

*Maintain the truth lovingly and
 always love truthfully.*
 St. John Paul II

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You Can't Share What You Don't Have
PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

As you know, God designed the family to be the domestic church, and to be the great educator that makes human society possible. Today, we live in a culture where the breakup of families is taking place on a scale perhaps unprecedented in human history. The contraceptive lifestyle and now the legalization of homosexual "marriage" completely contradict the divine nature of the Sacrament of Matrimony. The world is truly threatened with a dismal future.

But, as Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and now Francis have all reaffirmed, we Christians have a duty to resist such radical deviations from God's plan. *Catholic Parents OnLine* exists to do just that. There is the basic truth that you can't give away what you don't have. We believe that we must know our faith if we are to share it with others.

Our Savior's last command was to proclaim our faith throughout the world. It's critical that we understand the depths of our faith so that we can come to understand, live and share it with others. Our new one-of-a-kind DVD series: *Beauty, Truth, Goodness: The Fundamentals of Catholicism* by Fr. Robert Altier is the perfect answer to help bring faith and hope to our families and our future. Please see page 8 for more information on this beautiful series.

Let us continue to keep our Catholic Church, the clergy and our families in prayer, and thank you for your continued support!

Be sure not to miss the annual CPO Lenten Retreat coming soon! This year's theme is: *The Passion of Christ: The Cost of Divine Mercy*, featuring Father Robert Altier. The Retreat will be held on Saturday, March 12, 2016 at the Church of Saint Agnes in St. Paul, Minnesota. For more information and to register, please see the flyer on the back cover. Seating is limited, so register early!

God bless you and yours,
Colleen Perfect
President, Catholic Parents OnLine

Teresa Jensen, Colleen Perfect,
 and Kristen Coyne at the 2015
 CPO Lenten Retreat.



2015 Synod on the Family

BY FR. ROBERT ALTIER, CPO SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Back in October, there was an Extraordinary Synod that took place in Rome looking into questions about marriage and family. There was much discussion about many controversial topics, ranging from allowing Catholics who are divorced without an annulment and now in a civil marriage, to receive Holy Communion, to questions regarding same-sex relationships. This synod was the second of a two synods addressing similar issues. The question that many people have in light of these discussions is whether or not the Church can change any of her teachings. This is the topic I would like to address in this article. Before saying anything else, we need to make some distinctions to clarify the topic.

First, there are some things which are divine law and other things which are man-made laws of the Church. Second, there are those things which are dogmas, others which are doctrines, and other things which are discipline. These distinctions are necessary because there are limits to what the Church can change. If there is something which is a matter of law or discipline which was instituted by the Church, this can be changed. Some examples of this include the fasting and abstinence rules, or the use of the vernacular languages at Mass. These are man-made laws or disciplines which can be changed in light of the situation facing the Church and the world at the time. The Pope can change these things at will. A Vatican congregation or other person with authority can suggest changes which can be approved by the Pope. Similarly, a synod of Bishops has no authority of itself to change anything, but it can recommend to the Holy Father that something be added, changed, or deleted.

When it comes to matters of divine law, dogmas, or truths that are revealed by God, no one, not even a Pope or a Church Council, can change these. In other words, the Pope can change the points in Canon Law that have been implemented by the Church, but the Pope cannot change the Ten Commandments or anything else that God revealed. This is the part that I found so problematic with the recent Synod: they were arguing over matters that are Divinely revealed and dogmatically defined. If one looks back over the history of the Church Councils, you will find many heated debates over topics we now take for granted. However, those arguments were over things that had not yet been explicitly defined. For instance, when the question of the Person of Jesus was addressed, there were some who proposed that He was merely a human person like us; others said He was only God and not man; some said He was both a human person and a Divine Person. Since the matter had not been determined dogmatically as yet, no one was guilty of heresy as they made their points (sometimes very passionately).

However, once the matter was determined, it would be heresy to continue to hold to ideas contrary to what had been concluded.

