

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

INSIDE

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| CPO PHOTOS..... | PAGE 2 |
| AFFIRMING NATURAL LAW..... | PAGE 3 |
| TEACHING SALVATION HISTORY.. | PAGE 4 |
| OUR LADY OF GOOD HELP..... | PAGE 6 |
| CATHOLIC SPIRITUAL CLASSICS..... | PAGE 8 |
| A. HERKENHOFF AWARD..... | PAGE 10 |
| CPO LENTEN RETREAT..... | PAGE 11 |
| CPO MAILBAG..... | PAGE 12 |

Coming Year of Faith

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

Anti-Catholicism seems to be everywhere and it's not always easy being a Catholic nowadays. However, Pope Benedict XVI has declared October 11, 2012 through November 24, 2013 as the "Year of Faith." This year is to help us more fully appreciate the gift of faith, deepen our relationship with God and strengthen our commitment to sharing our faith with others. Are we up for the challenge? We have a critical issue upon us this year that every Catholic must be educated on: protecting the sanctity of marriage as a union between one man and one woman. CPO has joined efforts with the Minnesota Catholic Conference in supporting the statewide campaign to pass the Marriage Amendment. On Nov. 6th, 2012, all Minnesota voters can make their voices heard and vote "YES" on the Minnesota Marriage Amendment! The support of each of us on this matter is critical! Please check out MarriageUniqueforaReason.org, mncc.org/issues/marriage/ and MinnesotaforMarriage.com to learn more.

Be sure to tune into CPO TV! We are currently airing an outstanding three-part series exposing the dangers of "Freemasonry." It airs each Sunday from 9:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on MCN channel 6 (Twin Cities), and the new streaming video on our website **CatholicParents.org** allows you to view it at any time! Future shows will include topics such as Euthanasia and, of course, the crucial Marriage Amendment issue.

Great News! We now have available on CD, Father Robert Altier's ever-popular 12-part series *The Fundamentals of Catholicism* and also his excellent 6-part series, *Prayer*. In a culture where people do not know their faith, these CDs are needed more than ever! Please contact us for more information on how to order.

Seating is limited, so register early for the annual CPO Lenten Retreat to be held on Saturday, March 24, 2012. This year's theme is: *Back to the Catacombs: Suffering for the Catholic Faith in a Secular Age* featuring Father Robert J. Altier. The Retreat will be held at St. Bonaventure Catholic Church in Bloomington, Minnesota. For more information and to register please see the flyer on page 11.

This will soon be the "Year of Faith"! Are we up for the challenge? With the help of God's grace and your generous support, CPO will continue our



Jason Adkins, Executive Director, Minnesota Catholic Conference, speaking on the Marriage Amendment at the Luncheon in October, 2011.

Mission: To build a network of faithful, dynamic, and informed parents, students, and alumni, committed to working with Catholic schools, other programs of education and the community at large, to ensure the authentic teaching and protection of our Catholic Faith, and to address issues that undermine our Catholic Faith and Morals. We are grateful to all of you who donate financially, who volunteer, and especially for all your prayers! A Holy Mass is offered every month of the year for the intentions of our benefactors. I hope to see you at the Lenten Retreat on March 24!

*God bless you and yours,
 Colleen Perfect*





opo2011

Written on the Heart

Affirming Natural Law in an Age of Relativism

BY FR. ROBERT ALTIER, CPO SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

The Catechism of the Catholic church (#1952) states that there are different expressions of the moral law, all of them interrelated: eternal law, natural law, revealed law (from Scripture), civil laws and ecclesiastical laws. Eternal law is the source and foundation of all law; it is God's law and any law that deviates from the divine law is neither proper nor just. This is important for us because in an age where relativism reigns we need to be clear about what is true and what is false.

Following from the eternal or divine law is the law that God has written in our hearts, the natural law. The Lord promised us through the Prophet Jeremiah that he would write His law in our hearts (31:33). Therefore, a law that is in perfect conformity with the divine law is God given and remains within each and every human person in such a way that it cannot be removed. Most of us have probably made failed attempts to ignore, deny, cover over or remove these laws, only to find that they remain immutable and unshakable.

These attempts to ignore, deny, cover or remove these laws from our hearts and our minds demonstrate more than anything else our propensity toward relativism. The concept of relativism makes everything subjective and equal or, as its name suggests, everything is relative. It allows each person to have his or her own truth. Pope Benedict speaks regularly about the infection of this relativistic way of thinking and seems to recognize it as the greatest threat to our own selves, the Church and the world.

