

# Trumpeting all the right views will not solve the crisis facing America

by Mark Fischer

Those of us who invest time and energy in “socially” conservative political causes are in the habit of measuring our success by that of candidates who accept our favorite policy positions. The list should be familiar: pro-life, anti-gay rights, pro-prayer in school, anti-medically assisted suicide, pro-school choice, anti-affirmative action, pro-traditional family, and so on. To liberal pundits, this list represents the so-called “politics of division,” pushed by religious fanatics bent on legislating morality. We, on the other hand, have called it an agenda of “family, faith and freedom.”

The liberal pundits have insinuated that with the re-election of President Clinton, the populace has rejected this politics of division in favor of the President’s brand of non-confrontational inclusiveness. They point to the San Diego Republican convention as evidence that even the Republicans have rejected the “intolerance” of the religious right in favor of the big tent philosophy of Haley Barbour, William Weld and Christie Todd Whitman.

But while a faction of the Republican party did seem to dissociate itself from the above list of social policy positions, it is certainly a dubious claim that this election signified a broad public rejection of such positions. Bob Dole did not bother to campaign on social issues; President Clinton co-opted the “family first” theme with great success; the most conservative freshman Republicans generally won; and California of all places voted to end its state affirmative action programs. It seems that conservative positions on social issues are becoming more, not less popular among voters. Nevertheless, it is an appropriate time for us “social conservatives” to consider whether this list has served us well.

We should ask ourselves: Have we become so enamored of our list of

policy positions that we have fallen into the habit of presenting slogans rather than a compelling and unified philosophy of freedom? “Abortion is murder.” “\$500 tax credit for each child.” “Stop reverse discrimination.” “Vote for school choice.” When we present ourselves in this manner, we appear to be just like every other special interest coalition, attempting to garner support for our policies of choice. This “politics of the list” fits well in our current mode of political discourse, which is dominated by short sound bytes and easy solutions. But will it ever effect real and permanent change?

This “politics of the list” fits well in our current mode of political discourse, which is dominated by short sound bytes and easy solutions.

I should begin by acknowledging that Bob Dole was no litmus test

for the political viability of the list. Mr. Dole not only did not run on the “social issues”; he ran away from them. To him the list seemed an anathema. He was visibly uncomfortable talking about abortion, not to mention proposing any significant legislation on the issue. And when once questioned about “sexual orientation” issues, he used the word “tolerance” three times in fifteen

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## CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS



### Thomas not just a doctor, but a saint

I have been fascinated by the debate in the *Concourse* over our proper relationship to St. Thomas Aquinas. However, the debate—at least explicitly—has underestimated the role the Communion of Saints plays in every aspect of our lives. At a Catholic university this is an impoverishment.

Of course we should not treat the writings of St. Thomas as though they were sacred Scripture. On the other hand, it does not seem prudent to treat his writings as suspect until proven otherwise: surely he has at least earned the benefit of the doubt.

But, more importantly, we neither stand on St. Thomas' shoulders nor rest in his lap (though the latter seems more accurate, except perhaps for someone such as John Paul II). Rather we have a relationship to St. Thomas that yields

far greater fruit than the writings of any mere philosopher or the search for abstract truths ever could (which is not to say we ought not to be diligently searching for such truths).

We are in communion on our knees with St. Thomas, who intercedes for us and never ceases to help unite us spiritually and intellectually closer to the source and summit of all holiness and truth, Jesus Christ.

Jim Fox  
Executive Director of  
University Relations

### Is corporate repentance really possible?

I read with interest Mary Healy's article on corporate contrition in Issue 4. As a non-Catholic (Orthodox) Christian, I necessarily approach this subject as something of an outsider. While commending Ms. Healy's good intentions and those of the Pope in his encyclical, I would like to voice a few misgivings.

First, much of what Ms. Healy recommends, although laudable enough, does not really deserve the name of repentance. She says that Catholics today should "vicariously sorrow" for the sins of others in the Church and that they should express "sincere regret" for the crimes of Catholics in the past.

Granting this to be so, I think it is important that we not name such acts repentance. Repentance involves more than an attitude of sorrow or regret; it involves actively resolving to change while at the same time placing one's hope, not in one's own ability to change, but in the mercy of God. There is no better illustration of this than the story of the prodigal son. The repentance of the prodigal son is inseparable from his act of physically returning to his father and casting himself upon his father's mercy. Had he merely felt sorry for his sins without acting upon that sorrow, he would have remained lost.

It is worth noting that the New Testament marks this distinction by using two different verbs, *metanoein* and *metamelesthai*, for repentance and regret. Judas regretted (*metameletheis*, Mt. 27:3) his betrayal of Christ; he did not repent of his betrayal of Christ.

I realize that insisting on this point may seem pedantic. Why does it matter what we call what we do, provided that what we do is right? The answer is that if we call godly sorrow by the name of repentance then we are apt to forget what repentance truly is—how hard it is and how much it demands of us in the way of humility before God and true and fervent desire to change. Part of the reason why the sacrament of confession is so important is that it forces one to move beyond the stage of regret

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# The Catholic Church and the Little Green Man

by Justine Schmiesing

**I**N VIEW OF THE RECENT INCONCLUSIVE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE THAT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN LIFE ON MARS, THE QUESTION

ARISES ANEW: DOES INTELLIGENT life exist elsewhere in the universe? I've always wondered this myself, but after topping off my formal schooling with an excellent liberal arts education at Franciscan University (albeit *sans* core curriculum) I have come to the conclusion that it is undoubtedly an impossibility.