In this synod, there were arguments regarding the very nature of marriage, sin, and the Eucharist. While it is reasonable to look for ways to address the pastoral issues we face today, it is neither reasonable nor acceptable to suggest that we can change what the Church teaches to make it more palatable for those who have either gone astray or outright rejected the teaching of the Church. Neither is it acceptable to say that we can continue to teach the same things officially, but in

practice essentially ignore those teachings and allow people to engage in sinful practices.

The beauty of the questions of marriage is that God Himself has revealed the basic truths about this blessed union of persons. From the beginning God made them male and female; Jesus taught that if anyone divorces and marries another, that person commits adultery. St. Paul is clear that anyone who receives Holy

Communion unworthily (in the state of mortal sin) becomes guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ. These points are all matters of Divine revelation: they are not up for discussion.

Shortly before the synod began, the Holy Father introduced some changes to the annulment process. This process is employed to determine whether or not there are grounds to state that a marriage was not a Sacrament (because there was something seriously wrong at the moment the vows were made). Since the Church developed the process, the Church can change the process. However, the Church cannot change the fact that if there is a valid Sacramental marriage, the two are joined for life and no one, not even a Pope, has the authority to separate them. All of this is a long way of saying that the Church has the authority to change what she has implemented by way of her laws and disciplines, but those things which a Council has defined dogmatically or a Pope has defined infallibly are not able to be changed. Nor can the Church change anything that God has revealed. God revealed that marriage is between one man and one woman and that when God unites the two persons, that union lasts for life. It is also clear that adultery is a mortal sin and that no one in the state of mortal sin may receive Holy Communion. If a person falls and commits a sinful act, this can be forgiven in the confessional. But when someone is living in a perpetual state of sin (cohabitation or an invalid marriage), this cannot be forgiven until the person repents and changes the living situation so that it is no longer sinful. Since these are matters of doctrine and revelation, the Church has no authority to change them.



ARTHUR A. HERKENHOFF AWARD

Art Herkenhoff was a true friend and one of our founding Board members. He was a hero in all the areas that truly matter: in Faith, family and pro-life involvement. Art had enormous courage in the face of opposition to proclaim the Truth of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, and he always exhibited true charity, humility and joy. Each year CPO receives many outstanding nominations for the Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award. The Board of Directors chose to present the 2015 Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award to a remarkable woman, Mrs. Marlene Reid.

Marlene is a woman of strong Catholic faith. She has demonstrated how she always puts others first and defends the most vulnerable. Marlene was a registered medical technologist with the American Association of Clinical Pathologists. She also taught Hematology at St. Mary's Hospital in Minneapolis. Marlene has been involved with many very worthy organizations. She serves on the Board of the *Catholic Defense League*, and was President of the *Human Life Alliance* for 12 years. She has worked with *Women for Responsible Legislation*, lobbying for pro-family, pro-life and pro-ecency laws. Along with her daughter, Judy, who founded the *Eastern-European Children's Fund*, she has helped place orphans in good, loving foster homes. She also provided crib sheets, clothing and many other desperately-needed items for the orphanages in the Ukraine and Russia.



Marlene Reid, with members of the Art Herkenhoff family.

Marlene takes great joy in her wonderful family: her husband, Dan, their 6 children (one who is deceased), their 32 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. Marlene has faithfully served God and others throughout her entire life. Marlene Reid received the 11th Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award at the CPO annual Luncheon & Fundraiser held at the Southview Country Club in St. Paul on October 24, 2015.



2015 Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award winner, Marlene Reid, with family and friends.

The CPO Board of Directors seeks the names of individuals who would be worthy of nomination for the 2016 -12th Annual Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award. The persons nominated should exhibit the same qualities, principles and values which characterized the life and person of Art Herkenhoff: Faith, family, pro-life involvement, courage, charity and joy.

Please submit your nomination by October 1, 2016. You may complete the Online Nomination Form at: www.catholicparents.org/herkenhoff/index.html or contact us at 651-705-5409 and we'll be happy to mail you the form.

Who Will Guard My Little Ones?

