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# Christianity and the Politicians

David R. Carlin | Column

6/30/08

**I**f conservative politicians in the United States wish to connect their politics with conservative religion (and why shouldn't they?), they should at least take the trouble to become religiously informed. I say this because of an astonishing bit of religious ignorance I came across the other evening.

This past Monday, I happened to be watching the Hannity & Colmes show on the Fox News Channel, and one of the guests was the former Republican Congressman John Kasich of Ohio. Kasich, an otherwise intelligent man, was defending the proposition that the United States is a "Judeo-Christian" nation. Persons of other religious faiths (Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc.) are welcome here, he said, but there's no denying the fact that American culture is founded on Judeo-Christian principles. And then to clinch his argument he said: "George Washington prayed to God Almighty; he did not pray to Mohammed."

Somebody should tell the honorable Mr. Kasich that it isn't just George Washington who didn't pray to Mohammed. *Nobody* prays to Mohammed, not even Muslims. Mohammed is not the God of Islam. The God of Islam (what a coincidence!) is "God Almighty." Muslims of course are in the habit of calling God Almighty by the name "Allah," which is simply the Arabic word for "God," just as "Dieu" is the French term and "Deus" the Latin.

When blunders like Kasich's happen, can anyone be blamed for getting the impression that some conservative politicians really don't care about religious issues? That maybe they talk about them simply because there is a political advantage in doing so? I mean, how can a grown person who takes religion seriously imagine -- as Mr. Kasich seems to -- that Muslims pray to Mohammed instead of God? Even if one's early education included nothing about Islam, it's been nearly seven years since 9/11. Isn't that long

enough for an informed person to become acquainted with the basics of Islam?

**Almost as egregious a blunder** is made by those who insist that the Founding Fathers of the United States were all Christian believers. If Thomas Jefferson -- who by the way did not play one of the lesser roles in the founding -- was a Christian believer, then I'm an Olympic athlete. He was a believer in Deism, a philosophy very commonly found among the intelligentsia of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. True, he had a high regard for the life and morals of Jesus Christ (or "Jesus of Nazareth," as Jefferson preferred calling the famous man whose divinity he rejected); so high was this regard that during his years in the White House, Jefferson put together a redacted edition of the life and teachings of Jesus. This version omitted all the miraculous elements of the story, including the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection; for one of the Deistic articles of faith was that there are no such things as miracles. Hence virgins don't have babies, and dead men don't rise from the grave. And thus the need for a redacted version of the Gospels, which obviously, from Jefferson's point of view, contain large draughts of myth, delusion, and perhaps outright fraud.

If conservative politicians wish to be the friends of the Christian religion and get political mileage out of that, that's fine with me. Christianity, which is nowadays under very serious cultural attack, can use some political friends. But please let these friends be religiously literate. More, let them not embarrass those religious conservatives who *have* taken the trouble to read more than one book (even if it's a Good Book) by talking as though the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution were taken directly from the Bible. Let them acknowledge that the Enlightenment, which was to a considerable extent an anti-Christian movement, played an important role in

the founding of our nation. The cause of Christianity in America is not served by falsifying history.

**But it's not just conservatives who make me cringe.** I wince for a different reason when I hear liberals proclaim their religiosity. Take Senator Obama, for instance: he's now in the habit of ending his speeches by saying, "God bless America." It's not that I have any objection to divine blessings being bestowed on our nation. Quite the contrary: the more the better. But among Obama's strongest and most influential backers is a demographic group -- upper-middle class secularists -- whose goal, whether intentional or not, is to diminish the importance of religion in America. These are the people who are strong believers in abortion-on-demand, same-sex marriage, and sexual liberalism generally -- all of which are radically contrary to traditional Christianity. (It must be admitted that they *are* compatible with "liberal" Christianity. But if liberal Christianity is real Christianity, then I am once again an Olympic athlete.)

If you are Obama, and if your agenda includes the undermining and ultimate destruction of Christianity, wouldn't it be more honest to say so? Of course you wouldn't get elected if you did. (At least not today. If we continue to make moral "progress," maybe candidates for president will be able to say it 50 years from now.

Who knows?) And so -- very deceptively -- Obama says, "God bless" and gives other indications of being a friend of Christianity. His anti-Christian supporters tolerate this because they realize this is what you have to say if you hope to win the votes of the little people (AKA the "bitter" people).

As for Obama's personal beliefs, I don't know what they are. He may well be a sincere Christian -- and John Kerry four years ago may well have been a sincere Catholic while nonetheless strongly defending abortion rights. Just as 60 or 70 years ago many a sincere liberal was a "dupe" of the anti-liberal Communists, so today many a sincere Christian is a dupe of the ideological party of anti-Christianity secularists.

If we mean to have a serious public discussion of religion in America -- and we very much need one -- it would be helpful if liberals would be honest and conservatives intelligent.

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# Infanticide?

Deal W. Hudson | Column

7/1/08

**Infanticide is becoming a touchy subject for Barack Obama.** So much so that his supporters either deny that their candidate ever voted against the Born Alive Infant Protection Act, or they describe his votes as "procedural," as if Obama never really opposed providing medical treatment for infants who survived an abortion.

The facts show otherwise.

The Born Alive Infant Protection Act was first introduced in the Illinois legislature in 2001 after nurse Jill Stanek **revealed** that babies born alive in Christ Hospital in botched abortion procedures were left to die, unattended by medical personnel.

That same year Stanek testified before the Judiciary Committee, where Obama asked whether the bill would subvert a woman's right to abortion. Obama voted **against** the bill in committee but "present" on the Senate floor.

When the bill was reintroduced in 2002, Obama again voted against it in committee and was the only state senator to speak against it on the Senate floor. Again the bill was defeated with Obama voting "**no**" and leading the opposition.

Here is what he said:

Whenever we define a pre-viable fetus as a person that is protected by the Equal Protection Clause or the other elements in the Constitution, what we're really saying is, in fact, that they are persons that are entitled to the kinds of protections that would be provided to a -- a child, a 9-month old -- child that was delivered to term. That determination then, essentially, if it was accepted by a court, *would forbid abortions to take place. I mean, it -- it would essentially bar abortions, because the Equal Protection Clause does not allow somebody to kill a*

child, and if this is a child, then this would be an anti-abortion statute.

