

# THE UNIVERSITY CONCOURSE

*An Independent Journal of Opinion*

Volume III, Issue 1

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## How not to help households

by Kathleen van Schaijik

Over the summer I became convinced that the time had come to call attention to a problem I think is threatening the welfare of the FUS household system. This is not pleasant to do, because it involves criticizing the efforts of people whose good intentions, personal commitment and Christian zeal are beyond question. Nevertheless, I *will* do it, because I love the household system at Franciscan University (I owe it, among other things, some of my happiest memories and some of my closest friends), and I hate to see it suffering.

The gist of my concern is this: that the inner life of households is being gradually suffocated and demoralized

by the inordinate *heaviness* and *pater-  
nalism* of the Student Life Office's well-meant efforts to strengthen it. Let me try to explain.

As I understand and experienced it, the "genius" of the household system lies in its being a structured way for students to help each other mature as Christians, through their commitment to meet and pray together regularly, to build friendships, to share each other's lives, bear each other's burdens, and otherwise support each other in deepening their faith and drawing nearer to God. In other words, it is, essentially, a *grassroots* thing. As I see it, nothing could be more fatal to such a system than for it to be "taken over" by a centralized authority, so that the

formation it aims at bringing about is being imposed "from above" rather than cultivated "from within." Yet I'm afraid this is exactly what's happening.

Households are being treated, not as free associations of students, but as *arms* of the Student Life Office; vehicles of their influence among the student body. Of course, this isn't anywhere (that I know of) said right out; there is nothing in the official documents stating that households are the principal means through which the Student Life Office affects the formation of Franciscan University students. Nevertheless, this is the impression that comes across; the whole tenor of their efforts toward households proclaims it.

See **Households** on page 8

## Where Do We Go From Here?

By Regis Martin

Not long ago my wife and son arrived at a doctor's office for an appointment, only to be driven into the hall to escape the aggressions of daytime TV. In place of "Romper Room" and reruns of "I Love Lucy," both wonderfully diverting with kids, there were great, steamy discussions of sex. Not marital sex, mind you, in which the fruits of love making include life, but sordid, unwholesome sex, wholly deranged from either life or love. A flock of Call Girls were chirping noisily away

on the commercial advantages of selling themselves; well, doing it at least among clients of pronounced discretion and ready cash. Flesh being just another commodity, they felt, why not market it like any other upscale consumer item?

What was instructive about this

particular episode, it turns out, was not the ardor of the prostitutes; after all, commercial sex being their business one expects a certain Rotarian pride in performing it well. No, the really striking thing about the discussion was the utter absence of any objection from the

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## EDITOR'S PAGE

### What is *the University Concourse*?

Working in the John Paul II Library this summer, we happened to notice that the *Concourse* was on record there as being “published by the philosophy department.” We do not know how this happened, but we suspect it was not an isolated clerical error. We gather that many think we are an organ of the philosophy department, or some other department at the University. Though we proclaim ourselves in every issue “an independent journal of opinion, published by alumni and students of Franciscan University,” it seems the essence of the idea is still not widely realized.

To set the record straight, then, as well as to acquaint especially our new readers with the history, nature and purpose of *the University Concourse*, we here briefly lay them out.

It began early in 1996, when a group of alumni and students devoted to the welfare of FUS agreed together that something essential to her nature as a university was missing, namely, an open forum for serious discourse and debate. More than a mere lack, we noticed a sort of localized cultural resistance to the very notion of such a thing—a widespread, misguided nervousness about open disagreement among Christians, which was preventing us from attaining the sharp intellectual vigor of the great Catholic universities of the past. Also, a natural habit of trusting in the wisdom of our leaders seemed to be running to excess, leading to an exaggerated stress on submission to their authority that did justice neither to the limitedness and humanity of those leaders, nor to the essential role other members of a university play in contributing

their ideas toward the perfection of the whole body. This tendency was reinforced by a strong pastoral emphasis on avoiding the sin of rebellion, which was, in our opinion, inadequately balanced by a due appreciation of the dangers on the other side—intellectual passivity and spiritual dependency and backwardness.

Every community has its unwholesome tendencies; these, we found, were among ours. We therefore thought it important to try to provide not just a forum for opinion, but an *independent* forum for opinion: one that deliberately did not seek official approval or rely on official support; one wherein our contributors might feel completely free to express themselves as they saw fit (within the broad perimeters set forth in our editorial policy), even if it meant promoting ideas that are officially out of favor.

But, beside this remedial intention, there were more positive reasons for launching an opinion journal at FUS. We saw, in the special atmosphere of our University, a unique opportunity at hand. The exuberant religious life of our campus, which defies the usual liberal/conservative categories, could, we thought, make for a new and powerful type of intellectual conversation; one wherein truth was pursued as Christ Himself—joyously, ardently, and without party spirit. At FUS, we thought, students, faculty, alumni and others might strive intellectually with each other without bitterness and acrimony, “with our eyes fixed on Truth,” and against the unifying backdrop of our mutual love of God and desire for holiness.

