldn’t even imagine it is kind of what I aspire to have.”

“I feel like especially with me being in school, although I really want to have a family and I would love to be a mom, it’s just not something I think about super often. I feel like there’s so many things that I want to do with my life, be it study and travel and work. And so I hope to do that one day, but I feel like it’s a little bit more on the back burner for me.”

“That whole can she have it all thing has gotten into my head.... There’s a lack of privilege of deciding. There’s always some judgment that’s going to happen: If you decide to stay at home, it’s like, ‘Oh, well, do you have a life? Do you have dreams? But if you decide to work, then it’s like, Don’t you care about your kids?’ I think...there’s a tension there and...that’s an apprehension I would have for family life and marriage: navigating that tension.”

“My parents got married at 22. My grandparents definitely got married by the time they were in their early 20s. But it’s taboo if you get married before you’re 25.”

“If I think about [marriage] in the abstract...I’m skeptical [because] I hear feminist dialogue and all this stuff. But if I’m thinking about it in terms of concrete and what I’m seeing and what I experience in my day-to-day life, I think that’s why I want to be married—because I see my parents, a relationship between equals. It makes them both better, and it makes their whole family better. It’s like a stable base to do other things. And there’s a lot of love there.”

“The idea of getting married has dualism in that [on the one hand] I’m going to take this faith journey with someone, I’m going to make this really important decision. And then [on the other hand] it’s also this wedding-planning-Pinterest nightmare of the societal-complete awfulness of planning this day that really doesn’t mean anything if this [relationship] isn’t in check.”

“Everything that marriage means in the Catholic context of a sacrament is important to me, and I would be looking for someone who shares the same view.... I think that commitment and faith in a sacrament makes you more free.... The way I picture it is [that] you become a better version of yourself because of another person. Not that it’s tying you down, but rather enhancing life.”

“The rationalizations [of cohabitation] make sense to me now that I’m facing it...in a committed relationship. It makes sense to really get to know the person, to really see how they live, to cut costs, all that kind of stuff.”

“I find the Catholic Church to be fundamentally and completely out of touch with family and marriage and dating and anything that has anything to do with anyone under the age of 50.”

“I think you can be Catholic and choose not to believe and align with some of the social [teachings].... I think you can believe in all the Catholic traditions and everything that

Catholicism stands for and not fundamentally believe that homosexuals can't be [welcomed] in the Church, that sex before marriage automatically means you're going to hell."

"I got really excited [that the synod] happened, because it's one of the first conversations [in the Church] I've ever heard that really seemed aware."

"I think forgiveness and mercy need to extend into more areas of Catholic life, especially when talking to young people."

"The concepts and ideas of what a traditional marriage should be should be expanded, given the context of today's world."

"It's not necessarily that the [Catholic moral] standards need to be lowered, but I do think that you can bring into this discussion committed relationships and what a committed relationship can look like at different stages.... I think that needs to be brought into the conversation about sex within the Catholic Church because I think... 'no sex before marriage' is very quickly becoming inconceivable for our generation."

## MALES

"Just thinking toward the future, I would want to figure out myself and my spouse's life, get that all squared away, and then think about kids."

"If you've found someone who you really love and can see yourself with, why wait [to get married]? A lot of it [for others], I think, is financials. But the way my parents explained it to me was half the fun is starting off and struggling together and making things work. I guess I come across as very pragmatic here, but financially, [cohabitation] makes a lot of sense."

"I think I'm against [cohabitation].... I just think there's something to be said about saving some sort of surprise element to the marriage, you know? If you're already living together and then you get married and then you come back from the honeymoon and you go back into the same place you were living together already, it's like, what has actually really changed?"

"Would you live with someone before you married them? I'd be like, no, because to me, you live with someone who you're married to. If you love them enough to live with them, why don't you love them enough to marry them? I think faith does play a role."

"Part of me wants a special person who you could spend time with and grow a relationship with, but part of me's like, 'Man, I don't know if I have the time for a girlfriend, to dedicate to her.'"

"I think there's pressure to have someone, whether it be hooking up or multiple hookups with different people or having somebody [steady]."

"For me, the Church is like a guide on where you should go, because there's history and tradition and faith all brought into it, over 2,000 years. Who am I in my 21 years of life to say that this is how I want to live or this is how I should raise my family, because this is what I feel right now?"

"I think the less alienating the Church is to other people, the more people will return to the Church. I think that comes through softening some of these lines that have been hard-set in the past."

"I'm someone who struggles with my position as a Catholic in the Catholic Church. A big part of that is, to me, a lot of these rules and the ideas that the Catholic Church is so hard on just seem—a lot of them strike me as unreasonable and kind of separated from the world we live in."

"Personally, I moved from a place of no sex until marriage to a place of—it's very similar—no sex until I know this is the person who I want to spend my life with, which is almost the same as marriage but not quite.... [Marriage] seemed kind of arbitrary. If I'm going to spend the rest of my life with this person, [and] I've already decided, I think I should be able to express my love just as much then as after the ceremony."