To begin, let me explain whose existence I am denying. When I refer to "intelligent life" I mean organisms who have both a physical body and an eternal soul, as well as self-knowledge and a free will. I do not, at the moment, rule out lower forms of life that man, upon discovery, may subjugate as he does the animals of the earth. I suppose it is possible that a planet exists which is perfectly well-equipped with the necessary *flora* and *fauna* to sustain human habitation, and that our great-great-great-something-grandchildren will build summer homes there. But they will not find creatures there comparable in metaphysical stature to themselves. Humans are the pinnacle of God's creation.

How dare I (who lost interest in astronomy before I had saved up enough baby-sitting money to pay for a starter-telescope) make such a bold assertion? My theory derives (albeit indirectly) from my belief in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

First, let us review what our Faith does *not* teach us about aliens.

There is no mention anywhere in the Bible of other intelligent life forms (as qualified above) on earth or other planets. For instance, reference to alien



existence is notably absent in the Genesis creation accounts: when the universe went from nothing to something—no aliens were present. Furthermore, as this issue of the *Concourse* goes to press, there have yet to be any Church documents or papal encyclicals issued to make us suppose they may have made their appearance since. Nor have I ever heard of any reliable private revelation on the subject. This silence speaks volumes.

"So what?" someone may object, "We don't know about everything God has done. I mean, who can say why the dinosaurs are extinct?" True, we do not know everything about creation, but we do know some things. The Lord has chosen to speak to us of the existence of spirit-beings: angels and devils. No where does He mention little green men.<sup>1</sup> (Many people today would find it easier to believe in the existence of a spaceman than in St. Michael the Archangel!)

Our Faith teaches us that God created everything for man, in order for man to know Him, love Him and serve Him. We are taught that the entire universe is destined and addressed to man. Would we not find it strange to be informed, this late in the game, that, "Oh, by the way, you have to share it with the folks on planet 431-x, two solar systems down." We may only be tenants, but the universe is not a duplex.

How betrayed we would feel to discover another race of intelligent beings living and exercising dominion in the universe the Creator has declared to be designed for us? How unfaithful we would feel our God to be! He has called us His Bride—could He share such intimacy with another race and not be an adulterer?

Gazing into the sky on a star-filled evening, the gift may well seem a bit out of proportion. What need have we miniscule earthlings of such an overwhelming immensity of existence? Would not one small solar system have more than sufficed? But do not such reflections serve to throw into sharper perspective the boundlessness of God's generosity! The magnitude of His gift! (Wow!)

And another thing: what of the problem of eternity? Assuming there is one heaven, it seems safe to say that if God *had* created intelligent extra-terrestrials He would not deny them an opportunity to attain it. We know by faith that it is only through Jesus that man can enter heaven. The same would hold even if some brave 21st century pioneers started a transplant colony in

another galaxy; Jesus would still be for them “the way the truth and the life.” Would it not also be necessary for little green men to enter heaven through Jesus?

Jesus seems to have deliberately and permanently associated himself with earth; His (sacred) roots are sunk deep in our own home turf. He was born here; His mother was born here. Nothing can change that. He cannot be re-born on another planet. There cannot be another One who is true man and true God, given in ransom for another world. Therefore, how are these hypothetical other creatures to be saved? Hmmm...

What if someday some alien ship with a special cloaking device managed to slip through my theory, and we found these E.T.’s and discovered that God has given them a different salvation history, a different Bible, a different church hierarchy—whose Faith do we embrace? What about intermarriage? Even a world like that C.S. Lewis’ *Narnia Chronicles* doesn’t quite work if you think about it. If Aslan is Jesus, is he true God, true man and true lion?

It is not beneath me to admit that God’s mind is larger than mine and that he could easily blast my conclusions to smithereens, like the Rebel Alliance did to the Death Star. Until He does, I

will look forward to the new *Star Wars* movies to be released in the next few years, and promise to enjoy the adventures in imagination without sharing my conclusions with the unsuspecting (and probably unarmed) popcorn-munching movie-goer next to me. ■

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<sup>1</sup> I regret to note that my theory rules out the possibility of the real existence of the inhabitants of Tolkien’s Middle Earth—elves, dwarves, hobbits and the like—but I see no way around it.

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## Politics

*Continued from page 1*

seconds and made absolutely no sense. His early campaign tirade against Hollywood earned kudos from some conservative commentators. The speech, however, was rightfully characterized as “out of character.” Mr. Dole was never at ease discussing the moral failures of our country.

Still, we over-simplify the causes of Mr. Dole’s defeat when we focus our criticism too exclusively on his failure to take a strong conservative stand on our top five social issues. We forget that a large, large portion of this country is simply not concerned with our list.

Even those members of our movement most known for deep and serious thought, for their commitment to principle and their refusal to engage in empty slogan-swapping political rhetoric, seem unable to avoid entirely the temptation of relying on the list. The journal *First Things* devoted its November issue to the provocative question: “The End of Democracy?” Five writers—Robert Bork, Russell Hittinger, Hadley Arkes, Charles Colson and Robert George—asked the readership to consider whether our federal judiciary had so usurped the political function as to deprive the citizenry of its rightful voice in the gov-

ernment of the nation. The writers argued that the courts were deciding all of the “important” issues and leaving only the relatively meaningless decisions to majority vote. What were the “important” issues? Abortion, doctor assisted suicide, gay rights and affirmative action. The list reappears.

The writers noted that it is probable that within two years, the courts will enshrine constitutional rights to assisted suicide and various homosexual activities (possibly including marriage.) The courts have already created an unlimited abortion license and have adopted feminist positions in important cases concerning alleged gender discrimination. According to the writers, these acts of political usurpation by the courts call into question the very legitimacy of our government.

These are very serious charges indeed. This seriousness is punctuated by the writers’ collective belief that now is the time to begin considering action. “Civil disobedience” and “revolution” were cautiously discussed.