This, in any case, was our hope, and we think the experience of the last three semesters has proved it at least not entirely unrealistic. But, satisfied as we are with our success so far, we recognize that the *Concourse* still has room to increase in value and fruitfulness for FUS. But this will happen only in proportion with the willingness of the whole community to make good use of it. We therefore urge all our members to make this forum their own; to treat it, not just as an opportunity to practice and display rhetorical skill, but as a place where we can truly *influence* one another toward the good, by raising concerns, by challenging mindsets, and by generously donating our insights to the local “arena of ideas,” so that by our common efforts, a fuller light of Truth may come to illumine Franciscan University, as well as our personal lives.

The editors

# THE UNIVERSITY CONCOURSE

An Independent Journal of Opinion

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#### Editorial Policy

*The University Concourse* is an independent journal of opinion, published by alumni and students of Franciscan University, but not formally affiliated with the University. It is designed to encourage fruitful discourse among members of the FUS community. The views expressed in this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, nor those of the Franciscan T.O.R.s or other University officials.

We welcome submissions from faculty, students, administrators, staff, alumni, parents, trustees, benefactors and friends, on any topic of interest to a general university readership, provided they are courteously expressed and framed with a view to advancing the welfare of FUS and/or Catholic culture at large.

We recommend opinions be kept to fewer than 1,500 words.

Contributions should be submitted on a 3.5" disk, either to *The University Concourse*, Box 27, University Boulevard, Steubenville, OH 43952, or sent to e-mail address: “UConcourse@aol.com”

Please include your full name, phone-number and e-mail address, if you have one.

We will consider printing submissions anonymously or under a pen-name; however, in general we wish to encourage open, “face to face” discussion. In either case, the editors require the full name and phone-number of the author of each opinion.

# No shame in success

by Jason Negri

**M**OST CHRISTIANS WOULD AGREE WHOLEHEARTEDLY THAT OUR CULTURE NEEDS STRONG CHRISTIAN LEADERS NOW MORE THAN EVER. HOWEVER, DISAGREEMENT ARISES WHEN WE start offering ideas on how to accomplish the massive task of re-converting our culture. Everyone has his or her own role to play in this effort, but I would like to highlight an often-overlooked element of it, and in doing so, pinpoint what I see as an imbalance or mis-emphasis in the general culture of Franciscan University.

In many ways, Franciscan University prides itself in being countercultural. Our school proudly graduates its share of homemakers and those who enter religious life, in the face of a nation who sees these roles as impractical and nigh-worthless. However, our efforts to be countercultural and emphasize the value and vital necessity of these roles sometimes has led us to underemphasize how joining the workforce (like the average secular college graduate) is just as vital a calling—or vocation, if you will. I understand that society has glorified business and temporal success and has disparaged motherhood and simple ministries, but in our efforts to uphold the dignity of the person rather than their worldly achievements, we sometimes cross the line and start disparaging temporal success as if it were somehow a bad thing. I have spoken with more than a few students and alumni who feel that their professional ambitions and aspirations were sometimes stifled on our campus. In some respects, we are encouraged to focus on humility and St. Theresa’s “Little Way” as if it were the only way.

I try to understand that “stone by



stone” humility is part of Franciscan spirituality, but I believe we do ourselves and our country a disservice by suggesting that politicians, entrepreneurs and professionals can only be second-class Catholics because they happen to be successful in the eyes of the world. Because of this outlook, some FUS graduates will not consider a job in the “secular” arena, because they don’t believe they are serving God if they are not working for the institutional Church. These young graduates must certainly make their own decisions based on where they feel comfortable or believe themselves to be called, and I cannot and will not judge them. But I do wonder if their formation was not perhaps colored by a misunderstanding of the virtue of humility that

is sometimes conveyed here. I cringed some years ago when everyone on campus adopted the motto “Faithfulness, not Success,” because it cast success itself in such a negative light. And I believe some of our students and thus some of our graduates are, perhaps not uncoincidentally, prone to equate worldly success with religious unfaithfulness.

Fr. Michael repeatedly emphasizes how vital it is that our graduates stand for Christ in all arenas, including the business world. And many professors and administrators do encourage ambition to a degree. Still, as I know many fellow alumni, students and staff can testify, the problem is real. There is a more-or-less subtle disparagement of success hovering in the atmosphere of FUS.

Again, I realize that much of the resistance to worldly success that I have seen is the natural Christian reaction against a culture that idolizes wealth, power and influence. However, I see these goals as good things, and means to an end. That end is positive peer pressure, a return to a strong social mores and a culture based on natural law, so that Christianity can once again flourish in our country, instead of fighting for mere acceptance.

The late Russell Kirk observed that every civilized society has an aristocracy of sorts—leaders who through a

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combination of luck, ambition, skill, knowledge and wealth will rise to positions of influence. Well, if social, political and business leaders are going to exist anyway and influence the entire culture by their actions and character, then let those leaders be committed Catholic men and women who will use their temporal influence for the good. Do you want to see the re-Christianization of our arguably post-Christian culture? The conversion of the marketplace and the political arena must be a part of that, and it won't happen if we continue to keep to the fringes and discourage young committed Catholics from aspiring to greatness and success in these secular areas.