"I think we just fall in love with this idea of romance way too much, or this idea of 'the one,' and I'd say passion has taken over.... I think relationships now are almost [coextensive] with, 'Well, if it's not passion, not sparky enough, then it's no longer worth it.' And I think that's why we have these high divorce rates."

"I, again, don't think it's essential that you [and your partner] have the same faith... But I think it helps—I know me personally, my dating life, I have found myself more attracted to people of the same faith. You share the same values and are similar on that faith level that I just get along with better, because we can connect about going to Mass together. That's part of our lives. It has been, and hopefully it will be. I think that would help in that bond of relationship and marriage and family."

PHOTO CREDIT: Page 24–25: Courtesy of Office of Marketing Communications

# The REALITY of a HOPEFUL PEOPLE

*James A. Woods, S.J.*

**S**t. Ignatius and his followers long ago taught that being educated meant becoming symbols of hope and service not just for oneself or one's family, but for others as well. Today, Pope Francis echoes Ignatius's call for a change of mind and heart, and asks all to respond to Christ's most powerful message—hope. "Life, morality," he says, "is not a never falling down but an always getting up again."

A look around the nation confirms the reality. Marriages are "falling down," but Pope Francis's focus is on the "always getting up." This is the real story, the reality of a hopeful people. Hope offers possibilities, encourages couples to look beyond the fact that marriage, that iconic middle-class institution, is floundering.

Once largely regarded as a problem affecting the poor, today's retreat from marriage is very much a middle-class phenomena. High divorce rates (37 percent), increasing nonmarital child-bearing rates (44 percent), and low rates of marital bliss are common among the moderately educated middle class....

The past four decades have so reconfigured and redefined our understanding of marriage that few givens remain. Americans once saw marriage as a way to accompany a soul mate through life. The model promised a way for couples to fulfill their need for emotional intimacy, as well as sexual and personal satisfaction. This romantic view of marriage, however, stands in contrast to today's more pragmatic view, which sees marriage as an opportunity to share child-bearing and -rearing responsibilities, and reap the economic benefits that accrue from extended family cooperation. Surprisingly, in some ways this new vision of marriage is reminiscent of past models, which were often more pragmatic and perhaps less romantic.

Interestingly, the recession has made the soul mate model look impoverished, and the merger and acquisition model attractive. Couples have discovered the value of a husband



with a good health care plan, a wife with a promising career, and/or in-laws willing to provide free child care....

Unfortunately, today's retreat from marriage among the moderately educated middle class places the American dream beyond the reach of too many Americans. In many respects these high school graduates resemble their college-educated peers. They work, pay taxes, raise children, and take family vacations. A generation ago these middle Americans would have "identified with the institutional model of marriage and been markedly more likely to get and stay married even if they did not have much money or a consistently good relationship, they would have somehow made do."<sup>1</sup> For a nation that spends extravagantly on weddings, floods talk shows, websites, advice columns, doctors' offices, and social media with discussions, dreams, and debates about the perfect marriage, same-sex marriages, blended marriages, and unhappy marriages, the striking exodus from marriage is perplexing and discouraging....

Perhaps this is why Pope Francis's "never give up" message, so filled with hope and promise, resonates loudly around the world. Hope sustains people; it's the promise of tomorrow. It may defy definition, but it defines the life of believers.

## **SHARED BLESSINGS**

One of the many blessings of having lived my Jesuit vocation with enormous gratitude and joy for 66 years, and served for 45 years as a dean of nontraditional students under 30, is sharing with others the transformative power of hope. The privilege of preparing a thousand couples for marriage presents the opportunity to shift attention from the process, the techniques, the organizational details of the day and to focus on exploring just "who" is marrying and "what" is embodied in the "who."

This concept of preparation as a model isn't new; rather, it is tied to understanding the wonderful distinction St.



Pope Francis presided over the weddings of 20 couples in a historic ceremony at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, September 14, 2014.

Alberto Hurtado, a young Jesuit saint, made between teaching and educating. “In order to teach,” he said, “it is enough to know something. But to educate we must ‘be’ something. True education consists of giving oneself as a living model, an authentic lesson” within a sacramental life.

Sharing this concept of teacher as model raises the bar, shifts the focus from what is taught, to who we are as a teacher. Remember, in every role we assume in life, we teach. Couples will teach each other, the family they build, and everyone who comes into their life, as they tie their commitment to the larger communities of which they are a vital part.

### HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Instructing couples as they prepare to make one of life’s most important decisions comes naturally to this Jesuit. After all, recall that the Jesuit Order was born in a university. Committed to educating individuals to achieve the inner freedom to make good life decisions, the Jesuit ideals—faith, commitment, and service to others—blend seamlessly with building a solid foundation for marriage.

Though the bride and groom wed themselves, preparing a couple for the sacrament of matrimony and witnessing their vows provides an opportunity to instruct and remind them that as new symbols of hope, they can make a difference in so many lives.

Encouraging couples to believe all things are possible and to love each other and others generously can influence a couple’s decisions and potentially arrest the downward spiral so many marriage experiences....