But who will take their arguments seriously? Because they presume an acceptance of the list, they will resonate only with those who already believe that abortion, euthanasia, gay rights and feminist issues are the “important” issues facing our nation. But to others—to the majority—who see economic issues, welfare, equal opportunity, racism

and crime (for instance) as the key issues facing our nation today, they will seem ludicrously out of touch.

To illustrate this point: when I shared the ideas I had read about in *First Things* with individuals who do not share my philosophical, religious or political leanings, the general response to me was that the articles seemed to be “much ado about nothing.” They questioned me about *my* liberty; *my* freedom to practice *my* faith; *my* freedom to raise *my* family. No one is coercing *my* wife to have abortions. Priests are not being thrown in jail for celebrating Mass. The elderly are not being killed off to conserve medical resources. The sky is not falling. Lighten up.

Responses like these may be somewhat shocking to those of us who are used to investing great personal energy in these culture wars, but they do represent the way a great deal of “middle America” thinks. To many, the list is unimpressive. It does not move them. They have no stake on either side of the issues—or so they believe. And their lives go on with a great deal of personal freedom and social unconcern.

Many of these same people show themselves indifferent to the trends of judicial procedure. While we argue with great fervor: “Democracy has been usurped by an imperial judiciary that has ceased to base its decisions on the

original meaning of the Constitution!” and the other side counters with ominous talk about a “living” and “relevant” Constitution, the majority shrug their shoulders. They are not interested in procedural niceties; only in the concrete results of decisions which directly affect their own lives. Because the list does not presently affect them, the legal decisions in these areas do not either.

So where does this leave us? Talk of civil disobedience and revolution will either seem extremist or fall on deaf ears. It appears that we have a job of convincing to do.

We should begin by building on the moral sense of the populace. And contrary to popular belief, the American public still has a moral sense. It manifests itself in the growing suspicion that something is quite wrong with our culture. Violent sexual crimes committed by 8 and 9 year olds; a popular culture that has ceased to maintain even a semblance of decency; primary and secondary education becoming less and less effective, despite more and more money being thrown into the public school systems; generations of families caught in a seemingly endless cycle of dependency. America is beginning to ask questions about this state of affairs. In order to effect political and social change, we must begin to provide more complete answers. Lists will not do. We must fight the temptation to package our ideas in neat slogans—witness the Christian Coalition’s Contract with the American Family and the Family Research Council’s Six Point Plan for a Pro-Family America. Lists may be easy to sell; but ideas presented for easy consumer consumption do not have lasting effect. The country needs to relearn the moral principles which made it great. And Alan Keyes is an excellent example of this effort.

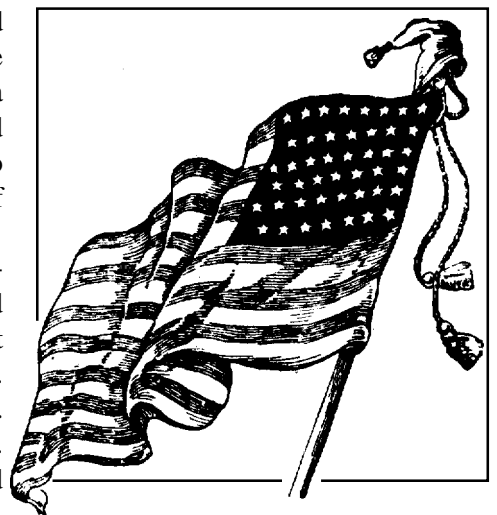
Keyes is fighting to re-connect America to its roots. He speaks not only in his own voice, but with the voices of Lincoln and Jefferson and Adams. He reminds us that our rights are not conferred on us by a paternalistic government but are grounded in our

dignity as children of our Creator. And because of this, we can never claim the “right” to do wrong. Keyes presents a compelling philosophy of freedom and reminds us that certain moral truths do not change and cannot be the subject of opinion polls.

Throughout his speeches, it is remarkable that he was never dismissed as divisive and never accused, like Pat Buchanan, of being a purveyor of hate. So much depends on the delivery. Buchanan depends more on the list. Keyes reminds us that our founders did not rely on lists but engaged in a vigorous debate about the foundation of our rights. Keyes reinvigorates this debate and, like John Adams, argues that our constitution “was made only for a moral and religious people.” Like Jefferson, he wonders whether our liberties could remain secure if their only firm basis—a belief that they are a gift from God—were removed.

I remember hearing an interview during the primary season where a Buchanan supporter asked Keyes to withdraw from the race, since he was taking votes away from Buchanan, who had a better chance of gaining the nomination (a questionable claim) and who stood for the same issues as Keyes. Keyes’ reaction surprised me. He was indignant and sternly replied that he would stay in the primary if only to prevent the party from being turned over to such as Buchanan. Buchanan’s message, said Keyes, is divisive by nature and cannot bring healing to the country. It is more “against” than “for.” It is quick to demonize opponents in the wars of the list.

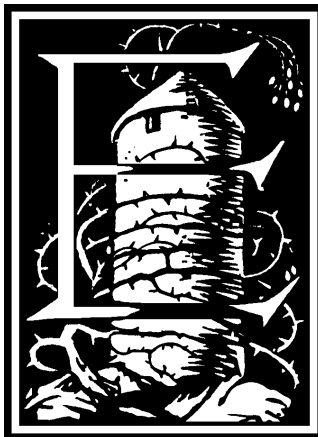
Keyes understands that we cannot afford to alienate our opponents and in the process alienate those suspended by indifference in the middle. For the problems embodied in the list are symptoms of a moral crisis. To address this crisis, we must rebuild the foundation of political discourse. We cannot skip this process and jump straight to the list. Some say such a rebuilding is impossible. Maybe it is. But if it is impossible, then so are lasting victories in social concerns.