Some might interpret my position as one of holding the less-than-glamorous life in contempt; I do not. I simply believe that the social influence and power that the masses pursue and Christians eschew are necessary parts of the conversion formula, and they are being downplayed or ignored. Would Disney be pulling its current garbage if a Franciscan University graduate were at the helm instead of Michael Eisner? Would corporations be extending benefits to "domestic partners" of employees if more influential businesspeople were strong Catholics? Would abortion still be legal if a majority of our political figures were committed Catholics?

We will not see Christian ideals in the marketplace if top executives and professionals in these fields don't stand for them. Our graduates, who may

otherwise be well-equipped to rise to the top of these corporations, will never get there if their ambitions are stifled by the very institution that should have worked to instill and clarify them.

Also, we should ask ourselves how other groups, such as the Ivy League schools and the Masons maintain their influence in society. I know one reason—they take care of their own. They network through their own; they give preference to their own; they hire their own. It's high time we Catholics did the same. Let those who are well-established in a professional field do what they can to encourage and favor those who are just joining the workforce or "coming up through the ranks." And let the committed Catholic students of today not fear to aspire to greatness, if that is their calling. Let them use their time here to study, pray, work and prepare for the challenges of maintaining their faith and integrity while excelling in the workplace.

I am aware of Acton's maxim "Power corrupts," as well as Morton Blackwell's warning (paraphrased), "The problem with getting our people into positions of influence is that by the time they become influential, they are no longer our people." These are sobering thoughts, but they need not be self-fulfilling prophecies. We can look at many historic examples to see that worldly success, sound morals and deep piety can and frequently do coexist in the same person: St. Thomas More, King St. Louis V, and Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who signed the Declaration

of Independence specifically to give religious freedom to Catholics in colonial America. In modern America, we have people like Congressman Chris Smith and Henry Hyde, business moguls like J. Peter Grace and Tom Monaghan, and others, like Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas. These people show us how we can be successful in positions of social influence without abandoning our morals or our faith; in other words, how we can do God's work in the corridors of power.

Temporal success and personal holiness are not mutually exclusive. We cannot throw the baby of success out with the bathwater of glory-seeking. If we do, Christians will continue to be marginalized from mainstream society, and society will get worse for lack of a Christian presence in it.

"God's plan for the world is that men should work together to renew and constantly perfect the temporal order. All those things which make up the temporal order, namely, the good things of life and the prosperity of the

family, culture, economic matters, the arts and professions, the laws of the political community...not only aid in the attainment of man's ultimate goal but also possess their own intrinsic value" (Pope Paul VI, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*). ■

*Jason Negri graduated in 1992. A few months ago he returned to Steubenville from Phoenix, Arizona to take on the position of Director of Alumni Relations at FUS. He and his wife Samantha (Browner, '94) have two children.*

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## QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS



### A question to ponder

**My daughter attended Franciscan University as a freshman last year. As a result, I was introduced to your thoughtfully provocative journal and decided that it might provide just the right forum for discussion of a question which has nagged me for some time.**

Some months ago, I was accosted by a fundamentalist friend who asked me what Catholics believe. I responded with a recitation of the Apostles Creed. He then asked me which doctrine of faith was the most important in my estimation. I thought a moment and, realizing that as Christians we were in agreement on many issues of faith, I by-passed mention of the resurrection and the divinity of Christ and headed for the true heart of our faith which sets us singularly apart from all our Christian brethren. I told him that we believe that Jesus Christ is truly present always in the Blessed Sacrament. But, upon reflection later that evening, I was surprised to realize that this beloved doctrine, so central to our faith, was *not mentioned* either in the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed!

I am truly puzzled about this omission. But, more important, I am disturbed if not alarmed by reports of the vast numbers of Catholics who no longer believe in the Real Presence of our Savior in our tabernacles, or even, perhaps, at the moment of Transubstantiation! I cannot help but wonder if this

would be the case today if one of our credos had included this teaching (perhaps citing the Last Supper as the first Mass?). Can anyone explain to me why so important an article of faith was not included in either creed?

I know little about liturgical changes or the ecclesial channels which implement them. But it seems the words of the consecration alone unfortunately do not disperse the doubts of all, nor the rampant heresy. Does anyone else feel, as I, that if a prayer proclaiming this belief were to be inserted into the liturgy, the faithful would at the very least be regularly called upon to state their belief in this truth, and that it might even provoke a thoughtful examination of conscience on this matter and help to rectify the distorted definition of the term "Catholic"?

Cathy I. Maksim

*Mrs. Maksim is the mother of former FUS student Marjorie Maksim, who is currently seeking to enter the Nashville Dominican sisters. The family live in Santa Clara, California.*

### Filling out the meaning of the term "charismatic"

**I was encouraged by Alicia Hernon's and Kathleen van Schaijik's articles in the May 6 issue of the *Concourse*. The discussion about so-called "charismatic" and "traditional" spiritualities assumes a right understanding of the terms "charismatic" and "traditional;" yet we really have not**

understood these terms correctly. These two women's articles have finally begun to address this misunderstanding.

The charismatic gifts are part of our Christian inheritance. They are an integral part of our Christian life and community. "It is not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the People of God, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts according as he wills (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11), he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank" (Vatican II, LG #12).