This Jesuit has been blessed to have been present at the happiest and most hopeful moments in a couple’s life. Often asked what makes a marriage, not the wedding, become all a couple dreams of and hopes for, I must admit to responding cautiously: “I’m not certain.”

Despite all the research, assumptions, and statistical

analysis compiled over centuries, no one really knows exactly why two people fall in or out of love, decide to marry, divorce, or rock through life. There are clues, red flags as well as expert advice and wisdom offered by the married, unmarried, and never married. Novels, movies, magazines, social media sites, psychologists, physicians, and consultants are all eager to weigh in, ready to unravel the mystery of true love and long-lasting marriages....


Building and sustaining personal and professional relationships, and especially marital partnership, is hard work. It takes time, insight, responsibility, patience, humor, a genuine desire to work as a team, a willingness to accept the absence of clarity as well as an ability to empathize with the other’s point of view and a capacity for forgiveness. But even more importantly, it takes hope. It is hope that enlivens and enriches life. Pope Francis in a recent homily reminded the world: “Hope is like a bit of heaven that enlarges your Soul. With hope you go forward and it helps keep your eye on what awaits us.”

Hope prompts us to reach for new possibilities, to take risks, to put one foot in front of the other, to move ahead in spite of the darkness to the new Light. Hope lights the flame; brings couples to the altar; keeps marriage restless, alive, and young; sustains life’s adventures; and rewards them with promises fulfilled. ■

JAMES A. WOODS, S.J. is the former dean and namesake of the Woods College of Advancing Studies at Boston College.

<sup>1</sup>W. Bradford Wilcox and Elizabeth Marquardt, eds., *When Marriage Disappears: The New Middle America* (Institute for American Values, 2010), 39.

PHOTO CREDIT: Page 27–28: RealyEasyStar/Fotografia Felici/Alamy

 Learn more about the C21 Center’s resources related to marriage and “Catholic Families: Carrying Faith Forward” by visiting: [www.bc.edu/c21family](http://www.bc.edu/c21family).

# GO and DO LIKEWISE

*Tim Kochems*

**W**e live in the shadow of the manger<sup>1</sup>.

Any discussion of the family and the Church would do well to begin here.

We all can picture the light of the manger, *Emmanuel*, God with us! All of us are also inclined to imagine the light, hope, and joyful sense of family and community that comes with the majority of mostly-healthy births in mostly-healthy situations.

Now, imagine the shadows of the manger: The birth after rough and lengthy travel, far from supportive community, surrounded by questions of paternity, and requiring emigration to escape the danger of mass murder. It is easy to see all this leading to isolation and predictable family suffering. Let's name this aspect of the shadow: Vulnerability.

Another aspect occurs as time passes: Development. At no point, from birth to death are we whole or complete. Mostly-healthy children and families, within mostly-healthy situations, do become stronger and more secure, more involved and supported in our communities. Mostly. However, as we develop, we love more. We are more vulnerable the more we love. There is more to lose.

Imagine the panic when 12-year old Jesus was thought to be lost; the grief when Joseph died—intimate partner, provider, and father; the disruption when issues of emotional instability arose<sup>2</sup>; and the despair when

eventually the shadow of the manger—vulnerability amidst development—blended into the shadow of the cross.

So what is the major practical implication of living in the shadow of the manger? Since we are never fully formed and our vulnerabilities always affect our decisions, we will always be in need of mercy. Mercy means being intimately or lovingly present to each other in the midst of our vulnerable development. God came that dark night not as a forgiving adult, or even an adult friend, but in the most vulnerable human way possible, slowly developing at our mercy and offering mercy to the end. In the shadow of the manger, mercy is necessary.

A few years ago, I worked with a couple, Sean and Lisa—not their actual names. They made the most of their resources and developed into successful adults. Both were partner-track lawyers with fulfilling careers. They had talented children and supportive parents—one set even lived with them. Nevertheless, they were still vulnerable.

As we develop, we are called to relate more intimately to more people. Intimacy requires vulnerability. The most common response to vulnerability is protection. The most common protection is isolation. Nations, the Church, families, and individuals—all tend to isolate in order to protect from the risks and demands of intimacy.

Children and parents mostly isolate through limiting interpersonal

interaction. Each does his or her own thing. We also isolate through addictions, even to the continuously available, stimulating novelty of technology. A common protection among couples is infidelity. Like a child's tantrums, an affair is both a cry for more and a protection that repels.

Sean desired passionate love. He had been unfulfilled for years. He had an affair. Lisa was betrayed; her trust destroyed. Their children and parents suffered with the tension between them. In today's individualistic culture either person would have been justified to end their marriage.

However, this particular couple attempted something countercultural. Mercy in the shadow of the manger is countercultural.

Sean and Lisa bravely began to face and share their pain. Looking internally with mercy, they not only saw their longings, but also their own self-protections. Sean learned that he most longed for intimacy, but that he protected himself from it by not expressing himself and tending a passive self-image as easy to get along with. Lisa too did not realize that she was missing intimacy. Her protection was being an anxious but efficient manager, even in regard to the sex they shared regularly.