2002 was the year the U. S. Congress **passed** and President Bush signed the federal version of the Born Alive Infant Protection Act. Unlike Obama in Illinois, Sen. Hillary Clinton voted to support the bill. In fact, the bill passed the Senate 98 to 0 with pro-abortion senators like Boxer (D-CA) and Reid (D-NV) supporting it.

In 2003, the bill was introduced in the Illinois legislature for the third time and directed to a committee chaired by Obama, Health and Human Services. They refused to bring the bill to a vote.

Only when Obama left for Washington in 2005 did the Born Alive Infant Protection Act pass the Illinois legislature. It's for good reason Barack Obama has been **called** "the most pro-abortion presidential candidate ever."

The Roman Catholics for Obama **Web site** has no mention of his opposition to the Born Alive Infant's Protection Act. Look under its section "Life and Dignity of the Human Person," and you will find statements on the death penalty, the Iraq War, gun control, and the promise to nurture "a socio-economic environment" that will provide "a safety net that will make abortion increasingly unnecessary and rare."

Some of Obama's infanticide apologists argue that since the declared intention of Obama in voting against the BAIP Act was to uphold Roe v. Wade then it was *not* evidence of "support for infanticide." Such poor logic completely detaches Obama's act of voting against the bill from its consequences. Without the passage of the bill, infants born in Illinois remained vulnerable to the lack of treatment witnessed firsthand in Christ Hospital by Jill Stanek.

It would be like a senator arguing that his vote to approve Iraq War funding was just to "support the troops" but not the war. How can you put a gun in a soldier's hand without taking responsibility for what happens when he shoots it?

Democratic pundits don't want to talk about Obama on abortion or infanticide, either. On a recent CNN broadcast, Wolf Blitzer [asked](#) Bill Bennett what he would ask Obama, if given the chance.

Bennett said he would ask Obama about his abortion extremism and why he "doesn't see a problem with killing a baby after it's been born after eight months." Donna Brazile, well-known Democratic consultant, reacted strongly: "You want to have a conversation about narrow issues, but the American people want to talk about gas prices."

Brazile can be sure that \$4.00 per gallon gasoline isn't going to divest the millions of religious conservatives who care about the dignity of human life of their repugnance for infanticide. The last thing the

Democrats want to hear are questions raised about Obama's "moral judgment," as Bill Bennett did on CNN.

Obama's attempt to move to the middle of the political spectrum will have to overcome two major obstacles: the memory of Rev. Wright at the National Press Club and Obama's voting record on the BAIP Act.

Obama *does* seem to have distanced himself successfully from his old pastor, but once Americans start asking why he would allow doctors to deny medical treatment to a newborn child, it may raise larger questions about moral judgment.

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*Deal W. Hudson is the director of [InsideCatholic.com](#) and the author of [Onward, Christian Soldiers: The Growing Political Power of Catholics and Evangelicals in the United States](#) (Simon and Schuster, March 2008).*

# The Children of the Texas Ranch

Ronald J. Rychlak | Column

7/1/08

**O**ne of the questions on my Constitutional Law final examination this past semester focused on the Texas ranch from which authorities seized over 400 children. I played with the facts a bit to set up a few extra issues that we studied in the course, but even unedited, this case raises numerous interesting constitutional issues that touch on matters of great importance.

In case you have forgotten, an anonymous caller to a family shelter hotline said that members of the 1,700-acre "Yearning for Zion" ranch near El Dorado, Texas not only practiced old-line Mormon polygamy, but they also forced youngsters into early marriage and subjected them to sexual abuse. As a result, Texas authorities raided the ranch, took children aged between 6 months and 17 years from their parents, and placed them in state custody. The authorities reported that many teenage girls were or had been pregnant, and that seemed to confirm the suspicions used to justify the raid.

Then there came a story that was given fairly little attention in the press considering its potential significance to the case, but has been very important to the courts. The anonymous call reporting on abuse at the ranch seems to have been made on a cell phone owned by Colorado resident Rozita Swinton. The caller claimed to have been a 16-year old girl who was beaten and raped at the ranch. Swinton, however, is 33 and has a history of making false abuse reports. She has since been arrested and charged with making false claims in a different case.

That's a big problem. The U.S. Constitution protects Americans from unreasonable searches and seizures. Taking children away from their parents is a really significant seizure -- about as big as they get. So a high level of cause should have been established before the seizures took place. Unfortunately, it wasn't.

The authorities in this case took their evidence to a judge to obtain a warrant authorizing them to seize the children. Judges routinely evaluate evidence before a search or seizure takes place, and they only issue a warrant if there is "probable cause." That means that there must be enough evidence so that a reasonable person would conclude that a search would reveal evidence of a crime or that a seizure would similarly be justified by law.

As you might imagine, evidence that comes from an anonymous tip to a "hotline" is highly suspect. After all, when you don't know the speaker, it is hard to evaluate his or her honesty or basis of knowledge. Moreover, probable cause must be individualized. The search of an individual is not justified simply because there is probable cause to be suspicious of the neighborhood (or the ranch).

Although a judge did grant a warrant to the authorities to remove the children, the Texas Supreme Court has now ordered that the children be returned to their parents. What about the fact that some of the girls and young women were or had been pregnant? Well, first of all, Texas law permits 16 year olds to get married if they have parental consent. Prior to 2005, 14 year olds were permitted to marry. (Some say that the law was changed specifically because of this ranch.) Moreover, evidence like this would only provide justification for the authorities to act on behalf of specific individuals, not everyone at the ranch. Additionally, evidence that is found *after* the search cannot normally be used to justify a search warrant. The Constitution calls for judicial determination of justification (or probable cause) *before* the search takes place.