We, "the faithful of every rank," all can use charismatic gifts. Such gifts are one part of normal Christian living. As Mrs. Hernon said, the use of charismatic gifts is not an optional spirituality. Rather, these gifts belong intrinsically to the spirituality of all the baptized. The seeking of and the use of the gifts is acceptable, encouraged in the Word of God, normal, and necessary for the Church. "By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church, as it is written, 'the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit'" (LG #12).

The choice to seek and use the gifts is based on God's will, not personal preference, temperament, cultural background, etc. Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition (as witnessed to by Doctors of the Church as great as Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem, Hilary of Poitiers (cf. [*Fanning the Flame*, Liturgical Press, 1991]), and



Everybody  
has an  
opinion.  
Write and  
tell us yours.

the teaching office of the Church all see the use of charismatic gifts as normal to Christian living (cf. CCC, #'s 688, 799-801, 951, 2003 and Vatican II documents: AGD, #4; A.A., #3; LG, #4, #12). "Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms" (CCC, #800).

Using the gifts is both the birthright and the solemn responsibility of every Christian. St. Paul urged the Corinthian believers to earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. He wrote, "Now I should like all of you to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:5). Furthermore, he wrote that these gifts should be used in the assembly of the Church. In 1 Cor. 10-14, he gives instructions about the public liturgy of the church: the worthy celebration of the Eucharist, the manifestation of spiritual gifts, and the charity that must permeate all. He writes, "When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of

the church" (1 Cor. 14: 26). The context of this chapter shows that this "coming together" was for the celebration of the Eucharist. If we want to be truly Traditional Catholics, we must embrace the use of the charisms that are fundamental to the Church's identity. Were it not for the work of the Holy Spirit through the charismatic, as well as the sanctifying and hierarchical gifts, we would not have the beautiful Tradition that we know as Roman Catholicism.

Charismatic gifts are only possible because the Holy Spirit is with us. And it is only by the Holy Spirit (CCC, #1266) that we can know Jesus as Lord (1 Cor.12:3), know God as Father (Rom. 8:14-16), grow in holiness (Rom. 8:1-27; Gal. 5:16-25; CCC, #2003), and build the Church. At our baptism we have received the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Therefore, we can have a personal relationship with Him and we can ask Him to empower us to know God, grow in holiness, and build the Church. We are called to constantly "fan into flame the gift of God" given to us at our baptism and confirmation, that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 1:6-7). In other words, we need the Holy Spirit not just for charismatic gifts, but in order to even be Christian and know God.

The use of charismatic gifts is one part of the normal Christian life and

therefore *cannot* be relegated to certain types of individuals or movements. As Mrs. Herson said, "These gifts are for every Catholic, because this life in the Spirit is not one spirituality of the Church, but *the* spirituality of the Church." Therefore, in the words of Mrs. van Schaijik, to deliberately suppress charismatic gifts or to banish them "from the liturgies, which are the heart of our communal life, could amount to a rejection of a divine gift, and a betrayal of the specific mission of our University." God's Word says, "Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues" (1 Cor. 14: 39).

Not only should gifts not be banned from the liturgy, they should also be encouraged in our daily lives and ministries. Personally, I thank God for the renewal of the charisms we have seen since Vatican II, where Pope John XXIII prayed to the Lord: "Renew your signs and wonders in our own day, as by a new Pentecost." The Lord answered this prayer. May we be faithful to this mighty move of God.

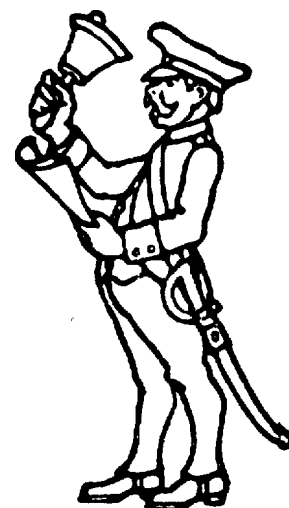
Jim Weiner  
Class of '96

*Jim Weiner is currently studying in the MA Theology Program.*

## Attention All Readers

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If interested please e-mail us at [UConcourse@aol.com](mailto:UConcourse@aol.com) or call Maria Ellis at 282-5239.



# R.I.P.

## *A tribute to some great lives*

by Joanna K. Bratten

### SOME TWO MONTHS AGO AMERICA MOURNED THE PASSING OF ONE OF ITS GREATEST STARS; ON SCREEN AND OFF, JIMMY STEWART

PERSONIFIED IDEALS CHERISHED BY THE PEOPLE OF America and the rest of the world. Upon hearing the news of Stewart's passing I was not so much distressed by his physical death, as by the greater significance of the passing-on of a spirit which, although not particular to Stewart himself, seems to have vanished since the hey-day of this great film star and which has since been replaced with a spirit that is, to say the least, banal. I decided at the time to write a tribute to Stewart and this spirit of which he was for some time a representative. But the events of the past few weeks lead me to extend this tribute to some very different people whose recent deaths have dramatically affected people all over the world. I speak, of course, of Mother Teresa and Princess Diana, as well as of the lesser-known, but also-great, Viktor Frankl.