I do not want to leave the impression that issues such as abortion and euthanasia are only of secondary importance. They are of the utmost importance. Do not forget: no one argued more passionately and convincingly against abortion than Alan Keyes. But in arguing the issue, he connected the crisis of abortion to our overall societal condition. Our current radical individualism, marked by a lack of discipline, a forsaking of responsibility to family and community, and a desire to please self at all costs, is responsible for a plethora of social ills, among the most serious of which is abortion. And this conception of individualism is at direct odds with the notion that we are “endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights.” These inalienable rights are jeopardized when we refuse to protect the most vulnerable among us. When we forget the source of our rights, we are all at risk. Alan Keyes had the answer for those who are content in their own personal freedom and who are unmoved by the list. Their rights are at stake.

Keyes presents a wise course of action. My hope is that we will recognize the power of his message and make it our own. For if we elevate a “politics of the list” over a more thoroughgoing philosophy of freedom, we will surely fail, and our failure will live with us for quite some time. ■

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## Conversations

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to that of effectual and lived repentance.

I have similar misgivings about another important element of Ms. Healy's argument: the prayers she cites from the Old Testament. In these prayers Nehemiah and Daniel confess before God the sins of the nation and beseech Him for mercy. These are, as Ms. Healy suggests, excellent models for us to imitate. But are they really acts of corporate repentance? I would prefer to call them prayers of intercession. They show us part of what it means to "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Corporate repentance, properly speaking, requires something else as well—a resolve on the part of the people to renounce their sins and return to God. It requires that the people pray as a body (though perhaps through a spokesman) for the mercy of God.

All of this makes it highly doubtful that the Church can really repent, as a body, of sins committed in ages gone by. Certainly she can express sorrow for them, but that is something different. Individual Christians can also make intercessory prayers of the type exemplified by Nehemiah and Daniel. What the Church can and should do as a body is repent of *present* sins. Unfortunately, that requires a certain unanimity in the recognition that these are sins and in the resolve to turn away from them. Given the present state of the Catholic Church, such unanimity is scarcely at hand. Even the Pope

seems to have shied away from anything more specific than a vague call for repentance for (to quote Ms. Healy's paraphrase) "our participation in the evils of our own modern culture." Very well, but what are these evils? If I use artificial contraception and vote for pro-abortion politicians, am I participating in the evils of modern culture? Traditionalists will say yes; modernists will say no. That leaves us about where we started.

It seems to me—speaking, of course, as an outsider—that what is needed in the Catholic Church at present is not so much a grand but ambiguous call for repentance as concrete acts of reform. I could not help but notice throughout Ms. Healy's article the assumption that non-Catholics today are alienated by memories of Catholic intolerance and bigotry. Although that may be true in some cases, among the Orthodox, at least, it is scarcely typical. We recognize that there is plenty of blame to go around and that our own slate is hardly a clean one. What alienates us are characteristics to be found in most Catholic parishes today—the lack of reverence for the Holy Eucharist, the Theotokos, and the saints, the neglect of disciplines like fasting and confession, the tawdriness and banality of most post-Vatican II worship, the dissent and even heresy among prominent Catholic theologians. I do not mean to say that if these were eliminated then the path would be clear for reunion; for serious issues would remain. But at the level of visceral reaction it is these, rather than the remembrance of ancient grievances, which today create the obstacle.

David Bradshaw

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## Did they dance at the crucifixion?

**The previous articles regarding**

"liturgical dance" and its appropriate place and form have been well-written and clearly presented. However, several points of clarification need to be made before a continued discussion of this current topic will bear fruit.

There is, first and foremost, a vital distinction between "liturgical dance," properly so called, and those other forms of dance which are extrinsic to and outside of the Mass itself, i.e., prior to the Introductory Rites (specifically, the greeting and sign of the cross), and following the Concluding Rite (specifically the *Ite, missa est*). The term "liturgical dance," therefore, refers only to dance within the Mass. In the western Church, the practice of liturgical dance, according to the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, as such, is illicit.<sup>1</sup>

Not wishing to contest the Ordinary Magisterium and argue for liturgical dance, I move to address the second form of religious dance, namely that which is "performed" in a liturgical context, but not within the body of the Mass. This seems to be the sort of dance Kay Cummins defends in her Issue 4 article, "Dancing for God."<sup>2</sup>

I also do not wish to contest that form of religious dancing which is clearly in conformity with the Congregation's decree on dance, so long as it does not take place in the context of the Holy Mass, or in a place properly liturgical. Such was the dance that occurred in St. Peter's square in Rome, following a missionary Mass celebrated by Samoan priests in 1971.

The appropriateness of dance within a liturgical context hinges on the essence of the Mass itself. Mrs. Cummins states: "The liturgy is primarily a communal act that reaches a climax in the sacrament of the Eucharist or Holy Communion." *On the contrary*, the holy sacrifice of the Mass "is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1382). References stressing the primarily sacrificial nature

of the Mass are also abundant in Canon Law, and both the Second Vatican and Tridentine Council documents. We see, then, that Holy Mass is not *primarily* communal, but indeed is the summation and unity of communion *and* sacrifice. There can be no separation of or distinction between the two; the Mass is the *re-presentation* of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary in an unbloody manner with the body of the Christian faithful. They are one and the same sacrifice, continued now sacramentally.

The critical question in our discussion follows: can dance, in the western Church, offer the body of the faithful any addition or supplement, either sacramentally or actually, to the unity and essence of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross in union with the sacrifice of the priest as *alter Christus* in the Mass? Clearly, the answer can only be in the negative.