The outcome of this entire matter has yet to be determined. It may well be that children were being abused and that the effort to remove them from the compound was justified. Before governmental

authorities take such drastic actions, however, they need to be very careful. A detailed investigation that took place prior to the search might have turned up probable cause justifying particularized action related to specifically identified individuals. Children who were truly at risk would have been taken from a dangerous situation. By acting too quickly, the authorities (including the judge who issued the warrant) not only subjected potentially innocent parents and children to a

traumatic event; they also endangered any real victims - who have now been returned to very dangerous situations.

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# Teaching Marxism

Peter Freeman | Column

7/2/08

In this summer's much-anticipated movie *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, the titular Professor Jones is forced to stare into the hollow eyes of the equally titular artifact. As Indy's will breaks under the skull's strange hypnotic gaze, a Soviet agent (Cate Blanchett) fantasizes about how she will use the mystical object to control America's media, leaders, and (perhaps most terrifying) teachers to indoctrinate the country with Communism. At this point in the film, those who were seated around me heard a cynical chortle -- the snobbish hoot of an academic who knows all too well the Marxist leaning of American higher education.

Blanchett's character succinctly describes the Ideological State Apparatus, (affectionately known by Marxists as an "ISA"). Made prominent by Louis Althusser, the ISA is the means by which the State controls the thoughts of its citizens through education and entertainment. Because the ISA is a principal source of power, it becomes a key battleground for the socialist revolution. Set in 1957, the Indiana Jones movie intends to play up Cold War McCarthyism and make the fear of socialist indoctrination seem the stuff of B-movie villains. Yet in today's academy, such threats are ironic jokes. Real Marxism *is* a dominant force in many Humanities departments, without the help of any trans-dimensional ancient relics.

It is hardly news to point out that Marxism is an underpinning of liberal ideology or that the liberal ideology dominates academia. David Horowitz's efforts to champion the Student's Bill of Rights have been largely to thwart leftist indoctrination of students. One can read Mike S. Adams's weekly (and often flippan) satires of his plight as a conservative professor at UNC Wilmington, and also petition him for legal representation if victimized by liberal prejudice in an academic setting. But aside from such provocateurs against the liberal status quo, there have been

academic studies to prove the bias. It's a bit like using a magnifying glass to look in the mirror. As recently as February 2008, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported on research by Matthew Woessner of Penn State to understand how academia became a field where "90 percent of professors called themselves liberal or moderate." Woessner's interest was in causation; the percentage quoted actually comes from [another study conducted by Solon J. Simmons of George Mason](#). The situation has become so extreme that, as you have probably heard, the University of Colorado, Boulder has decided [to hire a chair of conservative thought](#), just to make sure conservative ideology isn't completely forgotten.

**As Catholics, the prevalence of Marxism** in our universities and colleges should be deeply disturbing, if only because both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have written so eloquently and intelligently against the ideology, which takes subversion of authority and the dismissal of religion as two of its key principles. The widespread and often invisible dissemination of Marxist ideology in our classrooms should also concern students and parents, but at the moment, I'd like to focus on the ethical dilemma that it poses to teachers. My question is whether I can teach Marxism sincerely without accidentally indoctrinating my students for or against it. (Admittedly, it would take more than this single column to answer this problem).

From my vantage point as an English professor, I know that the field of literary study essentially has laid its once noble crown at the foot of Marxist critical theory, often under the mantle of "cultural studies." Much of what my field does, as the venerable Harold Bloom lamented, has become a tortured form of political theory, asking whether a literary work subverts or buoys an oppressive, capitalist, heteronormal, and usually white patriarchal regime.

Marxism is about class conflict, and a Marxist literary approach asks a reader to evaluate on which side of that conflict a work of literature stands or could be made to stand.

If a professor such as myself seeks competitive publication, employment, tenure, or promotion, he will address the concerns of class struggle and sound sympathetic to the oppressed party's interests, if only in footnotes or poignant postscripts. If he wants his undergraduate students to be prepared for graduate school, it behooves him to teach them to do the same. Thus, I find myself often having to teach a methodology that grossly disagrees with my own worldview, and the classroom becomes ethically complex. To dismiss Marxism entirely does my students a professional disservice. To teach my personal judgment of Marxism means that I am guilty of counter-indoctrination. To simply teach Marxism without critique seems socially unhealthy. One feels the eerie stare of a crystal skull upon one's back . . .

**My first answer to this problem** is to teach Marxism explicitly. In my undergraduate career, my teachers made no effort to expose the critical underpinnings to their interpretations. If not for a particularly exceptional high school teacher, I would have waited until my senior year at college to find out that different critical theories even existed. Thus, I name various critical methods to my introductory literature students so that they see that Marxism is one of a wide array of critical theories. Nevertheless, my personal experience consistently indicates that Marxism stands apart for my students and heightens the ethical stakes.

The students might not recognize those stakes immediately, as I find that many classes have an extreme ambivalence to the Marxist critical approach. Some students have an appetite for socialism (one of my pastimes is to count how often Che Guevara's face appears on shirts and posters on campus), but the aesthetes who love to read and write complain that Marxism essentially saps the pleasure found in lofty things like Truth and Beauty. Non-liberal arts majors

often complain that Marxist theory proves assumptions that the English department is full of left-wing political radicals. However, when I ask my students to write a paper using a critical method of their choosing, the majority of the class typically gravitates toward Marxism. Even those who claim to hate Marxism find themselves wielding it with bravado.

I suspect several reasons for this. First, Marxism comes with a fully loaded tool box of handy, and often large, vocabulary words: Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses, fetishization, commodities, capital, phenomenology, ideology, appellation, etc. Secondly, Marxism is rhetorically attractive. A student who writes an entire paper from a sexual-Freudian perspective runs the risk of looking too enthusiastic about the subject matter. A student who attempts a post-modern approach that deconstructs meaning often has a hard time explaining why his paper deserves reading. A student who writes from a Marxist approach, however, can always fall back on rhetorical guilt trips. In this age of social lethargy, what teacher wants to squash a student's call for political action? When schools are demanding we be more accepting, who wants to condemn a paper that advocates a voice for the downtrodden? Marxism must seem like a no-brainer to the undergraduate: it should flatter the teacher by showing how much one has paid attention to lecture notes and by showing how one has been "inspired" to save the world.