In noticing these protections, they were vulnerable firstly with themselves. When they later shared their hurts, they also shared their protections, and this helped them not blame each other.



Why did they choose the countercultural way? Well, why did the Good Samaritan help the vulnerable man beaten and rejected on the side of the road? The Samaritan did not even know the reasons the stranger had been beaten. The stranger might have first tried to rob whoever beat him. But the Samaritan carried within himself the human experience of needing mercy within the shadows. Both Lisa and Sean knew they needed more than the protection of rules, boundaries, and rejection.

Learning they longed for intimacy, the question came up, “How do we do that?” Fortunately they knew how to give their children what they assumed adults no longer needed. I asked, “How do you do intimacy with your children?” Sean immediately said, “Time. We spend time with them.”

I didn’t have to say, “‘Go and do likewise’—with each other.”

In order to deepen that time, Lisa practiced listening and became less efficient. Sean practiced communicating, feeling worthy to express himself within the marriage rather than despair and go outside of it to be heard. As a result, throughout the family there was more patience, less angry acting out. Three generations benefited.

Sean and Lisa met the challenge of vulnerably developing mercy and intimacy, not self-protection. Something of God was being reborn in the shadows of their human family that had earlier become quite dark. I like to think they were human sacraments offering grace to each other.

As a psychotherapist, I work in the manger’s shadow. Every day I witness

that through each other God is with us and responds to us with mercy. In our families and as church, we should all, “Go and do and do likewise” as we all vulnerably develop in the shadow of the manger. ■

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<sup>1</sup>I am indebted to Professor Guider, O.S.F. at Boston College for sharing this evocative phrase. See her *Living in the Shadow of the Manger*, in *Christian reflection: A series in faith and ethics*, 2003, The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University. [www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/ChildrenarticleGuider.pdf](http://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/ChildrenarticleGuider.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>Mark 3:21, 31-35.

PHOTO CREDIT : Page 29: *The Good Samaritan* (after Delacroix) by Vincent Van Gogh. © Todd Gipstein/Corbis

# Grief & GRACE

*Kathy Hendricks*

In their document, *A Family Perspective in Church and Society*, the United States Catholic Bishops defined family as “an intimate community of persons bound together by blood, marriage, or adoption for the whole of life.” First released in 1988, the document expanded the paradigm of family by looking beyond what had become accepted as “traditional.” Married couples with or without children; never married, separated, widowed, or divorced; grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other extended family members; and parents at various stages of full, empty, or partial nests are just a few examples within a broadened context of “family.”

Since *A Family Perspective in Church and Society* was first published, some attempts at addressing the various pastoral needs of family are being addressed while others remain largely ignored. One of the latter has a connection with the Catholic Church’s involvement in right-to-life initiatives. Great energy and numerous resources are channeled toward counseling, supporting,

and encouraging pregnant women to choose birth over abortion. Each one offers a hopeful alternative to women at a desperate time in their lives.

This support often drops away, however, once the baby is born. Presumably all will be well from that point on. For those who have experienced the reality of unintended pregnancy and adoption, however, it’s much more complicated. This is not a story we often hear and yet it is one with the potential to demonstrate the strength and resiliency of family ties and how these extend outward in profound and life-changing ways.

## **A STORY OF GRIEF**

When my daughter, Anna, told me she was pregnant, my heart broke. At 15, she was way too young to undertake the responsibilities of motherhood and too caught up in the rush of emotions to understand the long-range effects the baby’s birth would have on her life. After months of counseling through Catholic Community Services, she decided to place her child for adoption.

As difficult as this time was for us, I can only imagine how much harder it would have been without the openness of family and friends who surrounded Anna with their love and acceptance. Not so long ago, a teen-age pregnancy was shrouded in secrecy. The girl was often hustled off to be with distant relatives or to live in a group home. The baby was taken away at the time of adoption and the birth mother left to fend for herself.

At the time of its release, *A Family Perspective in Church and Society* affirmed the growing understanding of family systems and the interdependent nature of domestic life. “...A family is more than the sum of its parts. It is a dynamic and developing system whose members are radically interdependent. Individuals participate in their systems rather than being mere parts. The way one person depends on another, the fact that a person acts independently, the health of a parent, the aging and illness of a family member, a child’s maturing and leaving home—all these events in the life of one or another



family member have an effect on the lives of all family members” (pages 40–41).

The impact of family systems is illustrated powerfully in Mike Leigh’s film *Secrets and Lies*. It tells the story of Hortense, a well-educated, middle-class black woman who, after the death of her adoptive mother, goes in search of her birth family. She meets her working-class white mother, Cynthia, and discovers a dysfunctional family system fed, in large part, by the secrets they keep and the lies they tell that curtail mutual understanding. The shame Cynthia holds over the circumstances of Hortense’s birth surfaces and becomes clear in the fractious relationship she has with her other daughter, Roxanne as well as her brother and sister-in-law. It’s a powerful example of the negative outcomes when the truth is hidden and eventually denied.