The thought barely formed, the objection immediately arises, "Do, therefore, singing, or other bodily postures during the course of Mass, indeed anything which is not *essential* to the Mass, then offer no addition or benefit to the faithful who assist at Mass?" Although similar at first glance (both dance and music do, after all, manifest aesthetically the mind and heart of man), upon a closer look, we see the intrinsic difference between dance and sacred music, especially, in the cultural context of western society and spirituality. The Second Vatican Council recognizes the treasure that the Church has in her sacred music; Gregorian Chant is to hold "pride of place" in the Sacred Liturgy because of both its intrinsic sublimity and its unity with prayer. Dance has no such tradition or intrinsic connection to the essence of the Mass.<sup>3</sup>

I do not wish to contest the aesthetic value of dance, or even its capacity to assist certain people in worship; the fact remains, however, that dancing in the West carries with it feelings and inclinations which are contrary to purity and devotion; it is the introduction of the secular into the realm of the sacred.<sup>4</sup> For a fallen man, suffering

from the effects of the wound of concupiscence, to experience the aesthetic pleasure of graceful and beautiful women, even in prayerful and solemn adoration, in a religious dance before the Mass, is at the very least an opportunity for the occasion of sin. This fluidity of motion and beauty can have the unwanted effect of drawing the mind and heart to the world, instead of inspiring a prayerful and meditative spirit and lifting the mind and heart to God as preparation for the sacred mysteries.

Understanding, then, the great beauty and discipline with which dance is performed, and understanding the sincerity of heart of those who are inspired and uplifted by this mode of worship, it is nonetheless apparent that in the West, religious dancing as a liturgical practice poses both a pastoral and theological difficulty. Pastorally, it can be a hindrance to purity and chastity; theologically it does not and cannot add to the unity of the Mass in its principal essence as the sacrifice of Christ.

Did they dance at the crucifixion?

Andrew Bloomfield

Senior, philosophy and mathematics

<sup>1</sup> Both Fr. Stravinskis' *Catholic Encyclopedia* and Fr. Hardon's *Catholic Dictionary* define liturgical dance as I describe above. The prohibition against such form of "worship" in the Latin Rite is not found directly in Canon Law, but rather in an article of the *Notitiae* published by the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments and Divine Worship in 1975, Volume 11, p. 202-205. To quote: "if the proposal for a religious dance in the West is to be acceptable, care must be taken that this occurs *outside of the liturgy*, in assembly areas that are not strictly liturgical. Moreover, priests must always be excluded from the dance."

<sup>2</sup> I assume that dance prior to the Mass is not intended to be part of the Mass, but only as a method of preparation; therefore the Congregation's article would seem to permit this.

<sup>3</sup> The council notes that the Church's liturgical and sacred music is a "treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art... As a combination of sacred music and words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 112). The council stresses this importance throughout Chapter VI of the Constitution. No such tradition of sacred dance exists in the West.

<sup>4</sup> Again, the article from the Congregation is instructive: "Here [in western culture] dancing is

tied in with love, with diversion, with profaneness, with unbridling of the senses; such dancing in general, is not pure." For a society which has become increasingly sensate and desensitized to the true beauty and worth of the human body and its discipline, dance is a challenge to the soul, and no longer a help.

## Sexism in any form denigrates both men and women

I would like to thank Elizabeth Magaletta for her October 16 article entitled, "The Persistence of 'Masculinism' at Franciscan University." I found this article especially interesting because I had thought that many people at this University valued femininity over masculinity. Seeing that Ms. Magaletta held the opposite opinion led me to examine both my viewpoint and hers more closely. I concluded that we were both right and both wrong—in a way. This conclusion will need to be explained, but first let me mention two possible shortcomings in Ms. Magaletta's article.

First, there may be an inconsistency. In the tenth paragraph she writes, "We have never needed a defense of the rights of men against the aggressions of women; and so I use 'masculinism' expressly to designate that view of life in which the concerns of men subsume everything else. Male superiority is not so much a part of this view as its guiding principle." However, in the previous sentence she had said that in radical feminism "the special focus on women has subsumed everything else." If radical feminism subsumes everything else to the needs of women and what she calls "masculinism" subsumes everything



else to the needs of men and she considers masculinism to be an attack on women, does it not follow that she should consider radical feminism to be an attack on men? Yet she denies that masculinity needs to be defended against the aggressions of certain women.

This brings me to a second shortcoming in her piece. I say “certain women” because it would be false and misleading to eliminate the qualifier certain. Unfortunately, Ms. Magaletta does just this when she describes feminism as “a movement especially aimed at defending the rights and dignity of women against the aggressions of men.” Would it not have been better to have qualified this statement by saying instead that feminism defends women against the aggressions of certain men? Otherwise, she unjustly accuses all men of masculinism.

Now I will try to show how I think both Ms. Magaletta and I have falsely evaluated the situation. Interestingly, some of the very things that Ms. Magaletta sees as attacks on femininity I once saw as attacks on masculinity. The truth doubtless lies between, so to find it I will take each of these opinions and show how it could cut both ways.

In the sixth paragraph of her article Ms. Magaletta points out how viewing women in regard to their receptivity during sexual intercourse leads to their being seen from an exclusively male standpoint. As the natural result of this, “what seemed to be a discussion of the differences between men and women turns out rather as one of the difference of women from men.” On the other hand, viewing a list of how woman differs from him may convince man that those differences are too many and too great to be overcome. This, in turn, may convince him that he would be inadequate as her husband and she as his wife. This could leave him deeply depressed. Therefore this point of view, whether its proponents and opponents realize it or not, is an attack on all the members of both sexes.

Ms. Magaletta rightly complains

that concentrating on woman’s subjectivity may lead one to question whether she can be objective. However, it is equally true that concentrating on a man’s objectivity may lead one to question whether he can be subjective. She also rightly complains that a woman’s “nurturing aspect” can be used to cut “her out of spheres where emotion is not of primary importance.” However, the same argument could be used to cut men out of spheres where emotions are important. Again, insisting that women are only suited to homemaking could lead to insisting that no man could ever be a homemaker. Again and again the claims which seem, on the surface, to attack one of the sexes turn out to attack both, once one thinks them through.