Thus, I am left with two fears. The first is that I've taught my students how to cobble together jargon rather than how to interpret. The second is that after years of writing in the Marxist mindset, a student might someday actually start believing in the philosophy. Thus, the problem becomes not so much whether Marxism can be taught, but if there is some way to "baptize" Marxism so that it can be reconciled with the Faith without creating a monstrosity.

Marxism can (and perhaps even should) often appear to us as the serpent in the garden, tempting those who feel disenfranchised to rebel against authority by offering seductive yet ultimately empty

promises of power. But we should not, like Professor Jones, live with an irrational phobia of serpents. We should rather follow the course of Paul, who miraculously found the viper's venom to lack death's sting (Acts 28:3-6). Indeed, with its complex academic jargon and poisonous social ideologies, Marxism parallels both the strange tongues and the serpents to which Mark refers when he describes the signs of true believers: "In my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents (with their hands), and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them" (Mark 16:17-18).

These figures reflect the Christian scholar's responsibility to address ideologies that may at first

glance seem alien or antithetical, in the faith that a heart sincerely bound to Truth will not be led astray. Unlike Truth, Marxism's strength lies not in itself, but in its adherents' worship of it. If it truly were an all-powerful and all-corrupting ideology, Marxists (real and fictional) wouldn't be desperate for a crystal skull to disseminate its beliefs.

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# Iraqi Bishops Ask for Help Protecting Their Flock

Deal W. Hudson | Column

7/3/08

**T**he numbers are stark, and the situation is getting worse. Before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, there were 1.2 million Christians living there. Over 400,000 Christians have left the country since the war started. Many others have been kidnapped and killed; some have been crucified; a priest was beheaded, and an archbishop was kidnapped and killed.

One Chaldean and one Assyrian Catholic bishop from California presented a plan for protecting the Iraqi Christians who stay in spite of the danger and the ongoing discrimination and persecution. "The Iraqi constitution recognizes liberty of worship rather than freedom of religion," says Bishop Sarhad Jammo of El Cajon, CA.

The bishops told me it was "a make or break moment" for Iraqi Christians, and it is up to the United States -- and particularly to American Christians -- to help find a solution.

My interview with Mar Sarhad Jammo and Mar Bawai Soro took place just after their meeting at the White House with members of the National Security Council. Jammo and Soro want the United States to support the establishment of an "Autonomous Area" in northern Iraq where Iraqi Christians could hold the main governmental positions.

The area they recommend is on the plains of Nineveh, a loaf-shaped area of land between the Mosul province and Kurdistan. There is already a majority of Aramaic-speaking Christians living there, as they have been for thousands of years. Aramaic is the language of Jesus, which has been spoken there up to the present day.

Of the remaining 800,000 Christians, 65 percent are Chaldeans, 25 percent Syriacs, and 10 percent Assyrians. Many Assyrian Christians are not in communion with the Catholic Church, but Bishop Soro,

who is Assyrian, recently united with the Chaldean Catholic Diocese in California along with thousands of fellow Assyrians.

Bishop Jammo, whose family originates from the Nineveh plains, sees this plan as the best way to put an end to the bloodshed and persecution and provide equality of rights to the Christian inhabitants, including the rights of religious freedom and cultural expression and activity.

Bishop Soro predicted thousands of Iraqi Christians, who fled Iraq in the last few years, would return if they were not subject to discrimination on a daily basis, especially if they would have full freedom and an autonomous area of their own. "In Iraq right now Christians are second-class citizens." Not only would the creation of this area defend and restore the Christian community, it also would provide a "stabilizing factor" in the entire region.

While the day to day hardships of Iraqi Christians have been little reported, some of the atrocities have received worldwide attention. The kidnapping and crucifixion of Christian children made the headlines, but it was the kidnapping and killing of Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho that elicited protests from both Benedict XVI and President Bush.

The day of my interview with the bishops, the *New York Times* broke the story that the reason for Rahho's kidnapping and execution was his refusal to continue paying protection money to Muslim gangsters. Rahho somehow used his cell phone to call friends telling them not to pay any ransom for his return. His body was found twelve days later.

The bishops think their proposal is getting serious consideration by the Bush administration. They hope that their advocacy will develop into a concrete result.

Their proposal is titled "The Christian Initiative for a Successful New Iraq." This autonomous area would be established within the constitutional frame of Iraq, and would *not* be any kind of entity separate from Iraq, as some have suggested. Nevertheless, it would have a parliament "elected by all the adult Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people of the area," as a component of the Iraqi population.

The bishops' initiative faces serious political challenges. A source very familiar with the situation told me that the idea of an autonomous area would have to be approved at many levels, beginning with the local governments who share the Nineveh plain, the Iraqi government including Prime Minister Maliki, various countries including the U.S., and the UN and its Security Council. Further, the proposal of an area under "Christian control" might actually increase anti-Christian tensions even further.

Bishop Jammo and Bishop Soro have heard these objections before, but they are not deterred. "I don't see how the situation can get any worse," said Bishop Jammo. When I asked him if the solution was the implementation of the Iraq Constitution," he replied: "The Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian People should have

constitutional equality with Arabs and Kurds and that equality should include an Autonomous Area."

While Christians in Iraq are being persecuted every day and deprived of their constitutional rights, the United States is bending over [backwards](#) to maintain good relations with the Muslim community. In May, Maj. General Jeffrey Hammond held a meeting with Muslim leaders after a soldier used a Koran for target practice.

Gen. Hammond told them, "In the most humble manner, I look in your eyes today and I say, please forgive me and my soldiers."

The proposal the Chaldean and Assyrian bishops offer the United States is simply to ask for the same level of respect for Christians struggling to remain in their Iraqi homeland.

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*Deal W. Hudson is the director of [InsideCatholic.com](#) and the author of [Onward, Christian Soldiers: The Growing Political Power of Catholics and Evangelicals in the United States](#) (Simon and Schuster, March 2008).*

# On Adoption

Todd Flowerday | Column

7/3/08

**A**fter I finished with some business at the county building a few years ago, I went to fetch my daughter from the common area where she had been waiting. She was talking with another young girl, and I walked up to the two of them.