We were much more fortunate. Catholic Community Services only dealt with open adoptions, ones in which the birth parents remain in touch with their child. The director of the agency explained that, by offering both families the option of staying connected, a healthier situation results for all concerned, particularly the child. It also alleviates the damage that results from keeping secrets or telling lies. Shame, regret, and unanswered questions are hardly healthy ground upon which to raise a child or build loving relationships. From the day of her birth, my granddaughter was going to be told the truth about a mother who loved her too much to raise her without the maturity and stability needed for a healthy upbringing. Through the generosity of her adoptive parents, my granddaughter would also understand “family” as a much larger reality.

The support and counsel Anna received from Catholic Community Services throughout her pregnancy and the birth of her daughter were wonderful. Once the adoption was finalized, however, none of the counselors reached out to her again. Despite the hopeful prospects

associated with the process, it was a painful experience for Anna. It seemed to imply that she would now “get over it” and move on with her life. While the latter was necessary, there was also deep grief over the loss she suffered. She was not alone in this. My husband, Ron, and I were unprepared for the emotional toll it took to let go of a grandchild we might never come to know. What wounded Anna wounded us as well.

### A STORY OF GRACE

While systemic issues can result in family dysfunction, they can also give way to grace. Such has been our experience over time. Anna maintained contact with the adoptive family for several years and then, inexplicably, all communication ceased. It was distressing because she was left not knowing whether her daughter was safe, well, or even alive. After two years, however, Anna learned the reason for the disruption—a divorce and a move out of the state. The adoptive parents continued to recognize, however, the importance of an ongoing relationship with our family. Anna was not only put back in touch with her daughter, but Ron and I were given the chance to visit with our granddaughter when she came back to Colorado for visits. Contact resumed, at first sporadically, and then more consistently. Last year, Anna got married. Her daughter was the maid of honor at the wedding.

In her book *Traveling Mercies*, Anne Lamott describes the way in which the community of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church welcomed and prayed for her son, Sam, seven months before he was born. The largely African-American congregation surrounded her, an unmarried woman and recovering alcoholic, with love, support, and boundless generosity. After Sam was born, the women in the church took to calling him “our baby.” And so the system grows. The grace that emerged is not something Lamott completely understands but wholeheartedly embraces. Grace, she writes, “...meets us where we are but does not

leave us where it found us” (page 143).

Grace in family life often abounds in ways we least expect. The day I learned of Anna’s pregnancy, the bottom seemed to fall out of my world. Looking back, I now see ours as a story of infinite grace, leading our family to places we didn’t expect and drawing us closer to one another in ways we could hardly have imagined. We didn’t shade the story with secrecy but relied on those who offered strength, support, and wise counsel. The generosity of the adoptive parents brought an affirmative understanding to Anna about a decision she never has to second-guess. The deep admiration I hold for her selfless decision, made with wisdom far beyond her years, grows each time I am with her. And, best of all, my granddaughter knows what it means to be a family bound together by birth *and* adoption and how it truly is for the “whole of life.” ■

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To say that family is rooted in faith is not to say that it’s completely blind, or that it’s completely about luck or fate or the unknown. For followers of Jesus, it’s about faith that God is in charge, that our lives have meaning, that love is a window to eternity. In the light of Jesus’ faith, family is ultimately about a life’s purpose. To say it a little differently, nothing of family life is meaningless: God can orchestrate joys and griefs, successes and failures, expressions of love or experiences of pain toward something beautiful.

Tim and Sue Muldoon, *Six Sacred Rules for Families* (Ave Maria Press, 2013), p. 5.



# Dear Eighth Graders

Patrick at his graduation ceremony May 30, 2014

*Beth Foraker*

In June 2014, Patrick Foraker graduated from St. James School, in Davis, California, which he attended from the kindergarten to the eighth grade. Patrick's mother wrote this letter to his classmates 100 days before their graduation.

Dear Eighth Graders,

Way back in the fall of 2005, you entered kindergarten and a little experiment was going on.

You had a student in your class with an extra chromosome, otherwise known as Down syndrome.

No one came out and told you about this student and you just accepted him the way you accepted all of the other children in your class.

He couldn't run as fast as you could.  
He couldn't write as well as you could.  
He couldn't speak clearly.  
And yet, he was part of you.

You figured it out.

You naturally, without any adult intervention, knew that this guy needed some support.

You let him use a different kind of basket when you played two-on-two basketball.

You threw the ball a bit differently so that he could catch it more often.

You walked a little slower to be by his side.

You accepted him.

Did you know you had a choice?

Not really...because we tricked you.

We just put him in your kindergarten class—where kindergarteners just want to have fun.

\*\*\*\*\*

When Patrick was born, as soon as he was born, the doctor whisked him away, checked him all over, and brought him back to us a few hours later with a new label:

Down syndrome.

The doctor closed the door.

He put a sign on the door telling others not to visit us.  
He didn't even let Jack or Mary Kate come in to see their little brother.