In the next-to-last paragraph of her article Ms. Magaletta points out that what she calls “masculinism” survives by disguising itself and lavishly praising women. She points out that to those who see woman as inferior this inordinate praise of women is not seen as an attempt to establish female dominance. However, to a man who sees woman as his equal it can look like an attempt to advance women at the expense of men. Here again an attack on woman is an attack on man, and vice versa.

This suggests that those whom Ms. Magaletta terms “masculinists” and “radical feminists” actually have the same mindset. They see how certain points are attacks on their own sex and also see how they may attack the opposite sex through certain other points. They do not see that, because men and women are equals, every insult to one sex also denigrates the other sex. Therefore, what we need today is not

a defense of women from men or a defense of men from women. We need a defense of the members of both sexes from the attacks of those—whether male or female—who would reduce them to pale reflections of their true selves.

Michael Joseph Healy, Jr.  
Freshman, Classics

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## Capitalism clarified

**Reading Regina Schmiedicke’s** criticisms of my defense of capitalism, I feel she is confused over the definitions of two terms: capitalism and freedom. In an attempt to clarify the meaning of capitalism and answer her first question regarding the Church’s sustained criticisms of capitalism, let me humbly suggest that, like Mrs. Schmiedicke, perhaps what the Church criticizes as being capitalism is what economists refer to as a “mixed economy.” This is the form of economic organization where government and big business conspire to retain power in the hands of the few. This latter point is undoubtedly what Mrs. Schmiedicke is referring to when she talks about capitalism. If this is the model she fears, then I wholeheartedly support her thoughts.

Laissez-faire capitalism, however, as I stated in my original article, would not support an unfair allegiance between private enterprise and the state.

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In fact, true capitalism has never existed; the closest to it was the U.S. economy before the turn of the century. (History notes that social and technological progress was unprecedented during that time.) Perhaps the difficulty in discussing these issues today lies in the fact that most people have all but lost the knowledge of what capitalism is, how it functions, and what it has achieved. The truth about its nature and history has been drowned in a wave of misrepresentations, distortions, falsifications and almost universal ignorance. Nearly everyone today takes it as axiomatic that capitalism results in the vicious exploitation of the poor; that it leads to monopoly; that it resisted and opposed the worker's rising standard of living; that that standard of living was the achievement, not of capitalism, but of the state and regulation. It seems that people often do not question such bromides, since they "know" that capitalism is based on the profit motive and appeals to the individual's self-interest; that alone is sufficient to damn it.

Mrs. Schmiedicke states: "In its present form as well as in a more 'ideal' form, capitalism does not (and I would say cannot) fully allow the majority of men to experience the 'power of self-determination.' Why? Because capitalism without restraints is essentially competitive." I am unsure as to what she means by "a more 'ideal' form" of capitalism, but, as I said, in its present form we are dealing with a mixed economy, not capitalism. Also, this statement seems to make competition intrinsically evil. But surely Mrs. Schmiedicke would agree that competition develops man's creative powers and results in better quality products at lower prices, thus helping those who need it most: the poor.

The benefits of competition are especially important to keep in mind when we consider the power of monopolies. For example, in our present day mixed economy there exists one monopoly that cannot be threatened by any competitive forces. This monopoly is largely counterproductive, consumes

more money than any other, and can be blamed for the murder of thousands of unborn children every day. This "monopoly" is the state, and it is protected from market competition not by the superiority of its "products" but by force of law. One of the state's "products" is public education. I am sure that most *Concourse* readers would agree that "public education" is failing miserably to educate young people. I am sure that if public education had to "compete" with private education it would cease to be as shameless as it presently is.

Mrs. Schmiedicke argues for a "Third Way," that is, a distributive system based on the principle of subsidiarity. But the meaning she gives the term is in no way clear. She states: "Subsidiarity means that when there is a need, society should first look to the smallest possible unit to meet it...the small business is allowed to handle it." To me it seems like the words "is allowed" are nothing but a nice way of saying "will be required by law." To illustrate her point further, Mrs. Schmiedicke states: "The state government maintains the highways, but it should not discipline our children for not doing their homework." Excuse the cliché, but you cannot have your cake and eat it, too. In other words, you cannot expand the role of government to ensure that businesses are held responsible for an individual's needs and then hope that the state won't discipline your children. The system she describes reminds me ominously of the famous Marxist saying "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

In her discussion of the role of corporations and government, Mrs. Schmiedicke wrote the following: "Today the government and corporations regularly promise to meet the needs of everyone, but it is a promise every thinking person can recognize as patently unrealistic." My question is: since when is it the responsibility of the government or of business to meet everyone's needs?! It seems to me that we have moved on from a discussion

of what defines capitalism to a discussion of what defines freedom. Mrs. Schmiedicke seems to nuance the definition of freedom to include "the right to have my needs met."

In a politico-economic context, freedom means one thing and one thing only: freedom from coercion. Civil laws are created in order to protect the individual from those who would use coercion or fraud against another. This definition of freedom may be summed up as a "freedom from" not a "right to" and is compatible with "the acting person" that John Paul II speaks of in *Love and Responsibility*.

With all due respect, it sounds to me like the distributism Regina Schmiedicke advocates is just another type of mixed economy. It is as if she were saying "we will use the principles of socialism, but we will do it better, we will be fair."

I would like to end by saying how much I appreciated Jules van Schaijik's recent article, "On dwarfs, giants and little boys." In it, he wrote: "We are all aware that to be morally mature, our actions and choices must be our own. We cannot hand our consciences over to someone else, no matter how much holier he is than we." If one agrees with this statement, how can he then not apply it to the field of economics? Just as you cannot steal someone else's conscience, you cannot rob him of his freedom to be benevolent.

