



PROMISE KEEPERS RALLY - ST. PAUL

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It was September 9, 2005. I was off to St Paul for my second experience of Promise Keepers. We left with approximately 50 other men, who ranged in age from teenagers to senior citizens. We prayed for safe travel and a fruitful experience. About an hour into the trip they popped in a movie, "The Passion Of The Christ." What an inspirational way to begin the weekend!

The opening program was very exciting and ended with a call to bring food and supplies for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, which had just hit and people were hurting down there. Well, on Saturday morning, we stopped at a local store and just about everyone went in and bought something to bring along. When we arrived at the Excel Energy Center we had to park some distance from the truck. We formed a brigade and hand over hand we proceeded to unload our bus. We found out later that they had to get a second truck.

It's hard to imagine over 11,000 men in one venue all there for the same reason: to glorify God! When you put 11,000 men in one place and asked them to sing, wow! They like to raise the roof. No one was afraid to sing out. The

musical groups were very uplifting and exciting.

The talks involved men's lives in relationships with their families and especially their spouses and children. It gave us all a lot to think about and reaffirm our commitment to our marriages. The way they handled feeding of 11,000 men was something to behold. The weather was delightful so most of us ate outdoors in a park.

The journey home was spent sharing our impressions of the weekend. The witness talks were very heart warming and inspirational. Some men even got up more than once to witness to what they had experienced that weekend.

This is the second Promise Keepers Rally I've attended and each time I come away with a very warm feeling that renews my commitment to my family and my marriage. I would recommend this experience to any man who takes his marriage seriously.

- Peter J. Bekkers

**NOTHING is
Impossible with
GOD**



"The witness talks were very heart warming and inspirational."

CALL TO ACTION CONFERENCE

There were nearly 3,000 participants at the 29th annual Call To Action Conference in Milwaukee November 4-6. The theme was: “Religion, Money and Politics: What’s God Got To Do With It?” The resounding response throughout the weekend was: **“EVERYTHING!”**

The three plenary speakers were: James M. Lawson, Jr., Richard McBrien, and Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. James Lawson’s message was one in which he encouraged a non-violent approach to justice and peace. He is actively involved in new interfaith coalitions that have emerged among religious progressives in the U. S. since the 2004 election. He encouraged participants to unite in a non violent approach for seeking peace and justice. A non-violent approach nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become possibilities.

Richard McBrien shared his reflections on the first six months of the new Pope’s reign in “The Pontificate of Benedict XVI: A Preliminary Assessment”. He did this in light of challenges that

continue to confront the church. There are several areas that McBrien pointed out regarding Benedict XVI which he believes are positive signs for hope. They are:

- Benedict’s choice of his name – following Benedict XV who was a unifier in the church.
- Benedict XVI has met with Hans Kung. This is especially significant since Pope John Paul II refused any number of requests by Hans Kung to meet during John Paul’s Pontificate.
- Benedict XVI met with Jewish leaders in a synagogue this past summer in Cologne, Germany.
- Benedict XVI allowed one hour for discussion after every session of the recent Synod of Bishops. No topic was off limits.

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz stated that those who want to stretch the church need not leave. Rather, stay and work through issues realizing that we are the church.

She then reviewed the concept of Kingdom of God which implies social, economic, and political power. The church thinks it is the Kingdom of God. The church then acts out of the metaphor that church and kingdom are the same. Kingdom has lost much of the meaning it provided for Jesus and his followers. Today the metaphor of kingdom implies hierarchy and a patriarchal structure. The new metaphor Ada Maria encouraged participants to consider is kin-dom. This metaphor implies a more personal approach to church. It lies at the root of daily lives.

The conference had many other presenters who challenged those in attendance to keep alive the vision of Call To Action. After having come together to study, to pray and to celebrate, members left re-energized for the work of making that vision a reality.

- Sister Mary Barbieur



*“Christians, keep the faith.
but not from others!”*

RENEW

A small Christian community is a small group of individuals who gather to share their faith and life in order to grow in their life commitment to work for the Reign of God. They strive to incorporate prayer and ritual, scripture reflection, on-going learning and action to eradicate injustice in our church and society.