He thought this label would take some getting used to.  
He thought we would be crying and scared.  
He wanted us to have time.

He was coming from a good place...trying to be kind... but in truth, he was being cruel.

You know why??

He never went to school alongside someone who had this label.

He was afraid of it.  
He didn't understand it.  
He thought it was worth grieving.

Patrick did not get a celebration in those first hours of his birth.

No joy.  
No laughing and photo-ops.  
A whole lot of serious.

Can you imagine?

Probably the one person who is as joy-filled as could be and that was his welcome.

Maybe that's why he celebrates birthdays, all birthdays, in the biggest way possible now.

What was it like when you were born?

Oh, how your family celebrated!  
How loved and awaited you were.

\*\*\*\*\*

So here we are nine years after beginning the experiment.  
1,520 days you've been together.  
Only 100 left until graduation.

I can't thank you enough for your acceptance.  
Your grace.  
Your friendship and kindness...

You know why?

Because you weren't nice out of pity or because morally you thought you should or because you were trying to be nice or even because your parents told you to be nice.

You were accepting because you had the chance to get to know someone before you knew his label.

Best of all, Patrick had this chance.

That was our dearest hope for Patrick...at St. James he could be Jack and Mary Kate's little brother.

He didn't have to be "Patrick with Down syndrome."

He got to just be Patrick.

If only you could know how profound that gift is.

Everywhere else, and I mean everywhere else, he is "Patrick with Down syndrome."

Here, in this little school of 300, he is label-less.

It's grace in the ordinary every single day.

Did you know that Patrick will be the first person with Down syndrome to graduate from a Catholic school in our entire diocese???

He's the only person I know who has Down syndrome and is on student council, anywhere.

Do you know that because of your acceptance and the way your class has shown the school and the bigger world how to be as people that you are changing the world?

For the better.

Do you know that still to this day principals and priests at other schools say no when a family who has a child with Down syndrome asks to go to their parish school??

That craziness still happens.

Why?

Because that principal or that priest didn't go to school alongside of people with disabilities.

They're scared and ignorant.

They don't realize just how normal it is.

Someday you might be a principal.

Or a teacher.

Or a banker.

Or a parent.

I know that your kindness and awareness will be reflected in those jobs.

I can't wait to see what you do with your level of justice and equality and care.

I'm so excited about our future.

Because of you.

(And your parents, of course.)

Let's make the last 100 days the best yet.

Now you know the experiment.

You can tell your side of the story.

Share what you know.

Share your experiences.

Share with the world what equality and social justice look like and feel like...

wait, it just feels normal....

like how it's supposed to be.

Exactly, my friends.

Never tolerate segregation or separation.

Anywhere.

You know the truth.

Together, we're better. ■

BETH FORAKER is a former school teacher, blogger, and founder of the National Catholic Board on Full Inclusion. To read more of her writings, visit [grace-in-the-ordinary.blogspot.com](http://grace-in-the-ordinary.blogspot.com).

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PHOTO CREDIT: Page 32: top left photo, Patrick with his family, Photos by Beth Foraker.

For more information, visit  
[fullinclusionforcatholicsschools.org](http://fullinclusionforcatholicsschools.org)



*Registered nurse Shirley Hulgan comforts a patient who is in her hospice care.*

**F**riday afternoon at the hospice center. I punch in and eye the whiteboard, looking for empty white strips and unfamiliar names, quickly piecing together who has died, who is still living in this 18-bed facility. I start at the bottom of the list, Room 19 (no Room 13 here—these folks have had their fair share of bad luck). Room 19 is the stomping ground of the Delgado family. Miguelito, five years old, with his bald pate and big eyes, is speeding up and down the hallways in a motorized Big Wheel. His two older sisters will be coming “home” from grade school soon, and his younger sister, Lily, is being her cute, showboat self, hanging out once again at the nurses station while mom naps on the extra bed in Miguelito’s room....

In Room 16 is the John Roth family, with Miles Davis on the CD player

and pale ale in the cooler. They were hanging out last night, and they’ll be hanging out tonight and through the weekend, spirits never flagging, manners always impeccable, their love for their husband and father and brother deep and wide and joyful....

In Room 12 is “Airman” Mike Grable, an African-American and former professional wrestler, whose seven children will one day soon accompany his barrel-chested body down the long corridor, past the nurses station, through the lobby, and out the front door, singing “Amazing Grace” as they go.

The north-wing patients are present and accounted for.

It is a quiet but lively place, this unit. Periodically, ambulance drivers enter with their bright orange stretcher contraptions, bearing sedated patients

whose pale faces look tiredly out over white sheets and blankets, a small knot of family bringing up the rear. And while many of these patients end up being discharged to their homes after short stays, a great many of them leave on the black stretchers maneuvered down the corridor by funeral-home attendants, the same family members trailing behind.

What happens while they’re here cannot but prompt reflection.