We often hear people say that they will agree to disagree, that you are entitled to your own opinion, or that I will not try to force my position on you if you do not try to force your position on to me. These would all be correct if we are talking about matters of taste, for instance, whether a piece of art or music is beautiful, whether or not broccoli is good, what styles are more attractive, etc. However, when it comes to truth and morality, the principles are the same for every person in every generation and in every culture. The way the principle is applied may vary due to circumstances, but the fundamental principles are, as mentioned above, universal and immutable. In other words, when it comes to objective truth, we cannot say that you can have your truth and I can have mine.

Regarding natural law the Catechism (#1955) says that it *...shows man the way to follow so as to practice the good and attain his end. The natural law states the first and essential precepts which govern the moral life. It hinges upon the desire for God and submission to Him, Who is the source of all that is good, as well as upon the sense that the other is one's equal. Its principal*

precepts are expressed in the Decalogue. In this quote we can see the reasons why we are in crisis today: people do not desire or submit to God, we want to define what is good for me, and we do not want to accept the dignity and equality of all human persons.

Since any true and proper civil laws or ecclesiastical laws must be founded upon natural law, if I reject God then these laws just become a random set of rules that have no objective

**...when it comes to
objective truth,
we cannot say that you can
have your truth
and I can have mine.**

foundation. In other words, they are just opinions of someone or some group, but I can have my own opinions and, therefore, I can make my own laws. If I can define my own good and my own end, then I have the right to do whatever is necessary to achieve it. If I do not recognize the dignity and equality of others, then I

can use them to obtain my desired "goods" or eradicate them if they inhibit my self determined goals. Needless to say, this leads to anarchy.

Even though these problems are becoming more widespread, a simple example will suffice to demonstrate that the natural law remains effective within people who have given in to a relativistic way of thinking. With the economy going south as it has been, we are seeing theft skyrocketing. In other words, some people have managed to rationalize in their minds that it is acceptable for them to steal. However, if someone steals from them, the hurt, the anger and the sense of violation tend to be somewhat extreme, even though this person has been regularly violating the precept against stealing and has numbed his conscience and found a way to justify his actions. In other words, he has tried to erase the natural law from within, but when someone does to him what he is doing to others, he feels wronged and violated. Of course, for one who has embraced relativism, he will say that it was okay for him to violate others, but it was wrong for someone to violate him.

I have heard people argue against particular precepts of the natural moral law based on the fact that some immoral action is practiced by certain species of animals and, therefore, is natural. Being natural to that type of animal, the claim is that this is natural law and acceptable for us humans to practice the same behaviors. To this the Catechism (#1955) says, *This law is called 'natural,' not in reference to the nature of irrational beings, but because reason which decrees it properly belongs to human nature.* Although this law is written in our minds and hearts and is decreed by reason, the Church readily admits that not everyone is able to recognize it easily. The way people are formed, the various influences from social groups, the media, education, etc. work to mold a person's mind to a

Continued from page 3

certain way of thinking. Only when a person can understand that he is made for a reason beyond himself and that he is part of a larger reality that he did not create and that he cannot control will he finally begin to break away from the errant ways of thinking. For some people, this can take years. In paragraph #1960 of the Catechism we read, *The precepts of natural law are not perceived by everyone clearly and immediately. In the present situation sinful man needs grace and revelation so moral and religious truths may be known 'by everyone with facility, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error.'* The natural law provides revealed law and grace with a foundation prepared by God and in accordance with the work of the Spirit.

For those of us with faith in God and in His Church, we need to pray for others, but also for ourselves, for the grace to recognize and embrace the truths of natural law and to live according to the Law of God. The peace and order that come from living in this way will not only help us to live good and holy lives, but will stand as a sign of contradiction to a world that lacks peace and order because it rejects both God and His Church. In the midst of the chaos of people's lives, some will see the peace and order in your life which will give you an opportunity to explain that it is not anything you are doing on your own, but it is God forming you according to His perfect truth. The world needs to know the only source of hope, peace and truth. We are made in the image and likeness of Truth, and we are made to be conformed to that Truth, but we are not truth itself nor the ultimate arbiters of truth. All "truths" are not equal, all ideas are not equal, all religions are not equal. There is only one God, one body of revealed truth and one set of objective standards written in the hearts of each and every person. Now, more than ever, our relativistic society needs objective truth and our witness to natural law. ❖