BY MARILYN GRUTSCH

America, you are beautiful...and blessed... The ultimate test of your greatness is the way you treat every human being, but especially the weakest and most defenseless. If you want equal justice for all and true freedom and lasting peace, then America, defend life.

We have fallen short of this admonition from St. John Paul II during his visit to America in 1987. One of the greatest atrocities of our time is the slaughter of our own children in the womb. The battle of abortion rights versus protecting life has been going on for over four decades since it was legalized, with both sides ferociously defending their belief on the issue. In the early years, abortion rights advocates believed, or at least convinced potential abortion prospects, that what they were expelling was not really a baby, but

just a glob of tissue. Then came advanced technology, such as ultrasound, leaving no doubt that this is a developing human being. One would think that might have ended the debate and left everyone aghast at the thought that we had legalized killing of

human babies. But instead, we are actualizing Pope Paul VI's predictions that we would continue down that slippery slope beginning with contraception, then abortion, partial birth abortion, infanticide and now selling aborted baby parts. There have been past eras of atrocities, carnage, violence, genocides, and terrorists acts which we look back upon and shake our heads in horror. We ask, "*Why did good people not stop these evils?*" It begs one to wonder what our future generations will think of our times. Have we been so blinded by sin or de-sensitized by this ongoing taking of innocent lives that we no longer see the reality of it? How did we get to this place and what can we do about it?

Although there were many factors that may have played a part in this, it was one woman born in the late 19th century who had a great influence on abortion today. Margaret Louise Sanger (1879-1966) was a birth control, population control, and eugenics activist. She advocated exterminating the "feeble-minded," "Negroes," and large families to create a "thoroughbred race." Her advice to big families: "*The most merciful thing that a large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it.*" (Margaret Sanger, *Women and the New Race* Eugenics Publ. Co., 1920, 1923). She had a plan. In 1921, Sanger founded the American Birth Control League, which merged with the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau and eventually changed its name to Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Today, Planned Parenthood is, by far, the largest abortion provider in our nation. As their own sources tell us, they

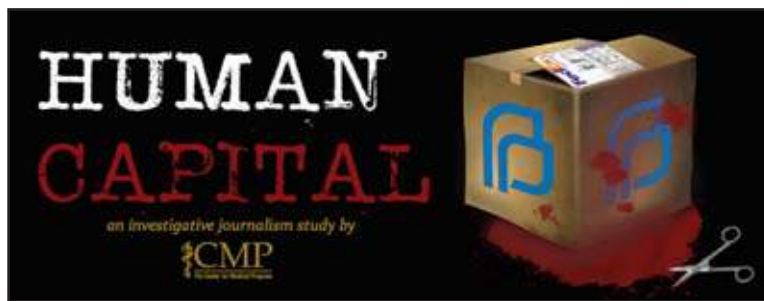
perform upwards of 328,000 abortions each year. What many do not realize is that \$528.4 million of their annual revenue comes from our own government through Medicaid and Title X, which means we have all been forced to support this act of killing. (www.plannedparenthood.org) Murder is against the laws of our government (and the laws of God). Most of us agree that it is a great evil. So what is the motivation that causes some to fiercely protect the legal status of abortion in our country? Planned Parenthood states that the following are the reasons women request abortions: birth control failure, inability to support or care for a child, an unwanted or inconvenient pregnancy, prevention of the birth of child with defects, pregnancy resulting from rape/incest and the argument that "*It's my body, my right.*"

I admit, I have taken my life for granted. The thought never crossed my mind that my mother or father did not want me, even though I was fifth in a family with 9 children. At the time of my birth, my parents had a

5-year-old, a 4-year-old, a 3-year-old, and a 15-month-old. And on top of that, they were trying to make a meager living by starting a farm of their own. It seems to me, if anyone might say "enough children" or "inconvenient pregnancy," it might have been my mom. I vividly remember my parents, and all the people I knew growing up, rejoicing over their gift of children, even when everything in their lives was not ideal. However, those were the years before Roe versus Wade proclaimed to moms and dads that, because they might consider this pregnancy a burden, they have a way out. What that did was open the door to people thinking babies were either "wanted" or "unwanted." It was also the time before contraception was promoted as the "intelligent and responsible plan" for people, married or unmarried, leaving many with resulting pregnancies from failed contraception. Children were no longer necessarily touted as gifts, but merely a product one could choose or discard, depending on whether it is convenient and desired or burdensome and unwanted. This lie has induced many frightened and confused women to choose abortion, leaving them forever deeply wounded and many of them profoundly regretful.