Since the early 20th century, contemporary small Christian communities have evolved in all parts of the globe quite spontaneously. In his 1998 post-synodal exhortation, *Ecclesia in America*, Pope John Paul II recommends small Christian communities as a way to reestablish human relationships in church communities:

It seems timely, therefore, to form ecclesial communities and

groups of a size that allow for true human relationships ... In such a human context, it will be easier to gather to hear the Word of God, to reflect on the range of human problems in the light of this Word, and gradually to make responsible decisions inspired by the all-embracing love of Christ (141).

In North America various organizations offer an array of support to dioceses, parishes and individuals who participate in, create and support small Christian communities evolving from the Catholic tradition. One of those organizations is Renew International.

One of the primary thrusts which Beacon of Hope – Light of Christ has taken is to facilitate spiritual development experiences which are separate from the

Sunday Liturgy. The *Beacon of Hope* Board of Directors is planning to offer the small group RENEW process for Lent 2006. A target group is currently reviewing the materials provided by RENEW International. Their comments will help the Beacon of Hope Board of Directors determine if the RENEW materials will be those used next Lent.

To learn more about RENEW you may access their WEB site at: www.renewintl.org. You may also secure information by writing to Beacon of Hope [address provided elsewhere in this newsletter].

To participate in the small group process you may send an email to: beaconofhope@bohlightofchrist.org or write to Beacon of Hope.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT!

The weather has gotten colder, the leaves have fallen from the trees, and even a little snow has come our way. With these events, we know two things for sure: the Christmas season culminating with the celebration of the birth of Christ is here, and December is the last month of the tax planning season.

Tax planning season? Quite possibly, many of you haven't heard of this before. Tax planning season is the time of year when you take a look at your

financial situation and see if you can take advantage of certain tax laws that will reduce your income taxes for the current year. Why am I talking about it? One way

many individuals reduce their income taxes is by making additional charitable donations just before year's end to take advantage of increased

deductions. Ah-hah, now you've figured this out! Yes, I am asking you to keep Beacon of Hope...Light of Christ in your year-end donation plans.

Your support is very much appreciated, and helps us continue our mission.

I personally wish all of you and your families a very Blessed Christmas, and may we all remember the true reason for celebrating this time of year.

- Gregory Stock, President

DOLLAR\$ & CENTS

WALK WHERE JESUS WALKED

“The trip will include many significant sites in Jerusalem and Galilee.”

Several members of *Beacon of Hope... Light of Christ* have organized a trip to Israel for March of 2006. Coordinating with De Wayne Coxon, founder of *Blossoming Rose*, travelers will leave for Jerusalem on March 20th.

The trip features 10 and 14-day options, according to organizers Peter and Carol Bekkers, Jim Kampa, Victoria Stock, and Tom Wiltzius. The trip will feature several Catholic Masses, although all Christians are welcome to join. The fee, including airfare from Chicago, all accommodations, and two meals a day, is \$1850 for 14 days (per person).

The trip will include visits to many significant sites in Jerusalem and Galilee, the Holocaust Museum, and significant archeological sites. The full itinerary, along with extended options to Egypt or Jordan, can be viewed on the web site at www.blossomingrose.org, under the TOURS tab.

Registration is being handled by Peter Bekkers, who can be reached at 757-9027. Further Information can be obtained from Tom Wiltzius, 757-0906, who has traveled to Israel before with Coxon and *Blossoming Rose*.

THE MEANING OF ADVENT AND THE ADVENT WREATHE

The importance of the Advent season remains to focus on the coming of our Lord. (Advent comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning 'coming.') The Catechism stresses the two-fold meaning of this 'coming': 'When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for His second coming' (No. 524).