By Means of Sacred Scripture

Teaching Salvation History to Children

BY LISA BROMSCHWIG

Salvation History is the story line of God's interaction with people. We find it revealed in the pages of Sacred Scripture and explained in the Traditions of the Church. These revelations must be passed on from generation to generation so that our Faith stays alive through the centuries. When studying and teaching Catholic Salvation History, be sure to use a Catholic Bible. This seems obvious, but it is complicated because of the abundance of Bible translations available today. Protestant Bible translations do not contain as many books as Catholic Bibles. Following are descriptions by Father Robert Altier of several approved editions. The New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE) is the one closest to the lectionary for the New Order of the Mass (the New Testament was retranslated). The Douay-Rheims is closest to the readings in the Traditional Mass but is a translation from the Latin, not from the Hebrew and Greek. The New Jerusalem Bible is better than the Jerusalem Bible because it is translated from the Hebrew and Greek whereas the Jerusalem Bible is translated from the French. The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition is probably the most literal translation into English. Children's Bibles are fine as long as you remember that the stories are only paraphrases of the authentic Scripture and only as good as the author's ability to capture and summarize the essence of the story.

Some basic ideas to keep in mind when teaching children are what level of cognition the child is at, what teaching strategies you have already had success with, and the child's comfort level with certain situations presented in the Bible stories. (*He* and *his* will be used to refer to both male and female, to avoid cumbersome phraseology.)

First of all, remember that a child can pay attention better when his basic physical needs are met. For example, a child who is hungry or tired will have a harder time listening to a story. Try to schedule a portion of time on a regular basis, at about the same time of day. One family tradition involves reading a Bible story at the end of dinner, over dessert, or shortly afterwards. The children look forward to lingering a little longer and hearing what the story of the day will be. You could make a dessert something that correlates with the story. For example, serve animal crackers with the story of Noah's Ark. Another option is to have a Saturday morning Bible time, when everyone has had a chance to sleep later than usual and before the demands of the day set in. The key is to schedule a time and stick with it.

When teaching Bible stories, be aware of your child's level of cognition. That is, how well he acquires knowledge through thinking, experiencing, and sensing. The Church teaches that a typical child has the ability to reason and begin making moral decisions around the age of seven years. Prior to this age, at around four to seven years, a child uses more intuitive thinking versus logical, and has



Continued from page 4

an active imagination. He bases his understanding on how he sees or perceives the immediate situation. His focus is limited to one part of the story at a time and he may ask questions about the same detail over and over again, possibly causing him to miss the main point of the story. That is okay. A strategy that might work well in this situation would be to decide ahead of time the one major point you want to stress with your child, and make it clear from the start. Then after you have read the story, reiterate the point. Also at this age, the child associates God with his parental figures. What he sees and understands about his primary caregivers are projected onto his understanding of who God is. This is a very good time to teach about the attributes of God the Father and to devote time to teaching the Bible stories about how God the Father loves, cares for, delivers, and otherwise provides for His children. Other successful teaching strategies are using conversational style, short phrases, and asking questions often to allow kids to respond to what you are telling them. Try to refer to pictures and objects while reading or telling the stories. Alternatively, you might consider using skits or puppets to act them out. Always name and identify key people, places and things. Point out locations on a globe or map. Try to engage all five senses: seeing (pictures), touching (objects, crafts), tasting (snacks or foods that relate to the lesson), hearing (listening to the story, provide sound effects if possible), smelling (use scented candles, oils, flowers, or other scents that relate to the story).

Once a child has reached the age of reason, about seven to ten years old, he can tell the difference between real and imaginary scenarios. He can put things in order and classify them. His logical thinking is developing but still limited and he may reach unrealistic conclusions when facts are presented. He can make the connections between characters and events, and from one event to another. Children at this stage can usually retell a story in chronological order, so this would be a good time to begin encouraging them to tell the story they just heard to younger siblings or other family members. Some teaching strategies include showing how to find a Bible chapter and verse, identifying the Old and New Testaments in the Bible, and relating persons and events in terms of coming before or after the time of Jesus. Have your child read aloud from the Bible, or take turns reading with him. Let your child role-play a character in a story, using simple costume pieces or props if possible. As with your younger child, try to engage all the senses to bring the stories alive, and allow for creative expression from your child. Acting out, drawing or writing about what he is learning allows him to retain it longer.