The modern world continues to become more civilized and sophisticated in our knowledge and technology. But along with that, comes the temptation to the same sin as Adam and Eve, from Paragraph 398 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

In that sin man preferred himself to God and by that very act scorned Him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status



and therefore against his own good. Constituted in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully 'divinized' by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to be like God, but without God, before God, and not in accordance with God.

Is there hope that we can ever change the tide of this horrific sin of our times? St. Paul writes in Romans 5:20, "*Where sin abounds, grace abounds even more.*" Just as Sanger heralded her plan with exterminating people who were not of her "thoroughbred race," we have many heroes and heroines in our times who are championing the cause for respecting the dignity of life at all stages from conception to natural death. Of the multitudes of faithful and tireless advocates who have been fighting for the lives of the unborn, two courageous warriors for life have come to the forefront in the battle in the past few months.

Dr. Theresa Deisher, who received her doctorate in molecular and cellular physiology from Stanford University, is a world-renowned scientist in the field of adult stem cell therapies and regenerative medicine. She is the founder of Sound Choice Pharmaceutical Institute and the CEO of AVM (Ave Maria) Biotechnology. Both companies have a mission to end the use of aborted babies in biomedical research. Based in Seattle, she has 23 patents in her name, including being the first person worldwide to identify and patent stem cells from the adult heart. She has worked diligently on developing adult stem cell technologies that are equally or more effective than fetal or embryonic stem cells, eliminating the need for human exploitation in research. Dr. Deisher has been gravely concerned about abortion providers harvesting and selling baby organs and body parts to a handful of bio-medical research firms.

David Daleiden has been working in the pro-life movement for much of his life. In college, while working as a research assistant, he attended a Stem Cell Conference. The presenter at this meeting, mentioned using cells from an aborted baby for research, a fact he had not known before which began to haunt him. Years later, he founded the Center for Medical Progress, whose mission was to investigate in-depth bioethical issues. As only God can orchestrate, He put these two people together. Dr. Deisher, with her expertise in the field, assisted the Center for Medical Progress in its preparation to infiltrate Planned Parenthood to expose its practice of harvesting aborted baby parts for sale. She helped prepare David Daleiden and his cohorts as biomedical representatives to conduct this undercover investigation. They have recently released these videos to the public.

Dr. Deisher suspects that, in some cases, these babies were alive until their hearts were cut out for harvesting. "*I don't think that any American can imagine fully what is happening in these clinics,*" she asserts. "*And, visually, perhaps, they need to see it. I think it's important that people see the reality of what's done. It's absolutely barbaric. Regardless of whether someone is in favor of a woman's right to abort her baby, or not—this is just something that a civilized society does not allow, condone, or support. Once*

we turn a blind eye to the baby being a person or say we're only going to do it once, the flood gates are open."