Therefore, on one hand, the faithful reflect back and are encouraged to celebrate the anniversary of the Lord's first coming into this world. We ponder again the great mystery of the incarnation when our Lord humbled Himself, taking on our

humanity, and entered our time and space to free us from sin. On the other hand, we recall in the Creed that our Lord will come again to judge the living and the dead and that we must be ready to meet Him

A good, pious way to help us in our Advent preparation has been the use of the Advent wreath. (Interestingly, the use of the Advent wreath was borrowed from the German Lutherans in the early 1500s.) The wreath is a circle, which has no beginning or end: So we call to mind how our lives, here and now, participate in the eternity of God's plan of salvation and how we hope to share eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. The wreath is made of fresh plant material, because Christ came to

give us new life through His passion, death, and resurrection. Three candles are purple, symbolizing penance, preparation, and sacrifice; the pink candle symbolizes the same but highlights the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, when we rejoice because our preparation is now half-way finished.

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TRANSPARENCY: An Increasing Need in the Church

Recently a non-Catholic friend and devout Christian asked me about the conditions that might have led to the clergy sex abuse scandal. As we reflected on the fact that clergy of all denominations have been caught in sex scandals, including the abuse of minors, we began to see that the problem was not only one of sexual abuse, but also one of the abuse of leadership. Simply put, the clergy sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church also was a major failure of governance.

How can such a thing happen? Aren't bishops and the church hierarchy responsible for protecting children and reporting suspected abuse? Where was the breakdown?

Such questions, legitimate as they are, also reflect a lack of insight into the hidden workings of the Catholic Church and the conflicts between Canon Law, Civil Law, and even common sense.

Canon Law governs Catholic Church affairs. It is the "law of the church" and often is seen as superseding public (civil) law. Civil Law is the law of government, and in the United States it is seen as the law of the people, hence public law. While most Catholic Church ordained priests and bishops acknowledge and follow both sets of law, where and when conflicts arise,

Canon Law seems to prevail, unless challenged.

Recently, a grand jury (Civil Law), found probable cause to recommend charges against the Diocese of Philadelphia for violation of public laws involving the sexual abuse of children. It seems that church hierarchy had become aware of priests who were abusing children, ordered them to stop, re-assigned them (Canon Law), and figured that was sufficient. Not so, says the grand jury. What would transparency do and why is it important here?

Transparency is a concept that allows impartial review of operational matters within any organization that chooses to apply it. If transparency existed in the Catholic Church, it is highly unlikely that the sexual abuse of children would have continued for so long, hidden by bishops afraid of what each instance of abuse might bring about.

Transparency would have neutralized the fear and denial exhibited by so many bishops in America. It would have protected children, it would have brought priests to justice; it would have helped so many victims and their families. Why then is Catholic Church leadership so against transparency?

If it were only a matter of

protecting children, the leadership would not be so against transparency. But transparency in one matter leads to an expectation for it in other matters, and exposure in all matters of governance (not faith), has Bishops afraid of losing control...control over operational matters such as finances, staff and priest assignments, closing churches, disposing of property, etc. They feel control in all church matters is their domain.

And so it is that control versus transparency is the argument, even if when it has meant the loss of a few children to predators. This remains the tragedy of current thinking.

In reality, organizations can need both transparency and control, as do leaders...good leaders, leaders who lead without fear and with faith, not only in God, but also in all of the faithful.

- Tom Wiltzius

"Transparency is a concept that allows impartial review of operational matters within any organization that chooses to apply it."

MEANING OF ADVENT (Continued)

The light represents Christ, who entered this world to scatter the darkness of evil and show us the way of righteousness. The progression of lighting candles shows our increasing readiness to meet our Lord. Each family ought to have an Advent wreath, light it at dinner time, and say the special prayers. This tradition will help each family keep its focus on the true meaning of Christmas. In all,

during Advent we strive to fulfill the opening prayer for the Mass of the First Sunday of Advent:

'Father in Heaven, ... increase our longing for Christ our Savior and give us the strength to grow in love, that the dawn of His coming may find us rejoicing in His presence and welcoming the light of His truth.'



From

The
Liturgical Seasons Of Advent
by Fr. William Saunders

If you have any questions/concerns, no longer wish to receive the newsletter or wish to receive additional information not included in this newsletter, please contact us at Beacon of Hope, P.O. box 2524 Appleton, WI 54912 or send an email to BeaconOfHope@bohlightofchrist.org

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Beacon of Hope . . . Light of Christ
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

December

DON'T
FORGET
THE

"Reason
for the
Season"