Since mid-summer, the world has seen the deaths of many influential people announced in the newspaper headlines; in addition to those I have already mentioned there are Robert Mitchum, Gianni Versace, and Sir Georg Solti. The world is learning much about national—and international—mourning, and death itself seems to be bringing people around the world closer to life. Closer to life because we understand better our humanity and realize how the loss of another life, so far from our own, can affect us so deeply.

What can we learn from the passing-on of these men and women? Certainly from Versace's death we saw first-hand, thanks to news accounts, how a life of depravity can hurt

oneself and so many others. But, contrary to this, we learn from the deaths of Jimmy Stewart, Viktor Frankl, Princess Diana, and Mother Teresa something of the greatness of the human spirit.

As I have already stated, Jimmy Stewart represents, especially in our generation, a sense of "wholesomeness" which we can look back to as being part of what our grandparents called "the good old days". Although a celebrity of tremendous magnitude, Stewart led a life that was in many ways ordinary; he was a normal man. This is, perhaps, what made him such a great man. When compared to the film stars of today, Stewart seems almost puritanical and a bit backwards: he wasn't involved in sordid affairs, he didn't have his body pierced, he said "gee whiz" instead of words which could only be indicated here with asterisks. Stewart came from a time

and a culture so alien to our own that it is amazing that he is still appreciated. But he *is* still appreciated, because the values he represented are so true and lasting that even our benighted age can look back and experience their appeal. The question is whether we can ever get them back.

The death of the great psychiatrist and author Viktor Frankl is another great

loss for the world, and his life a towering inspiration for our age. Rather than allowing himself to be embittered by his experiences as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, Frankl dedicated himself, through his "logotherapy" and scholarly work to helping fellow men recognize and cherish the dignity and meaningfulness of human life. And though he died quietly, in the shadow of more stunning world events, I hope and expect that the influence of his noble soul will continue to make itself felt for many generations.

Princess Diana led a life very different from either Jimmy Stewart's or Viktor Frankl's. She was a glamorous socialite and lived in a palace; photos of her were plastered on tabloids all over the world; accusations were continually leveled against her of being involved in innumerable acts of vice. Yet she stands as an example of the greatness of the human spirit. A woman who certainly made her share of mistakes, Diana attempted to make her life more bearable and worthwhile by helping others, by reaching out to people who were so often ignored, particularly by the British royals. Her death reminds the world of how careful we must be not to judge others, for only God can ever know what

While the world has lost some of its greatest and strongest individuals, the rest of us must take care not lose the greatness of spirit that these people exemplified.

is in the heart of a person. We are also reminded that the greatest virtue of all is charity, and that “love covers a multitude of sins.”

Mother Teresa, of course, was the brightest of charitable stars. One cannot even begin to sum up the magnitude of her life’s work. It is ironic that Mother Teresa, perhaps the greatest and most humble saint of our age, should die just days after Princess Diana. In the enormous hubbub surrounding the death of Britain’s princess, Mother Teresa’s passing was a footnote in the daily news. I say that this is ironic because I imagine that Mother Teresa would not mind missing out on the greater public attention she would cer-

tainly have had had hers been the only headline-making death that week. Great in humility to the end, I am sure that Mother Teresa knows and is pleased in the fact that the publicity surrounding Diana’s death has done so much in bringing the people of the world together in grief and in realization of the need to carry on charitable works. It would be like her to put her own death in second place. Such was the greatness of this woman.

While the world has lost some of its greatest and strongest individuals, the rest of us must take care not to lose the greatness of spirit that these people exemplified. We can look to Jimmy Stewart and hope to revive in our own

age his sense of wholesomeness; we can try to imitate Viktor Frankl’s dedication to the dignity of human life; we can learn from Princess Diana that through charity for others and by not dwelling on our own sorrows can we make our lives worthwhile; and we can learn from Mother Teresa the greatest lesson of all: holiness, pure and simple.

Rest in peace and let us never forget to emulate the greatness of your lives. ■

*Joanna Bratten, formerly on the Concourse editorial board, graduated from FUS last May. She is now studying Shakespeare at the University of St Andrews in Fife Scotland.*

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## Households

*Continued from page 1*

Consider the following facts:

1) The Student Life Office now has a “Coordinator of Household Support,” who, among many other duties, “is responsible for the overall organization and training of household coordinators”—as if household coordinators were not elected heads of student organizations, but employees, whom the SLO is “responsible” to “train.”

2) Much of this training is done through the Residence Directors, who are instructed by SL to “enrich” coordinators “by monthly in-hall trainings on topics compiled by the Coordinator of Household Support.” Further, RDs are required to meet twice monthly with all the coordinators on their floors, and at least twice monthly with individual coordinators, “to provide training, support, and guidance for these leaders.” These four-times-per-month (at least) meetings with Residence Directors are not optional for coordinators. And, to enforce attendance, at least one RD last year would impose punishments on those who didn’t show—for instance, locking the household common room for a week.