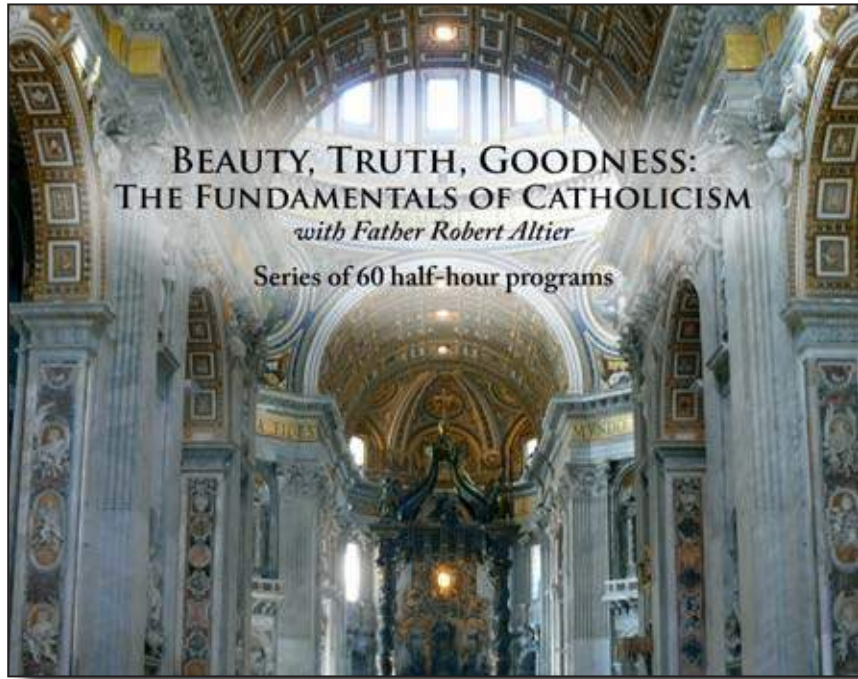
"*It is a paradox,*" says Daleiden, "*that we can't have laws that recognize unborn babies as human, and yet it is their very humanness that makes them valuable for experimentation.*" He said he prays for the providers he has met during the project, but "*we need to hold Planned Parenthood responsible for their atrocities against humanity. These videos are to inform and activate the public about what is going on right under our noses—with taxpayer dollars.*"

We owe an immense gratitude to these courageous souls who took such risks to expose these practices. It is a wake-up call to all of us that we need to keep up the work of defending life and bringing it out into the light, speaking for those being "knitted in their mother's wombs" who will never have the opportunity to use their voices. Sometimes we have the tendency to get discouraged and think the evil is too big or that someone else will fight the battle. We must never forget, from Luke 1:37: "*Nothing is impossible for God.*" Let us pray for those who have been wounded by abortion. Let us place our hope in the Lord and trust in the words of our great St. John Paul II: "*Never tire of firmly speaking out in defense of life from its conception and do not be deterred from the commitment to defend the dignity of every human person with courageous determination. Christ is with you: be not afraid!*"

Note: CPO is honored to have Dr. Theresa Deisher as our guest speaker at our 2016 Fall Luncheon this October.

Bernie Grutsch and Mike Jensen at the 2015 CPO Lenten Retreat.





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Father Robert Altier speaking at Saint Agnes,
at the 2015 CPO Lenten Retreat.



Kurt Virnig and Lisa Bromschwig at the Lenten Retreat.

The Mercy of God and Man's Repentance

BY FREDERICK BLONIGEN

In *The Church of Mercy*, a beautiful and insightful collection of homilies and speeches given during the first year of his pontificate, Pope Francis reminds us often of God's infinite mercy toward sinful mankind and His eagerness to forgive our transgressions. "God always thinks with mercy: do not forget this," says Pope Francis, "God always thinks mercifully. He is the merciful Father." To further emphasize this central theme of his pontificate, Pope Francis has proclaimed an extraordinary Jubilee, a Holy Year of Mercy, which began on the 8th of December, 2015.

Given the enormity of sin and evil engulfing our world, especially in the morally decadent, secular culture of the West, the theme of God's mercy could hardly be stressed too much. But a true understanding of God's mercy can never omit the need for repentance on the part of the sinner as a condition for receiving divine mercy. The Gospels tell us that Jesus begins His public ministry with the message of repentance. In Chapter One of Mark's Gospel it says, "After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: 'This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.'" Jesus, who is the mercy of God Incarnate, became man in order to free mankind from the bondage of sin and to lead us to true freedom found only in living according to God's will. At a time when in many, if not most, Catholic parishes the word "sin" is rarely mentioned, let alone preached about, it should be no surprise that many Catholics have a false understanding of God's mercy. The sin of presumption is widespread in our time. Many believe that because God is so merciful and loving only the most egregious sinners could possibly lose their souls. Hell, apparently, is all but empty.

