

A Change in Our Culture is a Worthy Goal

National Catholic Prayer Breakfast: Era of Comfortable Catholicism Is Over

The 800 Catholics gathered at the 10th anniversary of the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast in Washington got a startling wake-up call: They have lost the luxury of being comfortable in their faith in 21st-century America.

Princeton professor Robert George gave a sobering assessment of what Christian discipleship requires in America's current cultural-political landscape and Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston exhorted Catholics to embrace the missionary spirit of the early Church.

Prof. George told Catholics: "**The days of comfortable and acceptable Catholicism are past.** A tame Catholic who is ashamed of the Gospel is socially acceptable" but we must now "take risks" and follow Christ's words to "take up thy cross and follow me."

Culturally, the Church in America has found itself in "Good Friday," George observed. The shifting, more hostile cultural landscape indicates American society's "love affair with Jesus and his Church is over."

Cardinal O'Malley said that Catholics must embrace Pope Francis' call to foster a "culture of encounter" and practice "the art of accompaniment" as modern-day disciples of Jesus Christ. He noted that today's hostility focuses on the Church's teaching on "**the dignity of the human person.**" The Cardinal echoed George's point that belief in the Gospel requires accepting the totality of the Church's teaching on the human person and said it encompasses even immigrants living and working in the United States.

"Contemporary society offers the example of "superficial, self-absorbed" celebrities," said O'Malley, but the Church proposes the lives of the saints. He pointed to Servant of God Dorothy Day as an example of how the Church "calls everyone to conversion." "One of the worst effects of the scandals of the Church in our contemporary era is the cynicism of the call to holiness," he said. "People can be overwhelmed by the bad example of priests and bishops who fail to fulfill their calling."

He repeated Pope Francis' call that "love and justice must motivate us to transform our own hearts, so that we can transform the world around us. Put others first and seek the last place to be close with Jesus, who came to serve and not to be served." [Peter J. Smith, *Nat. Cath. Register*, 5/14/14]

Great Scientist, Advocate of Unborn

Jérôme Lejeune, discoverer of Down syndrome and the father of modern genetics, fell from the pinnacle of his career to follow his conscience and baptismal promises to advocate for the lives of persons with Down syndrome.

Servant of God Jérôme Lejeune (1926-1994) earned international acclaim and honors for his work in genetics. He deeply loved children with Down syndrome and hoped his 1958 discovery would help treat or cure their condition. But 10 years later, the world was embracing abortion and using his discovery in prenatal diagnoses to abort children with Down syndrome and other chromosomal abnormalities.

In 1969, Lejeune received the William Allan Award, the world's highest prize for work in genetics and took the occasion to speak out against abortion. After that speech, he told his wife, "Today, I lost my Nobel Prize in medicine." But Blessed Pope John Paul II reached out to the French scientist to help him found the Pontifical Academy for Life and named him its first president shortly before Lejeune's death in April 1994 from lung cancer.

Today, Lejeune is on the path to sainthood, as his cause has moved from the Archdiocese of Paris to Rome. [Peter J. Smith, *Nat. Cath. Register*, 3/30/14]

Three Famous People Were Almost Aborted

More than one million babies are aborted in the United States each year. Here are a few individuals who barely escaped becoming part of that statistic.

1. Justin Bieber At 17, Justin Bieber's mom was encouraged to abort her baby, but she chose life instead. Bieber told *Rolling Stone*: "I really don't believe in abortion. I think [an embryo] is a human. It's like killing a baby."

2. Cher Cher's mother even went to the clinic: "I can remember the chairs were chrome, and I was sweating. The sweat was just coming off of me and when the door opened and it was my turn, I said, 'Mother, I can't do it.'"

3. Celine Dion

When Dion's mother got pregnant with her 14th child she wanted to abort, a priest told her not to: Celine said: "I owe my life to that priest. Once she got over her disappointment, my mother didn't waste any time on self-pity, and loved me as passionately as she'd loved the last little one." [Source: Sarah Jean Seman, *LifeNews.com*, 5/29/14]

Destructive Lies In Our Culture

Fr. James V. Schall, S.J. explains in *Catholic World Report* fifteen destructive lies that dominate our culture. The first and third on the list are:

- “Abortion does not kill a specific, actual human being.” All evidence shows that this killing is true. To hold the lie in our souls, we call it a “right” or a “choice” that allows us to pretend that we know not what we do.