I am a nurse practitioner by training, and the field of hospice and palliative care is my *métier*. I have assumed various roles and performed various duties over the years, spending time as a field nurse visiting hospice patients and families in their homes, as a hospital-based palliative-care consultant tending to terminally ill patients in the hospital or

# THE LAST NEW PERSON

*Mary Lee Freeman*

being discharged, and as a nurse in a freestanding hospice facility....

There are a few things one learns, playing a bit role in the lives of the dying and their families. One is that “death with dignity” is an ambiguous term. Another is that suffering is part of the human condition, and trying to stamp it out or ignore it or gloss over it is a dangerous illusion.... Some patients and families are veritable black holes of need, with generations of sin and dysfunction that hardly lend themselves to easy understanding, let alone tidy solutions, happy deaths, and what the bereavement experts call “uncomplicated grief.” Affixed to the wall above my desk is a scrap of paper with this reminder from H.L. Mencken: “There is always an easy solution to every human problem—neat, plausible, and wrong.”

Hospice workers know—but sometimes forget—that we are seeing just the tip of the iceberg of people’s histories.... I often find myself, when I am visiting patients in their homes, in the position of being the last new person to get to know them, of being the last nonfamily contact with the outside world. Sometimes I am rather absurdly but quite obviously looked to as the embodiment of “the world,” as in, “What does the world think of me? How will the world remember me?” Opinions about the dying person are already well established and seemingly unshakable among family members. It is with the visitors from hospice that the dying person has a last chance to be better than he really was....

It’s 9:30 p.m. on the unit. The Delgados have become so many lumps under blankets on the beds, the couch, the floor. I learned that lesson the other night, when I unsuspectingly stepped on tiny Lily as I tiptoed into Miguelito’s darkened room to administer, through the “central line” sutured into his chest, his final medications of the day. It is against his grieving father’s chest that Miguelito’s sedated body will be pressed weeks later after a morning of fright and struggles for air. Death will come that afternoon, quietly, before his doting sisters return from school....

John Roth’s family welcomes me in with smiles. Frank Morgan’s “Mood Indigo” has replaced Miles Davis on the CD player. A daughter follows me out into the hallway. “Those doors to his patio—a bed can fit through them?” “Sure,” I say. “We could wheel him out there?” “Sure,” I say. A few days later, the sun will be shining, the breeze blowing, and the omnipresent family scattered around the patio when John draws his last breath. Each time there’s a “patio death” I think of St. Francis, hoisted outdoors in his last hour by his own request that he might die lying upon the cool brown earth....

In Mr. Grable’s room, one daughter remains. “How do you keep doing this work?” she asks me. “Isn’t it depressing?” No matter how many times I am asked that question, it still

takes me by surprise. I am not the one with the chronic disease, dealing with the ravages of it on my body and grieving the impending loss of my life and all that is dear to me. Even more to the point, I am not a family member who has been shouldering the multiple burdens of caregiving, of medical bills, of contemplating life without my beloved. It is a strange thing to walk the hospice hallways, amidst such suffering, and to have a question posed about my sustenance.

I am tongue-tied not only because the question seems directed to the wrong party, but because I struggle to put acceptable words to the images and feelings that crowd my mind. “Should I just say it?” I think. “Should I just say, I pray?” For the Dorian Gray families, ugly from decades of sin and dysfunction; for the relentlessly cheerful patient with ALS who smiles even as she cries about no longer being able to walk in the woods or weed her garden; for a 26-year-old patient’s mother, stricken and wide-eyed, absolutely certain that her lapsed Lutheran son will be going to hell; for the family of a strong and vibrant colleague who just weeks before had been bathing patients but then occupied a room of her own on the unit, preceding into death some whom she had bathed. In prayer, as in life, the neat categories—patients, families, professionals—meld one into another. We are all the living; we are all the dying, all of us sustained by grace and mercy and love. ■

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# FAMILIES, PASTORAL CARE, AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

## *The Catholic Style*

*J. Bryan Hehir*

Since the earliest centuries of the Church's life, children and families have been at the heart of its ministry. In a Catholic understanding and vision, families are essential for a vibrant Christian community, and the family is a foundation stone of civil society. Care of children and families has extended beyond pastoral care to social institutions dedicated to education, social service, and health care. To use the Archdiocese of Boston as an example, this tradition of care for families is embodied in the work of Catholic Charities (the largest nonprofit social service agency in eastern Massachusetts), St. Mary's Center for Women and Children (offering a spectrum of care for homeless pregnant women, training programs for employment, and care for traumatized children), and the Planning Office for Urban Affairs (providing housing for lower-income families). In addition, social service is complemented by Catholic education (K through 12) often in urban areas serving with uniquely successful programs.

These examples are replicated around the country in Catholic Charities, Catholic health care, and Catholic education. Rather than remain at the descriptive level, however, it is more pertinent to focus on the rationale for care of children and families in terms of two questions: (1) why we do this; and (2) how we do it as a Church.