"You look like your dad," the other girl said.

I looked at Brittany and said, "Do you want to tell her or should I?"

"I'm adopted," said my daughter.

It wasn't the first time someone has made the mistake. One of Brittany's classmates is convinced I must have been married or something to her birth mother. (I'm not sure we look so much alike as we share similar mannerisms.)

Brittany arrived in our home just a month short of her fifth birthday. She was fortunate among those older kids without birth parents in the picture: only four foster families and not too traumatized by switching homes every so often. It was still important, my wife and I thought, to reinforce the things we might take for granted, but that a small girl in her fifth home might not. "You are a special child," we remind her. "You are the best." "When God brought us together, we chose you and you chose us." "We are never leaving you." Seven years later, it's still important to remind her.

My wife and I had something of a trial ourselves before we adopted our daughter. We went through the required 24 hours of classes to get state-certified as foster and adoptive parents. We attended additional seminars to gather more information and prepare ourselves. We went to adoption fairs and other events where we heard presentations, met kids, and networked with social workers. We drove home often wondering if we were on the right track. At times, it was an emotional ordeal.

The most difficult part about adopting was reading the newsletters that included kids' photos, interests, and wishes for their "forever family." It was heartbreaking; most of these kids would never find homes.

"How do you feel?" my wife would ask after we paged through the latest glossy publication.

"I feel like taking over the whole church basement, adopting a newsletter's worth of kids, and making a real difference."

We learned that siblings fare better adopted together than single kids. Part of the family unit is together, and the adjustment tends to be supported when it's not solo. So we told social workers we were open to two or three kids.

All told we were considered for a total of 31 boys and girls -- single kids as well as groups of twos and threes -- before the State of Iowa considered us the best choice for number 32.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. (Eph 1:3-6)

**Adoption is part of the Divine Plan.** Each believer is adopted by the Father through the grace of Christ. It is because of this adoption we call Jesus "brother," and we identify with God as "Father," and not just as "Lord" or "Creator."

It is good that the Catholic Church has been involved with adoption, and in most places, continues to advocate for children without parents. A half-million Americans currently languish in foster care or group homes. More than 130,000 of these girls and boys have no legal obstacles to being adopted. Each one of them could be in a forever home before school starts this year.

Worldwide, the number of children without parents is in the tens of millions. Clearly, there's a lot of work to be done -- if not in the direct advocacy of kids in temporary care, then certainly in the promotion of adoption as a choice for Catholic parents. Too much is left to chance hoping a potential couple will show up at Catholic Charities with a willingness to adopt.

When my wife and I were preparing to adopt, we were told we'd need to be our own advocates. The state agencies and social workers were focused on the children. That made sense. We benefited from the support of many friends once word got out we were adopting. We heard other stories of adoption, and received great advice.

This was the kind of encouragement we needed, and the Church should step in to do likewise. Who would argue if parishes and lay organizations promoted adoption more actively? Who would complain if

Catholic parents began to flood the caseloads of adoption agencies? I can think of several million children who would cheer the thought.

You might consider these first steps. Do some awareness-building in your parish school or religious education classrooms. You'll likely be surprised at how many kids are adopted (I was when I first found out). Beyond that, parishes could host seminars: Ask a few adoptive families to share stories; invite a social worker to lay out the details; and be sure to explore adopting older American kids.

Adoption is part of the divine relationship with us, and making the choice to adopt is no less an imitation of the Father's embrace of His own adopted children. That might be something to pray about.

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*Todd Flowerday has served the Catholic Church as an ecclesial lay minister for 20 years. He and his family will be relocating soon to serve at the campus parish for Iowa State University. Online you can find him at his blog [Catholic Sensibility](#).*

# Why I Nurse at the Mall... and at Mass

Kate Wicker | Column

7/4/08

**I'm a nursing mom and I'm not shy about it.** Being the mother of two milk mongers, as well as someone who embraces ecological breastfeeding as a part of NFP, I have no problem feeding my children in public. I'm a lot like Sam-I-Am's friend: I'll nurse (discreetly) on a boat, with a goat (at a petting zoo), on a train or a plane, and a few places Dr. Seuss didn't think of.

In my family, we're movers and shakers and I'm not going to let the fact that I breastfeed keep us in when we'd rather be out. Nor am I going to sequester my baby and me in a public bathroom when she's hungry and needs to eat.

But there's one place where I was reluctant to breastfeed.

With my first child, the idea of nursing at church made me uneasy and I felt about as modest as a *Playboy* centerfold. I just couldn't get myself to do it. Not surprisingly, Mass wasn't a very peaceful experience for me in those early months when my daughter Madeline was eating every couple of hours (or less in the case of my firstborn, who expected access to *fast* food 24 hours a day, give or take). Planning around her feedings was next to impossible. Even as she grew older, she refused to take a pacifier and sought comfort at my breast frequently throughout the day.

So every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation and regular, old day I needed a taste of Jesus, I found myself in a pickle. I didn't want to miss out on Mass, but I didn't feel that breastfeeding was something I *should* do at church. What was a nursing mommy to do?

**Thankfully, the Big Guy decided to help me out.** When Madeline was a little over a year old, I was attending a church event when I noticed a woman nursing a toddler right there in the pew in front of me. She was also the

mother of the nine older children who filled the pew beside her. As a newbie mom, I couldn't keep my eyes off this veteran. I only pray she saw my look of admiration and didn't have me pegged as a boobophobe. Actually, I don't think she noticed me or anything else other than her child and God. This mom wowed me -- the way she was able to discreetly and comfortably feed her child and be *present* -- not just physically but emotionally and spiritually present -- at the prayerful event.

When it came time for us to quietly pray, she shifted her child's position and knelt just like the rest of us with his body cradled against her own. To me, there was nothing more beautiful than seeing this nursing mother provide nourishment to her little one with her own body in God's company.