Many coordinators have told me

that these mandatory meetings, on top of the regular meetings with their households, plus those with the Coordinator of Household Support, those with their adviser, those with RAs, and others that pop up throughout the semester, are an immense practical burden. One woman said she was chosen to be coordinator mainly because she was the only one in her household whose schedule was free enough to handle the time-consuming position; and even she was forced to drop her other extra-curricular activities and allow her schoolwork to suffer. She also told me that her biggest regret, in looking back on the year, was that her household had been so preoccupied with meeting all their official obligations, that they had had little time to just relax and get to know each other as friends.

But, to my mind, even worse than the practical burden of all these mandatory meetings is the *official interfer-*

*ence* with the inner workings of individual households that they represent. (Though clearly not of the same magnitude, it reminds me very much of the interference of so many “pastoral leaders” in marriages and families under their care, which did so much damage over the years in covenant communities.) The households are not allowed to just be; to work out their identity, their priorities, their aims and their difficulties on their own, in a way that would naturally encourage their maturity and self-standing as a group. Instead, they are constantly subjected to SLO “support;” pressed to discuss the status and progress of their association with university officials; obliged to submit to training and guidance—whether or not they find it helpful.

Though the benefit (to them) of having such

direct and frequent access to the households and such a handy way to become familiar with student leaders is appar-

Even worse than the practical burden of all these mandatory meetings is the *official interference* with the inner workings of individual households that they represent.



ent,<sup>1</sup> I wonder whether SL officials have any sense of the chilling effect such demands must inevitably have on household life. The fact that coordinators must meet one-on-one with RDs twice a month, or even once a week, can't help but give households a sense of being monitored, evaluated and unfree. More than one alum has said to me: "I would never have joined household if I had suspected our coordinator was reporting regularly to the RD!" (and the RD, in turn, weekly to the SLO.) None of the many alumni to whom I have spoken about this thought such meetings were a good idea; several of them were very disturbed to hear they are occurring.

Furthermore, the top-down management of coordinator-training and household support, though no doubt designed for the sake of efficiency and completeness, is bound to stifle independent initiative and bring about a depressing uniformity among households. Rather than the rich diversity to be looked for from a set of free student associations as loosely defined as households are, a "system" too closely "cared for" by officials, will tend never to break out of the narrow range of official conceptions of what households should be. It will be further impoverished when the students who are most insecure and eager for the approval of the officials they admire, and therefore most ready to carry out their directives and promote their policies, are for that reason taken to be exceptionally mature, and put into positions of leadership they are not really equipped to handle well. Meanwhile, the more independent-minded, true-leader-types among the students, prone (as they are) to be disgusted or unmoved by official heavy-handedness, will be written off as "rebellious," and left to wield their not-necessarily-wholesome influence outside the mainstream of campus culture.<sup>2</sup>

3) Last Spring, Student Life made known its goal to get all new students into households. At a meeting with advisers and staff members, various strategies were discussed for how this



Servi Dei Household, 1990

goal might be met, including making participation in household mandatory again (as it briefly was twenty years ago) or giving each coordinator a list of new students on his or her floor whom the household would be required to invite to at least one household function. In the end, neither of these policies was adopted, but I find the fact that they were seriously discussed at all very telling. It is as if Student Life saw it as its job to put as many students as possible through a set "process of evangelization," rather than simply to foster a campus culture that is conducive to the kind of "gospelization" and personal maturation that happens naturally at a good Catholic university—through its sacramental life, its academic life and its social life.

So adjusted to this way of conceiving things have we become at FUS, that, as far as I have been able to gather (from talking to several people who were there) no one present at this meeting raised objections *in principle* to these suggestions (though more than one protested the "unworkableness" of making households mandatory). No one questioned openly whether the Student Life Office has any right to impose such obligations on individuals or on households. Moreover, no one, it seems, wondered out loud about the le-

gitimacy of the goal itself. No one seemed to find it strange that University officials would make it their objective to get all new students, or even a certain percentage of students, into households. No one asked: "Wouldn't it be more appropriate to make it our goal to do what we can to support households, and leave the rest to the individual students and to God? Wouldn't that better suit the mystery of the way He works in minds and hearts and in our midst? And wouldn't that show more respect to the students themselves?"

Besides that such a goal is, as I see it, plainly inappropriate, it is obviously also bound to backfire. I have oftentimes heard former and current students declare themselves *proud* of the fact that they have never joined a household. Why proud—unless it is because they had come under unwelcome pressure to conform to others' idea of what is good for them? People feel strong and independent when they resist pressure to conform. It stands to reason that the more students sense that they are being too strongly *urged* by Student Life, or their peers, to join a household, the more they will naturally incline the other way.<sup>3</sup> I know some at FUS automatically impute this inclination to rebelliousness pure and simple, but I for

one think this unjust. Rebellion is a sinful refusal to accept legitimate authority; resistance to encroachments on our rights or privileges as free individuals is something else altogether. Bad tendencies toward paternalism in Student Life tangle the two up together, and make it very difficult to say which is uppermost in particular students.

In addition to households being treated as if they belonged to the Student Life Office, and the burdensome, interfering load of official mandates that entails, I find official *expectations* of households also too heavy, and more than likely to stifle the spiritual growth they aim at encouraging. For instance, I think it is worth asking ourselves as a community whether the very concept of “covenant” is not rather too much for households. Certainly it is a term usually reserved in our vocabulary for the relation between God and His people and the analogously indissoluble bond of love in the sacrament of marriage. Is it fitting to apply such a term to a temporary agreement among friends in college? Will it not encourage households to take themselves way too seriously?