Martha (Cotton, '89) Blandford

## Ét tu, Regina?

**Regina Schmiedicke's article** in the October 16 issue of the *Concourse* reminding us, once again, of the downsides(!) of capitalism includes some serious errors. However sincere she may be in her interest in the topic, she demonstrates little practical knowledge of economic theory and also fails to establish her opinions on the basis of the facts.

First of all, a clarification: we should note that while the Church has

always denounced the grave social injustices perpetuated by unbridled (a.k.a. laissez-faire) capitalism, she has likewise forcefully condemned the still graver moral injustices occurring under the other systems of material organization. No system of social and material order is perfectly free from error or invulnerable to abuse. But I suggest that free-enterprise, properly subsumed beneath culture and morality, not only can be humane, but is more conducive to humanity than any other system known to man.

When the Church proposes principles such as subsidiary and solidarity, they are meant to be taken as moral guidance which can help us in making decisions about the proper functioning of the system. However, it is imperative to recall that the system takes on the form we give it; its “success” (in terms of being good for humanity) depends on our exercising our freedom in morally responsible ways. We cannot change the system from the top to the bottom, as if it were some kind of machine or device that, when it is out of whack, can be adjusted and tweaked to generate the result we want or intend. The attempts by communist and socialist theorists (as well as our own federal government officials) to do this adjusting have resulted in disaster. The idea that a gifted few can organize and control the economy for the welfare of

society as a whole has proved a “fatal conceit.” This is a term I borrow from the Austrian economists, who are champions of freedom in the economic order. They point to the inherent impossibility of knowing what everyone wants and needs (or telling everyone what they want and need, in its much more diabolical form) at any point in time.

The best method is to start at the bottom (this is the true meaning of subsidiarity), that is, at the level of moral persuasion, education on economic literacy and our Christian heritage, and personal conversion. The result of such action, I propose, will be an evolving and widening moral order working itself into the fabric of our regular workaday existence.

Second, to rectify some errors: Regina states, rightly enough, that capitalism without restraints is essentially competitive. But she then proceeds to describe the centralization of management power over society’s resources, as if the mega-corporation is the necessary result of competitive processes. In essence, this is a watered-down version of the dialectal materialism popularized by Marx—a theory of economic activity which is totally out of touch with the facts.

Her argument fails to properly survey business demographics as well as the public policies and laws which effectively restrain the growth of such mega-corporations. In addition, a broader view of historical and current trends gives evidence that competition is heightening in the global marketplace and that corporate down-sizing and right-sizing is becoming more typical. Consider, too, the dramatic growth of small businesses especially between 1986 and 1992, when 21 million small business jobs were created. True, big business downsized by 3 million jobs in the last recession, but the net result was 18 million new jobs over the past decade.

Regina’s thesis that the free market in practice tends inevitably to reduce persons to wage-slaves is likewise unreal, and akin to the Marxist

notion of the oppression of the proletariat. The fear of mass marketing and highly capitalized businesses as essentially inhumane is one of the most naive yet prevalent myths that biases our understanding of free enterprise. Such thinking was central to early historical analyses of the birth of capitalism. However, as Hayek, et al., show (in a wonderful compilation entitled *Capitalism and the Historians*) workers under capitalism, despite hardships of factory life, were better off financially and had better lives than prior to the spread of capitalism.

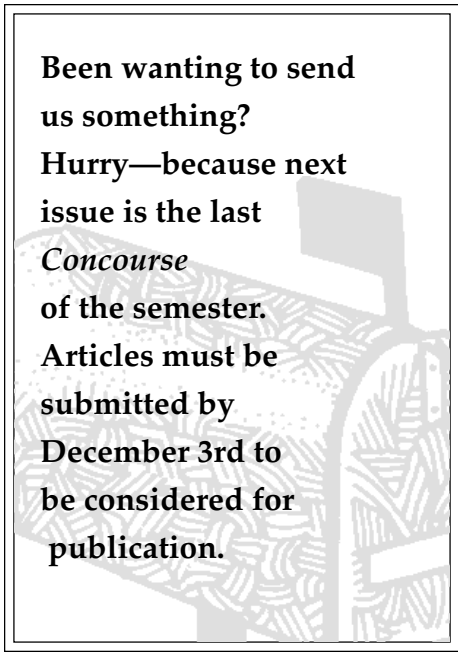
In her concrete examples of the evil of capitalism, Regina has committed what is known as the fallacy of composition—the mistake of believing that what is true for an individual is true for an entire group. I would like more facts, for example, related to the downsizing of the engineering firm Regina mentions, which has threatened the discharge of loyal employees. Was the firm in danger in some way that could not be avoided without cutting costs? Was anything done to avoid the situation? Were other options made available? Are the discharges early retirements? Did the firm promise a job for life? Did management cause the firm’s presently unhealthy situation? Unless we know the answers to such questions, we are not really in a position to condemn the threatened discharge as unjust or inhumane.

On the subject of distributism, I have little to say, except that the proponents of this kind of economic organization, even in mild forms, are basically advocating a completely new arrangement of society—one that poses potentially staggering costs and inequitable burdens—without resolving the practical and moral issues related to the equitable distribution of goods and resources.

Michael Welker

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**Been wanting to send us something? Hurry—because next issue is the last Concourse of the semester. Articles must be submitted by December 3rd to be considered for publication.**



# Considering receptivity in rethinking economic structures

by Nicholas J. Healy, Jr.

## A NUMBER OF *CONCOURSE* ARTICLES HAVE TOUCHED ON TWO SEEMINGLY UNRELATED SUBJECTS: FEMININE RECEPTIVITY AND

CAPITALISM. SURPRISINGLY, there may well be a connection, and a rather important one. I mean that the problems connected with capitalism could stem from the fact that ours has been a disproportionately “masculine” society—one with an inadequate appreciation of more properly “feminine” qualities, notably receptivity.