How does one reconcile this widespread attitude with Christ's own very sobering words: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matthew 7:13). In his brilliant book *God or Nothing*, Robert Cardinal Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, provides this profound comment on the true nature of God's mercy:

Many of the faithful rejoice to hear talk about divine mercy, and they hope that the radical demands of the Gospel can be relaxed even for the benefit of those who by their lives have chosen to break away from the crucified love of Jesus. They do not appreciate the price paid by him on the Cross, which delivered every one of us from the yoke of sin and death. They think that because of the Lord's infinite goodness everything is possible, while at the same time deciding to change

nothing in their lives. Many expect, as something normal, that God could pour out his mercy on them while they remain in sin.

The mercy and compassion of God for all sinners is, indeed, unconditional. But it does require that the sinner in need of divine mercy is receptive to God's mercy by freely repenting of his sins. We cannot even imagine, let alone commit, a sin God will not forgive *provided we are sincerely sorry for our sins.*

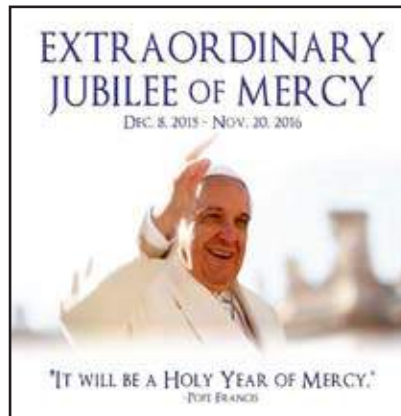
A contemporary and much-talked-about issue that requires a correct understanding of God's mercy is the reception of the Eucharist by those Catholics who are divorced and civilly remarried. The constant teaching of the Church is that persons in such a relationship cannot receive Holy Communion. At the start of the recent Synod on the Family, Cardinal Erdo of Budapest said in his opening speech:

Regarding the divorced and civilly remarried, a merciful, pastoral accompaniment is only right—an accompaniment, however, which leaves no doubt about the truth of the indissolubility of marriage taught by Jesus Christ himself. The mercy of God offers sinners pardon, but demands conversion.

As persons, endowed by God with the precious gift of free will, we determine by our choices the kind of persons we will be. We are, in effect, the choices we make each day. When we choose to sin we imprison ourselves; we reject authentic freedom for a false freedom. God hates sin because He knows that it distorts our true nature and keeps us from the happiness and fulfillment found only in doing His will.

In his great 1980 encyclical *Dives Misericordia*, Pope St. John Paul II says "... the church—professing mercy and remaining always faithful to it—has the right and the duty to call upon the mercy of God, imploring it in the face of all manifestations of physical and moral evil, before all the threats that cloud the whole horizon of the life of humanity today." The Church also has the duty to profess and proclaim conversion. For, to again quote Pope St. John Paul II, "Conversion to God always consists in discovering his mercy, that is, in discovering the love which is patient and kind as only the Creator and Father can be; the love to which the 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' is faithful to the uttermost consequences in history of his covenant with man: even to the cross and to the death and resurrection of the Son. Conversion to God is always the fruit of the 'rediscovery' of this Father, who is rich in mercy."

May this extraordinary Year of Mercy lead many souls to a profound conversion of heart and to a life-changing encounter with the tender mercy of God in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ.





THE PASSION OF CHRIST: THE COST OF DIVINE MERCY

Saturday, March 12, 2016

8:00 AM - 2:30 PM

Presented by Father Robert J. Altier

Church of Saint Agnes
535 W. Thomas Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55103

Lenten Retreat

sponsored by



The day begins with 8:00 AM Mass at the Church of Saint Agnes, followed by a continental breakfast, and includes three dynamic presentations by Fr. Robert Altier, a delicious lunch, the Rosary and more.



Please join us!
Register early, seating is limited.

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Tickets will not be mailed out in advance; name tags will be waiting for you at the registration table after Mass.