Part of Student Life’s official description of the role of household coordinator says “ultimately you need to see that your brothers or sisters are keeping the commitments of the household.” It is easy to imagine how this must encourage young coordinators to pose as *authorities* in the lives of their household brothers or sisters.<sup>4</sup> Many students have told me that members wielding the covenant over each other’s

heads is a common problem in households. Students will gravely “call each other on” for failure to attend a gathering or two—as if it were sinful. Others have told me that they were made to feel as if they had betrayed deep personal and religious obligations when they decided to leave household, even when they did so under a prayerful sense that it was God’s will for them to leave. I realize very well that if households are to thrive, they have to be able to insist on a basic display of commitment from their members; I also know that college students are notorious for laziness and irresponsibility. Still, I think many will agree with me when I say that stress on household commitments very often goes too far at FUS, making students (especially those who take their studies seriously) feel almost as if “they were made for households and not households for them.”

The significance of all these things comes into sharper focus when we examine the history of households at FUS. For example, few students today are aware that the idea of having covenants is relatively new. They are surprised to hear that I was deeply and happily ensconced in household for four years in the ’80s without ever signing a covenant. For the first two years at least, I think I never even heard the term. Neither did we have all those mandatory meetings. In comparison with what there is today, there was virtually no organized support of households back then. If a group of students wanted to

become a household, they simply did so, and informed Student Life, so their name could go on the official list. There was no formal procedure to go through, no permission to be gotten, no checklist of expectations to be met. If they had questions about what they should do, they generally went to an older student in an established household, or to a friar or an adviser. The members decided together at the beginning of each semester what their commitments would be; if they proved too many or too few, they could be adjusted at any time. The focus was clearly on developing friendships, for the sake of supporting one another in striving for holiness. I think coordinators were seldom if ever required to meet with SL officials. If there was a meeting called, it was perhaps once a year, and then for the sake of providing information about resources and upcoming events. There was no formal “training;” coordinators learned what to do in their position from observing others before them. The RD communicated with the students in his dorm, not through the coordinators, but through elected representatives from various groups, who met once or twice a month, to discuss business, not to be pastored.

I do not mean to idolize the household life of the early to mid-eighties. Even then, I think there was an unwholesome heaviness and “over-spiritualization” about the whole system which could have stood correcting. But it was certainly a lot freer than it is now, and households were thriving.

The big change came somewhere around 1987, when Keith Fournier, who was then a head coordinator in the local covenant community, became Dean of Students. In a sweeping effort to strengthen households (and bring them into closer conformity with the community way of life) his office handed down a whole series of new mandates: from now on all households would draw up and sign covenants; households would, like the Greek organizations, have a formal date and

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procedure for inducting new members; households would make banners; households would participate in Household Olympics; coordinators would be required to meet regularly with RDs; they would be encouraged to place themselves under the “pastoral leadership” of their RDs (who would now be full-time religious, instead of part-time grad students); RDs would give regular “dorm teachings,” which all households would be “strongly encouraged” to attend; dorms would no longer be called dorms but “residence halls;” Student Life would sponsor an annual “Leaders Retreat Weekend” and monthly gatherings and teachings for all coordinators; the advisers would all come from the community and would be much more involved with the life of the household (that one in particular was disastrous for our household);<sup>5</sup> everything would be much better, stronger, more organized than before.

In my opinion it would be hard to exaggerate the damage these measures did to households at the time. And though some of them have since been rolled back, others have been added, and the general trend of more official sponsorship of household life has continued, to the point where students and officials alike today seem virtually unable to conceive households surviving without it. I think they won’t long survive with it. They’ll gradually collapse in on themselves from lack of inner strength and from dependence on outside support, which is in turn bound to “burn out” from the constantly burgeoning drain on its resources.

By the example of the disaster of “big government” policies in civil life, by the experience of what went wrong in covenant communities, by the lessons to be learned from our own institutional history, we ought by now to know better than to violate the principle of subsidiarity in our approach to households. We ought to have more trust in the Holy Spirit, more respect for our students, and more confidence in the genius of the household system than to be so anxious about it falling

to pieces unless constantly propped up, monitored and overseen by University officials.

I leave the practical implications of these criticisms for subsequent discussions. My hope here was only to raise a red flag; to try persuade the community at large that some kind of reform is called for; and to invite others to share their experiences and insights on a matter so close to the welfare of Franciscan University. ■

*Kathleen (Healy) van Schaijik graduated from FUS in 1988. She served as coordinator of Little Ones household during her senior year, and assistant coordinator during her junior year. Freshman year she and several other new students on her floor founded a new household, which later dissolved. She and her husband Jules were co-directors of Student Life on the Austrian campus from 1991-1993, the first two years of the Austrian Program. They now live in The Netherlands, from which they edit and publish the Concourse. Their fourth child is due October 8th.*

<sup>1</sup> though, since the communication is forced and not natural, we might ask whether even the apparent benefits are not rather deceptive. Forced communications are seldom perfectly honest ones—there is too much psychological pressure to give the other what he or she expects to hear, leading to (perhaps entirely unconscious) distortions of real situations. Only think how just wanting to have something to say at all these meetings, might make a coordinator dwell on insignificant “problems” in the household. After all, who can spend an hour a week saying, “Everything’s fine.”?