At about ten or eleven years and older, the child matures into a more advanced level of cognition. He can use maps to locate places, and do simple research on a given subject. His critical thinking is more developed, meaning that he can begin to analyze ideas and circumstances for their merits and faults. He is beginning to think more logically and arrive at realistic

conclusions when presented with facts about a situation. He can understand simple metaphors and comparisons and has a better grasp of timelines and historical context. He is also capable of wrestling with more complex moral issues that are presented in the Bible stories. Some effective strategies for this level include comparing two different translations of the same story, and allowing for some personal interpretation: *What does the story say to me?* Whenever possible, consult the Catechism or a good Catholic commentary to help understand the meaning of the story in light of Catholic Tradition.

A final consideration when teaching your children the stories in the Bible is your child's comfort level with different situations presented in the Bible stories. Some children are easily upset with violence and dangerous situations. There is no need to read every word of the Bible story; sometimes you will need to skip over or censor certain words and phrases you think will be too upsetting for your child. Regarding sexual situations, the Church teaches that no unnecessary sexual information be given to children during their years of innocence – that is, until the first signs of puberty. Therefore, it may be necessary to protect them from too much information of a sexual nature by screening the story ahead of time. After the age of puberty, when they are mature enough to understand, it becomes advisable to teach your children what Scriptures say about sexual morality and God's expectations for our behavior as morally upright people.

There are many good reasons and ways to teach Salvation History to your children. The important thing is to start soon and continue until they are old and gray. No one is too young or too old to study Scripture!

*For information about a new Bible study curriculum for children, be sure to check out the **Great Adventure Kids Bible Timeline** by Ascension Press. This brand new curriculum is based on the Great Adventure Bible Timeline study for adults by Jeff Cavins. It will be available in beginner, intermediate and advanced levels for children ages five through twelve and up. This curriculum is scheduled for availability later in 2012. See ascensionpress.com for more information.*

*There are many Catholic children's Bibles available. One we recommend is called **My Big Book of Catholic Bible Stories**, compiled by Heidi Saxton, published by Thomas Nelson. It contains paraphrased Bible stories and additional study tools, including references to the Catechism and classical art. Visit thomasnelson.com for more information.*



Our Nation's Heavenly Treasure

Our Lady of Good Help

BY MARILYN GRUTSCH

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2010, Bishop David Ricken of the diocese of Green Bay, officially approved the Marian apparitions that occurred at the site of Our Lady of Good Help in Champion, Wisconsin. He proclaimed, *I declare with moral certainty and in accord with the norms of the Church that the events, apparitions and locutions given to Adele Brise in October of 1859 do exhibit the substance of supernatural character, and I do hereby approve these apparitions as worthy of belief (although not obligatory) by the Christian faithful.* This is

a tremendous blessing for our country, considering it is the first and only Church approved Marian apparition in the United States. Because the faithful have become accustomed to hearing about alleged apparitions throughout our world, sometimes we have a tendency to become complacent and even wary of those who claim them to be true. It also may have come as a surprise to many of us who had never even heard of this story prior to the official approval. However, there is no doubt that, when the Catholic Church stamps her blessing of an apparition, we can rest assured it is true. The Church very cautiously subjects any reported apparition to exhaustive study and evaluation. They analyze the mental state of the seer, as well as the miracles, for a possible natural explanation and whether or not they bear good fruit. They also must insure that the private revelation does not contradict the public deposit of faith contained in Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church.

Our Blessed Mother Mary is a “mom” in the truest sense of the word. She loves us with a maternal heart and when she sees her children’s eternal souls in danger, she comes to our aid as our advocate. In this case, when these 19th century immigrants settled in the rugged and primitive land of Wisconsin, they were far removed from shepherds to direct and instruct them in the faith and they began to abandon their faith and morals. Our Blessed Mother almost always chooses to give her message to the meek and humble. In learning more about this apparition, it is understandable that she would choose this young woman.

In 1855, Adele Brise, at age 24, left her home in Belgium to move to America. Even though she deeply grieved leaving (because of her promise to Our Blessed Mother to become a religious in her homeland) she followed the advice of her



confessor to comply with her parents’ wishes that she go to America with her family. They, along with other Belgians, Germans and Dutch, formed the first Belgian Colony 15 miles Northeast of Green Bay, Wisconsin. They lived simple and industrious lives, enduring great hardships of starvation, cholera outbreaks, extremely cold weather without sufficient protection, and lack of provisions in this vast wilderness. As a result, the survivors became hard-working, self-reliant, hardy and optimistic people, but they began to neglect the education of their children and the practice of their Catholic faith.