This was an *ah-ha* moment for me. I realized that if, as I strongly believed, nursing was a part of God's plan for helping mothers bond with their babies and a way of using my body the way He designed it to be used, then of all places, I should feel comfortable breastfeeding my children in God's home. Christopher West, the Catholic author best known for his insightful commentary on John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, describes a nursing mother as "one of the most precious, most beautiful, and most holy of all possible images of woman." So why should I feel ashamed nursing in church -- in the presence of the Most *Holy* Eucharist -- but not at the mall? Do I believe breasts are made to feed babies or are they just meant to be squeezed into rhinestone-clad bras for surfers to ogle on the Internet?

Nowadays you'll find me nursing my baby at the mall, the library, the park, *and* at Mass. As of yet, I've never heard any rude comments or noticed raised eyebrows or disgusted looks. Really, I'm not sure if anyone other than fellow nursing moms can even tell I'm breastfeeding. But if they can, I hope they will

recognize this act for what it is -- an expression of love for my child. And just as that loving mom of nine did for me, the image of me and my little nursling might inspire other moms to embrace breastfeeding without shame.

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# The Bonds of Friendship

Joan Frawley Desmond | Review

6/28/08

*A Life with Karol: My Forty-Year Friendship with the Man Who Became Pope*

Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, Doubleday, 265 pages, \$25.95

**G**reat biographical memoirs can arise from lucky coincidence: familial bonds, old school ties, or professional postings allow the narrator unrivalled access to his famous subject. Dark secrets, character insights, and historical footnotes enlarge and challenge the readers' understanding.

Stanislaw Cardinal Dziwisz, author of *A Life with Karol: My Forty-Year Friendship with the Man Who Became Pope*, possessed an enviable perch from which to observe and share in the most intimate and profound moments of a great pontiff's life. The personal secretary of Karol Wojtyla during his twelve years as archbishop of Krakow and for most of his long pontificate, Cardinal Dziwisz witnessed his father figure's struggle to free their native land from communism. Dziwisz looked his boss in the eye as Wojtyla emerged from the conclave as the first Slavic pope in history. Dziwisz's arms caught John Paul II after two bullets cut the pope down in St. Peter's Square.

Dziwisz was there at the right time and the right place. But that significant advantage is no substitute for the gift of storytelling or for the ability to embrace new roles when required. What is most poignant regarding Dziwisz's portrait of Karol Wojtyla is that this humble secretary, the keeper of secrets, cannot put aside his old job description and take a few steps toward center stage. The dynamism we associate with John Paul II is muffled in this disappointing recapitulation of world-changing events.

The memoir begins with considerable promise. Dziwisz puts his finger on the "mystery" of John Paul II's specific charism with this stirring remembrance:

He showed the face of God, God's human visage, if you will. He displayed the features of God incarnate. He

thus became an interpreter and instrument of God's Fatherhood, a man who narrowed the gap between heaven and earth, transcendence and immanence. And in so doing, he laid the groundwork for a new spirituality and a new way of living the faith in modern society.

This is the man who drew the whole world to his deathbed. John Paul sought his lost sheep in every corner of the globe. Those who stood before him felt wholly enveloped in his loving gaze, no matter the brevity of the meeting. Dziwisz thus prepares the way for a series of well-told vignettes that never really gain momentum. Any Catholic conversant with Karol Wojtyla's journey from Krakow to Rome and beyond will enjoy no more than a handful of succulent morsels on which to feast.

Dziwisz's choice tidbits include a compelling version of John Paul's encounter with Mehmet Ali Agca, his incarcerated, would-be assassin. Dziwisz also reveals that the pope and his advisors briefly discussed the possibility of his resignation after Parkinsons Disease sharply restricted his movements. There is a whimsical account of the pope's repeated -- and largely successful -- attempts to slip away for a day of skiing without the burden of official Vatican escorts.

John Paul's ethos of spiritual poverty lingers in descriptions of his austere Vatican apartments and of anguished encounters with the poor in the developing world. Faced with the desperate living conditions in one shantytown, John Paul pulls off his papal ring and hands it to the people before him. After visiting Mother Teresa's House for the Dying in Calcutta, he reportedly tells its founder, "If I could, I would make this my headquarters as Pope."

Not surprisingly, Dziwisz employs his memoir as a forum for settling old scores. In one chapter, he contends that the Vatican never funded Poland's Solidarity movement. Elsewhere, he argues that the pope was a man of the Second Vatican Council, not a reactionary opposed to its teachings as some critics aver. Furthermore, John Paul was right to oppose both the first war in the Persian Gulf, and the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Dziwisz occasionally hits his target, but others have defended John Paul's mission in the world and in the church with more brilliance. What the author does convey beautifully, if indirectly, is his subject's "spiritual paternity." John Paul leads, instructs, inspires and admonishes his spiritual children. Upon his death, the entire church mourns his passing -- not out of duty, but in a visceral way.

Yet if we acutely feel the late pontiff's absence, imagine what Dziwisz experienced when he said goodbye. Never again would his father's gaze touch his soul. True, the common faith of both men leads the survivor to anticipate the glory of their next meeting. For now, though, Dziwisz remains anchored in this world, and so he worries about John Paul's pilgrimage into eternity: "Who is accompanying him on the other side?" the faithful secretary muses.

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# Summer Sounds

Robert R. Reilly | Review

6/30/08

**S**torms are not the only things that have been flooding the United States this summer. There has been a deluge of wonderful classical music CD releases. I aver that this time -- *our* time -- will go down as the golden age of recording. The riches are unbelievable. It's not simply that I am now able to listen to things that I never thought I would be able to hear; it's that I am getting to know volumes of wonderful music that I never knew existed before. This comes along with wonderful new recordings of old treasures.

This and next month I will give a two-part itinerary of these new recordings -- more of a recommended list with notes than a critique of each CD. Otherwise, space constraints will make us miss too much.

There is no better place to begin than with Haydn, the composer of all seasons. Naxos has released a sublime new recording of Piano Concertos Nos. 3, 4, 9 and 11 ([8.570485](#)). Pianist Sebastian Knauer and the Cologne Chamber Orchestra, under Helmut Muller-Bruhl, give highly poetic, finely nuanced, though amply energetic performances of these jewels. Surely they will have to record the others after this triumph. Do not miss the wonderful bargain.