**Why:** The why question has a theological and an empirical response. The theological response has been found in the Scriptures, again at the Second Vatican Council, and most recently by Pope Francis. Both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures identify "widows, orphans, and resident aliens" as privileged individuals in God's eyes and God's care. From the powerful voice of the prophets, to Mary's Magnificat, to Jesus in Mt. 25 (the judgment of the nations), the consistent imperative is proclaimed for the Church: be to these what God is for them—a refuge and a support. The final document of Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, is biblical in inspiration and analytical in its style: Together these sources are woven into an ecclesiology to place the Church in the midst of the world as a servant and a sign of hope, especially for those in greatest need. Pope Francis

has reinforced and reanimated this social tradition multiple times by word and example, calling the Church, in his evocative phrase, to stand forth as a "field hospital" in the midst of human needs of various kinds; among these he has identified the family as fundamentally important.

The empirical answer to "why" is the socioeconomic pressures families face even in this nation of staggering wealth and persistent poverty. In the years since the financial crisis and the lengthy Great Recession, the Census Bureau has identified poverty in the United States as hovering around 14–15 percent of the population; in 2013 the official poverty rate was 14.5 percent and the poverty rate for children was 19.9 percent. Again, to use Massachusetts as an example, the *Boston Globe* this summer ran two articles about continuing poverty in the Massachusetts suburbs and the rising rate of children in poverty in the commonwealth. The "why" of the Church's social ministry is, therefore, grounded in the resources of our faith and is responsive to our surrounding social circumstances.

**How:** The why of Catholic social ministry (in its educational, health care, and social service institutions) has remained stable over the centuries. The Gospel mandates to feed the hungry, house the homeless, care for the sick, and share the social vision of faith have informed the conscience of Catholics personally and institutionally. The "how" of this ministry has manifested more diversity and change over time. The change in part has been due to the fact that in the United States these social ministries were at first dedicated to care for the Catholic community, then gradually shifted to care of the whole community. The change also was due to the rise of the American version of the social welfare state. This phrase is not limited to the idea of "welfare" in a narrow sense, but refers instead to the concept of the social responsibility of the state in meeting basic human needs of the citizenry. The reality is common to virtually all postindustrial democracies even though there are specific variations among countries in Europe, North American, and Japan.

The Catholic Church's self-understanding of its social

obligations corresponds to the social welfare model not only in terms of what is to be done, but how it can be executed. The Church has social responsibilities no matter what the state does; and if the Church and state can work in tandem each will fulfill its social role more expansively and effectively. For Catholicism these two ideas were not purely theoretical; in each of these areas of ministry to children and families there were preexisting institutional structures that had been supported and staffed primarily if not exclusively by the Catholic community.

A unique role in this pattern was fulfilled by women religious. The Catholic conception of partnership with public authorities had roots in the Middle Ages; it also had been part of the development of the social system in

collaborative model has been incremental and evolutionary extending over the last 40 years. Beginning with the 1973 abortion decision (*Roe vs. Wade*) of the Supreme Court and extending through a range of bioethical issues, to more recent decisions of the law and policy about marriage and family, the common ground between secular policy and Catholic social policy has shrunk. In response to this trend, Catholic leadership has increasingly retreated to a position that is less in search of practical solutions to these conflicts and more inclined to a clash of cultures model of engagement. This statement needs explanation: Obviously, a “practical solution” cannot be based on a violation of central norms of Catholic morality. But some of these cases, while not appealing to a Catholic moral vision, admit of



*Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley joins the Cheverus Award recipients and their families at a reception in neighboring Cathedral High School following the November 21 Vespers service.*

Europe. The scale and scope of the U.S. social system offered a very different challenge as did the constitutional limitations on the state's cooperation with any religious community. In spite of these differences, the Church, across the country, offered its institutions, its experience, and a skilled community of professionals to the society at large. Catholic Charities, again at the local, state, and federal levels, led the way. When the federal government became more deeply engaged in health care, the preexisting Catholic health systems were a natural ally.

Two principles governed this church-state relationship at every level. First, public funds were not to be used for directly religious purposes (e.g., worship) but could be used to support religious communities fulfilling needed secular functions in society. Second, secular mandates of the state should not require contracting religious communities to violate their basic religious and moral belief systems. Over time it became clear, particularly in the legal system, that these two basic principles were easier to assert than to interpret.

The more troubling phenomenon in the last 40 years has been changes in the American political-legal system that could threaten the broad fabric of collaboration between the state and the Catholic social system. The threat to a

tightly defined but admissible areas of cooperation between secular and Catholic conceptions of the morally licit.

In the midst of this intensive struggle the rationale for the existence of Catholic social and health care institutions should not be forgotten. Proposals to close down agencies, hinted at periodically in some quarters, miss the point that more than one moral question for the Church is at stake here. Protecting Catholic identity and not giving scandal are basic concerns for the Church. But so is provision of food, counseling, and care for the vulnerable. There is a need to balance multiple goods in this debate. Our social institutions are the face of the Church for many in American society. They deserve protection for their Catholic identity; but they also must creatively preserve the ability to maintain the broad public role they have played in Church and society. That, too, is a valuable moral good. ■

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PHOTO CREDIT: Page 37: Gregory L. Tracy/the Pilot

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