It was on a typical day of work for Adele Brise, that on her way to taking wheat to the grist mill, she saw a lady all in white standing between two trees, a maple and a hemlock. She was frightened and stood frozen until the vision disappeared, leaving behind a white cloud. When she told her parents, they suggested maybe it was a poor soul from Purgatory who needed prayers. A few days later, Adele, along with her sister and neighbor, were on their weekly 11 mile trek to go to Sunday Mass. When they came to the two trees, she again saw the same lady at the site. With apprehensive curiosity, she uttered, “Oh, there is that lady again.” The two with her, although they couldn’t see the lady, observed that this was confusing and distressing to Adele. Within a few minutes, the lady disappeared, leaving again the white cloud. After Mass, Adele talked to her confessor about the visions. He told her to ask the lady who she was and what she desired of her. On the way home, as the three women passed the spot, Adele again could see the beautiful lady, clothed in dazzling white, with a yellow sash around her waist, a crown of stars around her head and long golden wavy hair. There was a such a heavenly light all around her that Adele could hardly look

Continued from page 6

at her kind face. Adele fell to her knees and asked her, *In God's name, who are you and what do you want of me?* The lady replied, *I am the Queen of Heaven who prays for the conversion of sinners and I wish you to do the same. You received Holy Communion this morning and that is well, but you must do more. Make a general confession and offer Communion for the conversion of sinners. If they do not convert and do penance, my Son will be obliged to punish them.* She added, *What are you doing here in idleness while your companions are working in the vineyard of my Son?* In tears, Adele asked, *What more can I do, dear Lady?* (recalling her desire to stay in Belgium to work as a religious missionary). Mary said, *Gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation. But how shall I teach them who know so little myself?* humbly replied Adele. *Teach them their catechism, how to sign themselves with the sign of the Cross, and how to approach the Sacraments; that is what I wish you to do. Go and fear nothing, I will help you.*

Adele wasted no time in following the instructions of the Queen of Heaven. A reporter for the Kewaunee Enterprise at that time, wrote of her: *With patience and earnestness that never flagged, she persevered in her mission going from house to house, and helping, unsolicited, to do whatever work there was to be done in the household—asking only in return that she be permitted to give instruction to the children.* She traveled sometimes 50 miles from her home in rain, snow, or heat, often enduring ridicule and persecution. After the children were prepared in their faith instructions, she then brought them to the pastor to receive their Sacraments. Eventually, the priest advised her to encourage others to share in her work as a religious community and to solicit funds to build a school and a convent, which she did.

On October 8, 1871, almost exactly 11 years after the first apparition, a forest fire that was described as a “tornado of fire” engulfed nearly the entire Green Bay peninsula, destroying everything in its path, sending horrified mobs of people into a frantic exodus for safety. Many sought refuge on the Chapel grounds of Our Lady of Good Help: *Filled with confidence, they entered the Chapel, reverently raised the statue of Mary, and kneeling, bore it in procession around*

their beloved sanctuary. When wind and fire exposed them to suffocation, they turned in another direction, and continued to hope and pray, saying the rosary. (Father Pernin) After hours of terror, relief came in the form of a downpour. The fire was extinguished and the faithful believed it was their prayers to the Blessed Mother that saved them. Everything around them was destroyed but the fire did not touch the Convent, school, Chapel and the five acres of land consecrated to the Virgin Mary.

Although the simple original log oratory built by Adele's father no longer exists, three other chapels have replaced it on the same spot, each time bigger and more substantial, in order to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims who come to pray at the site. When Bishop Ricken declared this as an official Diocesan Shrine of Green Bay, he said: *I encourage the faithful to make pilgrimages to the Shrine to seek the intercession of the Blessed Mother and to draw closer to her Son, Jesus Christ.*

Catholic Parents OnLine (CPO) eagerly responded to this when we discovered that the message Adele received from our Blessed Mother corresponds so fully with our mission to teach the children their faith. Last July, CPO sponsored a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help. Although the apparition happened over 150 years ago, one can still feel the gentle and loving presence of the Blessed Mother there. What a gift it is to have this shrine in the center of North America so that we can all have access to it!