<sup>2</sup> I am very far from meaning to imply that everyone in a position of leadership in the household system is a sap, while every one who scoffs at households is a hero of maturity and independence. Certainly there are true leaders in households who rose to positions of responsibility because of their natural talent and dedication, just as there real rebels and mere sheep among the scoffers. I only want to say that in a set up like the one we have now, things become confused.

<sup>3</sup> It would be interesting, in another place, to discuss whether the Management-By-Objective style of operating endorsed by University officials belongs in Student Life at all. Certainly it seems ill-suited to evangelization, where the

appeal to personal freedom and a profound reverence for the sovereignty of individual consciences is of such central importance.

<sup>4</sup> That this is a problem at FUS may be gathered from a list of “things to keep in mind” attached to an official Student Life description of the role of coordinator: “Don’t be domineering; Don’t feel you must make all the decisions; Don’t do everything yourself; Don’t assume that you are perfect; Resist any feeling of superiority; don’t feel as if you need to solve everyone’s problems; You are not the Messiah.” Clearly Student Life means to discourage what must be a common tendency among coordinators, but they don’t seem to realize how much their own treatment of the coordinators contributes to (if it doesn’t cause) their typically exaggerated sense of self-importance.

<sup>5</sup> Over the course of my years in household we had four or five different advisers. The only one who didn’t work out was the one who was really committed to being involved, to coming to our meetings, to getting to know us, to “calling us on” and “holding us accountable.” She meant well, but she did badly by us. I’ll never forget, for instance, her telling us: “If you’re not going to the dorm teachings, then you need to repent.” All our other advisers were mature, older women in the community, who simply made themselves available to the coordinator, in case she needed help or wanted to talk. No pressure, no interference.



# Depravity

*Continued from page 1*

audience who heard it; not to mention the poor souls in the doctor's office by turns insulted and seduced by it. Indeed, there was not a whisper of disapproval from either group concerning a way of life which, until now, has been seen as squalid and degrading. Not a soul seemed to have taken the least notice of that dimension at all.

Do you see the problem we're up against here? Not that sin doesn't in fact exist, or that people who traffic in it cannot become shameless, but that no one seems to mind. Have we grown so callous to the corrupting effects of sin, so demoralized by the disorder around us, that none of it matters any more?

The other day a jury in Pittsburgh finally reached its verdict concerning a group of young women brutalized by local police in an Operation Rescue attempt six years ago. Their conclusion?

None of the brutality mattered. The jury, in the words of the plaintiff's attorney, "believed everything the women said, but they didn't find that it shocked their conscience." And why is that? Because, she concluded, "What can shock your conscience if you watch TV?"

Meanwhile, Marilyn Manson, apt

symbol of American pop culture's slide into a cesspool of depravity, continues to be the rage among the under-fourteen set. Deliberately affronting the sensibilities of mainstream parents—many of whose children now may be seen flocking to his concerts wearing T-shirts adorned with satanist signs and slogans ("American by Birth, Anti-Christ by Choice," is a particular favorite)—his latest album, ANTI-CHRIST SUPERSTAR, has become something of an anthem of teenage angst.

So where in the name of God are the parents of these children? Have they grown so obtuse that the evidence of widespread degeneracy goes unnoticed altogether? Or are they sunk in the same quagmire of corruption as the purveyors of a culture determined on suicide, destruction, and disease? One is reminded of the question once put by Albert Jay Nock, namely: How can a civilization know whether or

not it has fallen into a Dark Age? His answer is a deeply disturbing one: When all the lights having gone out, no one notices the darkness. Have they gone out? Has anyone noticed?

More and more we have got to face the fact that we cannot save this civilization, cannot arrest its accelerating de-

scend into barbarism. A people besotted for a generation or more on images of deviance, violence and depraved sex cannot even be trusted to keep the machinery going, much less uphold the meaning of a civilized order. On the other hand, whoever said it was our job to shore up human civilization anyway? Our job is to try and sanctify our souls, and the souls of our children, pursuant to which civilization may or may not be saved. People bent on saving the world without first looking inward to try and save their souls, will certainly fail to save either. Our task is to first renew the interior life, to allow a shaft or two of God's light to pierce our own darkness; then, and only then, will the encircling gloom and dark outside perhaps begin to fall away.

It is the lesson of the saints, after all, of holy men like Benedict, whose flight from the world into the mountain fastness of Subiaco, there to commune with God, attracted such attention to his fierce, single-minded joy, that it soon drew others to a common life of faith, on the strength of which a great movement began whose chief and lasting fruit would be the Christianization of the West. There is no reason why it cannot be done again. But not without saints, not without the witness of holy men and women. The rebuilding of a ruined world will begin when enough people fall to their knees, their minds undistracted by the fate of the world, their hearts set on God, on the life of God.

And one last thing: Turn off the TV. ■

*Dr. Martin is an Associate Professor of Theology at FUS.*

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