Naxos has also recorded Haydn's three extant violin concertos with the same forces, and violinist Augustin Hadelich ([8.570483](#)). I do not find these works on quite a comparable level with the piano concertos, but they are still a delight, especially with this fine soloist. All concerned perform as if these concertos were new. It is playing of real character and freshness. I so loved the Adagio of the Concerto in C major that I looped it on my CD player.

There is no pretense at greatness in the string quartets of Ignaz Pleyel (1757-1831). They are defined by a simple charm. If that interests you, go no further than the new CPO release (777-315-2) of Quartets Nos. 7-9, with the Pleyel Quartet Koln.

Naxos has given us a number of excellent recordings of the music of Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837), none better than this recent addition ([8.557845](#)), offering four works with piano from the peak of his career. There may be no great profundities here, but the entertainment value is very high. The storm scene in *Oberon's Zauberhorn*, for example, is terrific fun. Another delightful bargain.

I am a great fan of the chamber music of Louis Spohr (1784-1859). Some of it reaches greatness. I never took to his symphonies, however, though they were rated in their time with Beethoven's. New recordings of Nos. 3 and 10 on CPO (777 177-2) give the best case I have heard so far for his work in this genre. I can only hope that the NDR Radio Philharmonic and conductor Howard Griffiths are commissioned to record the other symphonies so we can experience their real merits.

The CPO label has performed marvels in bringing us the music of Beethoven clone Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838), including a magnificent survey of his symphonies. He may have imitated Beethoven, but so what? He was his student and had real talent. CPO now gives us Vol. 2 of the string quartets (777 227-2), with the Schuppanzigh Quartet performing Quartets Nos. 2, Op. 70, and 20. These are rich, substantial works that demonstrate his stature. The meltingly lovely Larghetto from Quartet No. 20, never published in Ries's lifetime, is worth the price of admission by itself.

Another CPO surprise is Ries's oratorio, *The Kings in Israel* (777 221-2). This nearly two-hour work may have it longeurs, but it contains many outstanding numbers, including deliciously creepy music for the witch's scene, enough to warrant its success in 1837 with, according to Ries, "a completely enchanted public."

Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832) published his Piano Sonatas Op. 59 with the description "*facile et brillantes*." That they may be, but their charm is what appeals in a new Naxos recording by Hungarian pianist Jenő Jando (8.570709), who has also done some wonderful Haydn and Mozart recordings for Naxos. These works, with the accompanying Piano Sonatinas, Op. 20, are perfect for light summer listening.

Someone needs to explain where Friedrich Kiel's music has been all these years. For his time (1821-1885), he was more inclined to his Classical forbearers than to his Romantic contemporaries, so perhaps he got lost in history. However, that is no reason to miss his Complete Piano Quartets, works of great warmth and huge melodic appeal, offered by CPO (777 076-2). I knew this composer from his outstanding *Missa Solemnis*. Now I add these works to my favorites. If you love chamber music, do not miss this one.

What would summer be without a good orchestral wallow in Wagner's music? And who knew how to wallow better than Leopold Stokowski, who created Symphonic Syntheses from *Das Rheingold*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal*, and *Die Walküre*. Portions of these are served up by the sorcerer's apprentice, Jose Serebrier, who was Stokowski's deputy when Serebrier was a young man. It is all beautifully done by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra on Naxos (8.570293).

Heinrich von Herzogenberg (1843-1900) may have been to Brahms what Ries was to Beethoven, though he was only an admirer and friend of Brahms, not his student. Apparently, Herzogenberg's Piano Trio No. 1 was close enough to the master that it spooked Brahms when he heard it. CPO lets us listen to both Piano Trios Nos. 1 and 2, with the Atos Trio (777 335-2). Surgingly dramatic, contrapuntally complex, and beautifully melodic, these works make the neglect of Herzogenberg a mystery. CPO adds the delightful Wind Quintet and the Wind Trio to our growing view of this composer's claim on our attention (777 081-2). These are lighter, breezier works than the piano trios, though written at the same high level. This is very appealing music, as

performed by pianist Oliver Triendl, and members of the Orsolino Quintet.

I do not know how I missed volume 1 of ATMA Classique's release of Theodore Dubois's Works for Piano and Strings, but I am delighted to have volume 2, with the Piano Quartet and Quintet for Piano, Oboe, Violin, Viola, and Cello. Dubois (1837-1924) is principally known for his choral work *The Seven Last Words of Christ*. These elegant works, written early in the 20th century, may have seemed conservative for their time. However, that is no reason to overlook them now. The level of lyricism in these two compositions is irresistible, as is their great melodic warmth.

Poor Dubois wrote at the end of his life:

I don't think that people have always been fair and equitable toward me. . . . I still think that some of my works deserve better than the cold disdain that has greeted them. I almost have the certainty that if later, after I am gone, they fall into the hands of fair-minded musicians and critics, the tide will turn in my favor.

That is just what has happened here with lovely performances by the Trio Hochelaga, with pianist Stéphane Lemelin, oboist Philippe Magnan, and violist Jean-Luc Plourde. Next I will hunt down the Piano Trios from Vol. 1.

Charles Koechlin (1867-1950) was a French musical genius of great individuality. (I dedicated an article to him in *Crisis* magazine.) For the first time, we have available his String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2, performed by the Ardeo Quartet on the Ar Re-Se label (AR 2006-3), which can be found on [Arkivmusic.com](http://Arkivmusic.com). Anyone who loves French musical impressionism (think of the Ravel String Quartet), especially when imbued with warmth and nostalgic yearning, will love these works.

The First Quartet has become a favorite. In the first movement, Koechlin goes from bittersweet heartache to the ecstatic. The andante has a kind of lazy sorrow to it, and the finale sparks with Mozartian vivacity. The Second Quartet begins with one of Koechlin's experiments: He tries to see how close he can pare

things down and approach stasis without losing our interest. He succeeds in this haunting work. Bravo -- or, I should say, *brava* -- to the four ladies composing the Ardeo Quartet.