First, a brief historical comment is in order. For the better part of this century we have been preoccupied with the evils of communism. By comparison, capitalism not only seemed to be benign, but an intrinsic part of the more virtuous free world. Yet for upwards of a century before the 1917 Russian Revolution, it was the problems of capitalism that plagued much of the world. Child labor, monopoly power (often secured through improper political influence) and extremes of wealth and poverty were very real evils that spawned communism and its less aggressive cousin, socialism. In the West, the religious reservoir of Christendom ameliorated the worst of these abuses and thus staved off the Marxist threat.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the concomitant discrediting of state socialism, capitalism is seen by many as both victorious and the only practical alternative. Yet once again the inherent tendency of capitalism toward excesses is manifesting itself. Indeed, as the moral capital of the West suffers what may be its final exhaustion, the voices of “libertarians” can be heard calling for markets to be unfettered from religiously inspired restraints. Thus we see the spread of legalized gambling, pornography and, in a few

areas, prostitution. From the Far East, the specter of child labor again haunts us.

However, as Regina Schmiedicke pointed out, the choice is not necessarily between laissez-faire capitalism and state socialism or even a “mixed” economy somehow balancing the two. Catholic distributists like Belloc and Chesterton warned us decades ago of the effects of consumerism and big business on the Catholic culture of the day. A similar conclusion was reached by a prominent German economist, Wilhelm Roepke. Although a Lutheran, Roepke was highly impressed with the social encyclicals of the popes. Like the Catholic distributists, he decried “bigness” in economic enterprise, whether private or government. He saw that small entrepreneurship, family farms, widespread ownership of land were all more consonant with and encouraging of the development of Christian culture; and that it was the uprooting of that culture that had led to the devastating tyrannies of communism and fascism.

Today in America we are experiencing a cultural collapse comparable to those which in the past have ushered

in tyrannies elsewhere. The causes of that collapse may not yet be fully understood. Yet it does not seem unlikely that our economic system has contributed to it; a system which prizes (and rewards) efficiency, productivity and individual (economic) achievement over strong families, stable communities and religious worship.

What is to be done? A great deal could be accomplished by changing laws to encourage smaller-scaled enterprises. Perhaps this would slow down, if not reverse, our cultural decay. Yet encouraging a degree of “distributism” may not be enough. Perhaps it is time to go deeper; to reconsider our economic system in the light of a new understanding of the nature of man, and heed the Holy Father’s recent exhortation for us to reconsider the role of woman.

Capitalism seems quintessentially masculine. It rewards initiative, aggressiveness, competitiveness and single-minded devotion to work. It is not a system which encourages

or rewards receptivity, the divinely ordained role of “receiving and giving.” Of course, women can and do succeed

The problems connected with capitalism could stem from the fact that ours has been a disproportionately “masculine” society—one with an inadequate appreciation of more properly “feminine” qualities...

in the market economy, but too often they are required to do so on “male” terms. At times, they seem to “succeed” by diminishing or subsuming their femininity. Thus, much of the debate on the role of women has centered on “rights” and “empowerment”; in effect, the opportunities to be given women in a “masculine” system.

Mary, as the role model par excellence, shows us that receptivity is the essential beginning for the Christian.<sup>1</sup> Her fiat: “Be it done unto me according to Thy word,” led to her gift: “My soul doth magnify the Lord.” Opening to the Holy Spirit, she bore abundant fruit, and the graces she received she has lavished on the world in ever increasing measure.<sup>2</sup>

The saints too, show us how critical is this receptivity. Their conduct, while creative and efficacious, was always in response to prayer and self-denial. They always understood how little of what they accomplished was from their own resources and how much

was grace working in their lives. The apostles, emptied and disconsolate at Pentecost, received the Spirit and became the men, who “turned the world upside down.” (Acts 17:6)

What if the Holy Father is suggesting that women ought to provide a perspective on the very nature and structures of our systems? What would an economic system be like if it emphasized and encouraged Marian receptivity? What if we put first not initiative, efficiency and productivity, but openness to God, family stability and security, the valuing of the human person, and true service to the poor? In *Centissimus Annus*, the Holy Father noted that ordering society to the Catholic vision of the common good may require “important changes in established lifestyles in the Capitalist countries.” Surely this suggests a more radical approach than merely

tempering the abuses of capitalism. Surely we cannot cling uncritically to a system which, for all its marvelous gen-

eration of wealth, has undoubtedly helped bring us to the brink of cultural and spiritual ruin as a nation.

I could not begin to suggest the practicalities of a more feminine system based on Marian receptivity. I do suggest that it is fitting for Catholic intellectuals to reflect prayerfully and fearlessly on our economic and social arrangements. It may be that the answer does not lie in a new “system” at all. Perhaps, like most things Christian, it must begin with each of us having a changed heart and new eyes. Yet, if we trust God and His Word, we know that it is in giving that we receive, and it is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life. ■

*Mr. Healy (who is not related to the Michaels Healy mentioned on p.8) is Vice President for University Relations, and father of Concourse editors Kathleen van Schaijik and Mary Healy.*

<sup>1</sup> Jesus Himself was “receptive.” “The Son can do nothing on His own, but only what He sees the Father doing ...” Jn 5:19. “I seek not my will, but the will of Him who sent me.” Jn 5:30. “...I do nothing on my own authority, but speak thus as the Father taught me.”

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted for these ideas to Dr. David Schindler of the John Paul II Institute, Washington, D.C. In his recent book, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church*, and in articles in the journal *Communio*, Dr. Schindler has expounded in theological terms the concept of receptivity as being the heart of the human person.

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