As is written by Sister Dominica in her book about the shrine, *Mary has a solicitous eye on each one of us; she strives mightily to get each of us to walk the road that leads from earth to heaven. We will be able to help solve some of the problems of our day, if like Adele, we continue the crusade for re-Christianizing society within our sphere, by helping to preserve the pearl of faith in the hearts of His little ones.* May we be imitators of Adele Brise in her humility and obedience to answer our Lord's call to *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.* Proverbs 22:6. Mary promises to be with us in our labor as she told Adele, *Go and fear nothing. I will help you.*

Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you!



The Importance of Reading the Catholic Spiritual Classics

BY FREDERICK BLONIGEN

This year at St. Agnes School in St. Paul where I teach theology we developed a new course, a senior seminar on the Catholic classics. The goal of this course is to introduce students to the best in Catholic thought and spirituality from antiquity to the present. Recently in our seminar we read and discussed the *Confessions of St. Augustine*. Re-reading this great autobiography for the seminar, I was again impressed by its amazing intellectual depth and spiritual wisdom. St. Augustine raises many challenging questions: What is the nature of God? What is the origin of evil? Why does evil exist at all? What is the meaning of freedom? What is the relationship between time and eternity? Learning the answers to these types of questions is important for all of us, but especially for our young people, who are constantly searching for meaning and truth in their lives. What better way, we decided, to help our youth find the truth than to expose them to the best in Catholic spiritual writing. And that means reading the classics.

I remember vividly while attending one of Fr. John Hardon's retreats about thirty years ago, that this great Jesuit reminded us that for a serious Catholic who wants to grow in holiness regular spiritual reading is not an option but a necessity. Today, in our militantly secular culture, spiritual reading is not only necessary but indispensable. Too often when it comes to spiritual reading many, if not most, Catholics settle for popular, contemporary books rather than the tried and true classics. There are a number of reasons for this. Sometimes Catholics are simply uninformed about the spiritual classics in the Catholic tradition. They have never been told about these great works. Sometimes readers feel intimidated by the writings of such stellar minds as St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, or St. John of the Cross. They think that such writers and their works are only for the clergy or highly intellectual lay Catholics. But such is not the case. Some of the Catholic spiritual classics can, indeed, be difficult to read and understand. This is all the more reason to struggle through them, as the spiritual benefits far outweigh one's efforts. The truth of the matter is that the majority of these books are intellectually accessible to the average Catholic.

If the old adage "you are what you eat" holds true, even more so it is true that "you are what you read." Reading mediocre books tends to make one a mediocre Catholic. Reading the best books by the best people—holy people, and always those with a "St." before their name—makes one more likely to become a holy person oneself. These spiritual "experts" are a treasure of advice, comfort, guidance, and inspiration. They provide wisdom and insight on every aspect of the spiritual life.

An essential element of holiness is a strong prayer life. For one who struggles with prayer and feels as though little



progress is being made in one's interior life, there is no better saint to come to the rescue than St. Teresa of Avila, who herself struggled for many years with prayer. St. Teresa's *The Way of Perfection* is a masterpiece, a work of sublime beauty, and a highly practical guide to prayer and the attainment of spiritual perfection. St. Teresa discusses humility, detachment from created things, recollection, contemplation and a wide variety of other related topics.

For someone who is having a great difficulty accepting God's will in their life and is restlessly seeking the peace only God can give, the perfect book to read is the 18th-century Jesuit Jean-Pierre De Caussade's *Abandonment to Divine Providence*. As the title suggests, the key to a holy life, according to the author, is total and complete surrender to God's will. To see the loving hand of Divine Providence in each moment of our lives and to humbly say "yes" to God's will, no matter what it is, and to live what De Caussade calls the "sacrament of the moment" is the sure path to holiness and happiness. In the beginning of his book, De Caussade summarizes the entire message of his work: *If the business of becoming holy seems to present insufferable difficulties, it is merely because we have a wrong idea about it. In reality, holiness consists of one thing only: complete loyalty to God's will.*

While many spiritual books are written with a clerical or religious audience in mind, St. Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life* was written for the lay person. The common sense approach to living a holy life taken by St. Francis in this marvelous book has endeared him to countless readers. The book provides sound, practical, spiritual and moral advice on growing in holiness. Whether it is prayer, resisting temptations, cultivating various virtues, dealing with anxiety, cultivating spiritual friendships, or examining one's conscience, St. Francis provides reasonable, down-to-earth advice that all of us can understand and apply to our daily lives. The essence of the devout love is charity: love of God and love of neighbor. In genuine devotion we become like the one we love: God Himself.