- “Euthanasia is a ‘right’ to kill oneself or have others do so for us.” It is made legitimate by the civil law. Euthanasia is self-inflicted suicide, not an act of compassion or autonomy over ourselves.

Denial of Pro-Life Group’s Bid Sparks

Controversy at Yale Pro-lifers were rejected in a secret vote by a campus social-justice center after a last-minute ‘whisper campaign’ claimed that defending the unborn is opposed to social justice. The group is the first student organization in recent memory to have been denied membership to a prominent on-campus social-justice center, despite being encouraged to apply by the center’s leaders.

Denial of **Choose Life at Yale’s** (CLAY) bid for member status is still generating controversy on campus and across the country. *First Things* and *National Review* expressed outrage over the attempt to stigmatize pro-life outreach as antithetical to social justice, and *Commentary* magazine attacked the center’s decision as an expression of “ideological bigotry.”

CLAY had actively been recruited for membership by Dwight Hall’s executive committee more than a year ago. “We got assurances from board members that all was going smoothly,” group head McEachon wrote in a guest column for the *Yale Daily News*. Then Andre Manuel, Yale’s American Civil Liberties Union rep to Dwight Hall, announced in the campus paper that he would be voting against CLAY’s membership — and other constituent representatives should as well.

CLAY was not informed what time the vote would take place and was given no meaningful opportunity to make its case before the assembled representatives. Matthew Gerken, a former CLAY president and 2011 graduate of Yale, said it was “ironic” that an organization dedicated to social justice wasn’t more aware of the fact that a democratic majority doesn’t always make just decisions.

In the online comment section for *Yale Daily News* articles, one person wrote that she finds Manuel’s definition of social justice hypocritical, given that “he believes CLAY

should not be allowed into Dwight Hall because they oppose the killing of babies.” **“I cannot think of a greater social justice than saving the lives of the unborn, regardless of race, creed or color,” said another.** [Source: Jonathan Liedl, *Nat. Cath. Register*, 4/25/14]

From St John Paul II: “The path to holiness is not easy but that should not prevent us from facing its difficulties with courage. It is a journey which often involves an inner struggle against selfishness and sin. To be properly equipped to make this journey we must wear the clothing suggested by St. Paul:(Col 3:12) heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

Teen Sex Data Incomplete

The media are trumpeting the Guttmacher Institute report showing that teenage pregnancies, births, and abortions have dropped to their lowest level since they peaked in the 1990s. Guttmacher claims it’s due to contraception. But the report’s data are incomplete.

The U.S. teenage pregnancy rate is still 5.5 times higher than in Western Europe. Moreover, the report says nothing about rates of teenage oral sex, or same-sex sex. Also, it is entirely possible for pregnancy rates to decrease at the same time that “hooking up,” or casual sex encounters, are increasing. We know, for example, that there has been an increase in pre-teen “hooking up.”

Even more important, the Guttmacher Institute, and most other organizations that track sexual activity, never discuss the emotional effects of sexual experimentation among teenagers; among girls, in particular, the effects are serious. If we look at studies on **teenage wellbeing** -- measures of their physical and mental health, coupled with their level of happiness – the results are not encouraging.

It is entirely logical that organizations bent on seeing technology as the great elixir to social problems would neglect to report on the wellbeing of teenagers, which is tied to moral issues, and that is a subject that makes sexologists uncomfortable. [Source: Bill Donohue, *Catholic League*, 5/30/14.]

A *National Review Online* article, “U.S. Abortion Rate Falls to Its Lowest Level Since 1973,” by Michael New, shows that the group’s explanations for the decline lack a basis in their data. Another article, “Regulating Abortion Reduces Abortion,” by James Heaney, shows how Guttmacher’s own data support the assertion that **stricter abortion laws** have reduced the incidents of abortion.