Belgian composer Joseph Ryelandt (1870-1965) was a devout Catholic who seemed almost indifferent to the fate of his works, which included a number of large-scale oratorios on different aspects of Christ's life. He wrote, "If God wants my work to be recognized one day, it will. If not, what does it matter?" One might say, then, that the new release from the Phaedra label with four of Ryelandt's chamber pieces is providential. It reveals another unjustly neglected composer whose somewhat anachronistic style is irrelevant to its merits. Ryelandt did not place a premium on being stylistically *au courant*. Throughout his long life, he remained in the late-Romantic tradition of the 19th century. He declared: "Whether the artist makes use of the most modern techniques or decides to work in a traditional manner is not really important. Techniques wear out, but what remains is that which breathes life into the work."

The Spiegel String Quartet, double bassist Joost Maegerman, and pianist Jozef de Beenhouwer breathe

ample life into Ryelandt's Piano Quintet (1901), Adagio for String Quartet (1895), String Quartet No. 2 (1903), and Andante "Ach Tjanne" and Variations (1933). It seems that Ryelandt excelled in composing exquisite adagios and andantes. His lovely and moving Adagio from 1895 is all that he retained from an otherwise disowned string quartet. Thank heavens he kept this gem. The *Adagio religioso* from the Piano Quintet is also very touching. Had Ryelandt pushed much further in the direction in which he was going with this music, it might have become cloying, but he kept his balance and its effect. The Andante from the String Quartet is also extremely fine, with real depth of expression. Gorgeous melody abounds throughout these pieces. One can only hope that the Phaedra label will be encouraged to give us more. This CD (DDD 92055) is a special import thorough [Records International](#).

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# Grabbing Religious Voters

Mark Stricherz | Review

7/3/08

*The Party Faithful: How and Why Democrats Are Closing the God Gap*

Amy Sullivan, Scribner, 272 pages, \$25

**F**or decades, Republican presidential candidates have been winning over some religious voters practically by default, facing little competition from Democrats. This revolution began in 1969 when antiwar liberals used the McGovern Commission to hijack the presidential wing of the Democratic Party and, except for the Carter and Clinton presidencies, has continued the same through the last two presidential elections. "If the Gore campaign had a Catholic vote effort, we never noticed it," Deal W. Hudson, the GOP's principal outside advisor in 2000 to Catholics, writes in *Onward, Christian Soldiers*. "I'm not sure the Democrats realize how many otherwise quite liberal pro-life women, Catholics in particular, have switched sides over this issue but continue to look for a way back to the Democrats, with whom they agree on almost every other matter," Melinda Henneberger writes in *If They Only Listened to Us*, her account of why so many women voters defected from John Kerry in 2004.

Yet this era may be coming to an end. As Amy Sullivan, a senior editor at *Time* and former Democratic staffer, details in her briskly written and insightful new book, *The Party Faithful: How and Why Democrats Are Closing the God Gap*, Democrats are making a play for some "values voters." The Democratic National Committee hired its first outreach coordinator to Catholics, John Kelly. Two ex-DNC staffers founded Common Good Strategies, a political consulting firm that, by running ads on Christian radio stations, helped several Democratic congressional candidates gain office in 2006. And all but seven Democrats in the House passed an appropriations bill for "abortion reduction" (note the language), while 139 Republicans voted in opposition.

Will the Democrats' new strategy work? The answer is that it depends. As Sullivan notes, the goal of the Democrats' plan is not to make the party culturally traditional; it's to "poach" enough religious voters away from the GOP. "In a state like this, if I can get two or three percent of evangelicals to be either independents or to vote Democratic, that's a huge shift," Mark Brewer, chairman of the Michigan Democratic Party, tells Sullivan. Brewer's assessment applies to other states as well. Take Ohio in 2004. If 59,301 state voters had switched their votes from George W. Bush to John Kerry, Kerry would have won the election.

To her credit, Sullivan acknowledges the resistance within the party to even the modest goal of grabbing a segment of religious voters. While Hillary Clinton in 2005 famously endorsed reducing the number of abortions, her liberal feminist and abortion-rights allies have opposed any such concession; as Sullivan notes, the groups "fear that a successful abortion-reduction effort would hurt their overall cause and make women feel guilty about having abortions." For example, in anticipation of the abortion-reduction bill in the House, Planned Parenthood commissioned a poll that found that Americans preferred reducing the *need* of abortion rather than the *number* of abortions and lobbied Democrats to defeat the appropriations bill. Although the abortion industry's efforts failed, Sullivan implies that they would be more likely to stop a "Democratic nominee (from endorsing) abortion reduction efforts from the podium at a national convention."

I should mention that I part with Sullivan's prescription on moral grounds. Her proposals would make the party of abortion rights, human cloning, and

embryonic stem cell research friendlier to religious voters, while largely bypassing traditional positions on the sanctity of human life. (A better solution, I argue in my [book](#), is to democratize the party's nomination system and rules. This kind of reform would give religious and downscale Democrats a voice in the presidential wing of the party.)

That criticism aside, Sullivan's proposal to micro-target and reach out to religious voters might well succeed politically. This should scare Republicans. This fall Barack Obama may follow a *new* Democratic playbook: He speaks at liberal Catholic universities and appears on stage with a bishop or two in key swing states; and his campaign aides canvas heavily Catholic and evangelical counties. Already, he has ads on Christian radio discussing his faith and has proposed spending more money on the government's faith-based programs. None of this represents a major policy concession, as with Bill Clinton signing the Defense of Marriage Act. Yet Obama's rhetorical and organizational

appeal to religious voters might pick off enough of them to turn the election.

Of course, the presidential wing of the Democratic Party will not have changed much. It will still have a litmus-test for Supreme Court nominees on cultural issues. It will still have hard quotas for female delegates and implied quotas for homosexual delegates, both of which favor the secular liberal wing of the party. And it will still have an undemocratic and elitist nominating system. But if the election this fall between Obama and McCain is neck and neck, Sullivan's proposals could well tip the scales in favor of the Democrats.

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*Mark Stricherz, a contributor to [GetReligion.org](#) and [InsideCatholic.com](#), is the author of [Why the Democrats are Blue: Secular Liberalism and the Decline of the People's Party](#) (Encounter Books).*