Continued from page 8

For the person who is enduring great suffering and tragedy in their lives and is tempted to despair because of the heavy cross they are being asked to carry, the ideal Catholic classic is the *Diary of St. Faustina*. Written in the early part of the 20th century by a Polish nun to whom Christ appeared and revealed His Merciful Heart, this work has become one of the most widely read and quoted spiritual classics of all time. At a time of so much hopelessness, *Diary of St. Faustina* provides great hope, especially for those who have sinned the most and feel the most distant from the love and mercy of God. At one point in the *Diary* Jesus says to Faustina, *My daughter, do you think you have written enough about My mercy? What you have written is but a drop compared to the ocean. I am Love and Mercy itself. There is no misery that could be a match for My mercy, neither will misery exhaust it, because as it is being granted—it increases. The soul which will trust in My mercy is most fortunate, because I myself take care of it.*

A classic of any kind is a book that has withstood the test of time and transcends the particular cultural environment in which it was written because it has something to say of enduring value about the human condition. If this is true of secular classics how much more true it is of spiritual classics. The great spiritual classics in the Catholic tradition speak to the modern reader because the search for God and the desire for union with God are universal yearnings of the human heart. At the center of all these Catholic classics is a fervent belief in God's love for mankind and His desire that we respond to His love. As God says to St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*: *All I want is love. In loving me you will realize love for your neighbor, and if you love your neighbor you have kept the law. If you are bound by this love you will do everything you can to be of service wherever you are.*

For the committed Catholic, living one's faith in today's secular culture is a daily challenge. To meet this challenge and to actively engage and transform this culture we need prayer, the sacraments, and the rich source of wisdom and inspiration the Catholic spiritual classics provide. In his great book *This Tremendous Lover*, Trappist monk Eugene Boylan says,

We regard this exercise [of spiritual reading] as of very special importance for the cultivation of the spiritual life, and for facility and progress in prayer, particularly in the case of the laity. Quite apart from its fruits, it is an exercise of the spiritual life in itself, and as such is meritorious. We consider that a firm resolution to read in this fashion is of capital importance for everyone who wishes to live in Christ. In fact, unless some sufficient substitute for it be provided, we would say that there is as little chance of living spiritually without reading, as there is of living corporally without eating.

Be nourished spiritually. Read the Catholic spiritual classics.

For those who want a recommended reading list on the Catholic spiritual classics by the author see the CPO website under the **Book Review** section.



Photos from a July pilgrimage to the first and only Marian shrine in the United States that is on the site of an approved apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary: the **Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help** in Champion, Wisconsin.



ARTHUR A. HERKENHOFF AWARD

Art Herkenhoff was a true friend and one of CPO's 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. For the past seven years the CPO Board of Directors has had the difficult task of choosing one Catholic person to receive this award. The 2011 Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award was presented to a remarkable woman, Mary Kellett. Mary and her husband Don have been married for 31 years and live in



Mary Kellett, 2011 Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award Winner

Maple Grove, MN. They have 11 beautiful children, one, whose name is Peter, age 61/2, was called home to God this past August. Mary is a Secular Order Discalced Carmelite and an extraordinary Eucharistic minister bringing Holy Communion to the home-bound every month. She is also the sacristan at St. Therese nursing home once a week. Mary partners with "Prolife Across America" for billboards with children with Down's Syndrome, and she belongs to the Rosary Society at St. Raphael's... praying at abortion clinics. Mary's strong Catholic faith and belief that every child is an awesome creation of God helped prepare her for the discouraging news when her son Peter was born with a chromosomal defect, called Trisomy 18. The doctors said he wouldn't live 2 weeks and others advised they should wrap him in a blanket and let him die, but Mary knew from the beginning that Peter was a unique gift from God and that someday he would leave a lasting legacy... and he has. Mary is the founder of Prenatal Partners for Life an organization which matches families who receive an adverse diagnosis, with families who have given birth to a child with a similar condition. Prenatal Partners for Life is now in every state and in 25 countries.

From left to right: Elizabeth Kellett, Jenny Kellett Hilts with grandson Philip, Father Mark Juettner, Mary Kellett, Don Kellett, Christine Kellett, Amy Glasscock and Colleen Perfect, President of CPO.



Mary Kellett with Herkenhoff family members. Left to Right: Dick Larson (brother-in-law), Jason Cornelius (grandson), Liz Larson (sister-in-law), Joe Herkenhoff, Katie Herkenhoff Wrobel, Mary Kellett, Elizabeth Herkenhoff Rustad, Kathy Herkenhoff, Meghan Herkenhoff Habisch and Colleen Perfect, President of CPO.

The Board of Directors of Catholic Parents OnLine seeks the names of individuals who would be worthy of nomination for the 2012 8th 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. This year's award will be presented at the CPO Annual Fundraising Luncheon to be held on Saturday, October 27, 2012.

Please submit your nomination by October 1, 2012. 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!

BACK TO THE CATACOMBS: SUFFERING FOR THE CATHOLIC FAITH IN A SECULAR AGE



Catholic
Parents OnLine

Featuring Father Robert J. Altier

LENTEN RETREAT

Saturday, March 24, 2012

8:00 AM - 2:30 PM

St. Bonaventure Catholic Church
901 East 90th Street
Bloomington, MN 55420

Please join us!

*Register early,
seating is limited.*



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

Register:

Please use this form or register & pay online at www.catholicparents.org
For more information call 651-705-5409 or email info@catholicparents.org

REGISTRATION FORM

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Cost is \$25 per person or \$40 per married couple.
Please send check made payable & mailed to:

Catholic Parents OnLine

P.O. Box 130815

St. Paul, MN 55113

Number Attending _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Includes continental breakfast and lunch

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



I want to commend you for all of your efforts in providing the TRUTH on so many levels! I have many times forwarded your emails on—so please keep them coming! May God continue to bless all of you and the work of your hands.

I wanted to thank you for your wonderful DVD: A Parent's Guide: Teaching the Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality. I wanted to share with you how your DVD was a blessing in a situation that recently came up with my family.

I had just completed the Family Honor semester course on the Truth and Meaning of Sexuality, which was life changing for me. During my study my dad received your DVD from Fr. Michael Freihofer in Winter Park, CO after mass while on a golf trip. Knowing I was taking this course, he gave it to me. Months later I sat down and viewed the DVD. I found it to be very inspirational and covered many of the important points from the Family Honor course. I thought the DVD would be a great tool to communicate this beautiful and desperately needed message.

A few weeks past, a permission slip came home from our Catholic school to allow our 5th grader, our oldest child to attend a talk on puberty. Immediately a yellow flag went up. I knew I was uncomfortable with our

daughter hearing this information. Two thoughts kept coming through my mind. First, that I knew I wanted to protect her little soul from early exposure to any sexual content. Second, that this was my right, my duty and my privilege to share this information with her when the timing was right for her. I strongly believe that even though the content was very light, I wanted to be the one who discussed these things with her because it gives me an opportunity to develop our relationship as mother and daughter laying a foundation for future discussions. I told my husband I was uncomfortable and I didn't want her attending the talk. He thought I was being oversensitive about the issue and recommended I get the details of the talk from the teacher. I was frustrated because I felt so strongly about this issue. But still being very new to concepts of The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, I had difficulty persuading even my own loving husband. I asked him to view your DVD and then weigh in on the decision. We sat down together and viewed the DVD. His response was, "Now I understand." I plan to share the DVD in my community to help convey this godly message.

Please add me to your email list. Friends share your materials and I finally decided I want all of it, not just what others send me. You are doing good, thank you. I look forward to spending time on your website.

I cannot TELL you how happy I am to see

this DVD and plan to share the website with my new homeschool group who will love it! I wish this were available when I was a kid. Thank you!

I thank God for you and this trusted treasure-trove at Catholic Parents OnLine!

Being part of our parish Respect Life group and the one responsible for gathering information, I very much appreciate your emails and educational resources, thanks so much.

I would like 3 copies of "A Parent's Guide: Teaching the Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality" for my 3 sons. I saw this on EWTN and wish I had this when my sons were growing up.

I was awake very early this morning, and I turned on EWTN. Your DVD was being shown and I was truly inspired! I would like to order 3 of the videos with my donation. Thanks again for your great DVD and for your important work in this crucial area of forming parents. May the Lord continue to bless you and keep you and shine on you and your ministry.

I am a grandparent of ten and would like to order a copy of the DVD "A Parent Teaching Guide: Teaching the Truth & Meaning of Human Sexuality" shown here in Australia, tonight on EWTN, to offer my daughters who are good mothers. Thank you for being who you are in Jesus. Please pray for my family and me. I am thanking God for you.

