



Catholic Social Workers National Association

October 2007

Letter from the President:

It has been a wonderful summer for CSWNA. We have grown in membership and continue to build support across the United States. The website is still under construction, but should be launched in the next month. We will be continually adding different features to the site once the site is launched. I appreciate your patience during this time. As always, if you have ideas or suggestions, we would love to hear them. In addition, I would like to invite you to attend the first annual CSWNA conference, "Catholic Social Work: Living the Mission" on June 8-9, 2007 in Grand Rapids, MI. I hope to see you there.

I would also like to share with you an opportunity that was provided to me on behalf of CSWNA. Through the support of Fr. Robert Sirico of the Acton Institute, an honorary member of CSWNA, I was given the opportunity to travel to Rome and introduce the association to the Pontifical Councils and attend the "Healthcare Technology and the Common Good" conference which was co-sponsored by the Vatican dicastery and the Acton Institute. The association received the blessings, support, and direction from the members of the Pontifical Council.

I would like to thank the Acton Institute, Father Robert Sirico, and a very special individual who personally funded this trip to Rome.

While in Rome I picked up a prayer card from the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, and wanted to share this special statement with each of you. I hope you find it as moving as I did.

"And only where God is seen does life truly begin. Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our friendship with Him"

Immaculate Heart of Mary, cause of our joy, pray for us.

Kathleen Neher

Kathleen Neher, MSW, LSW

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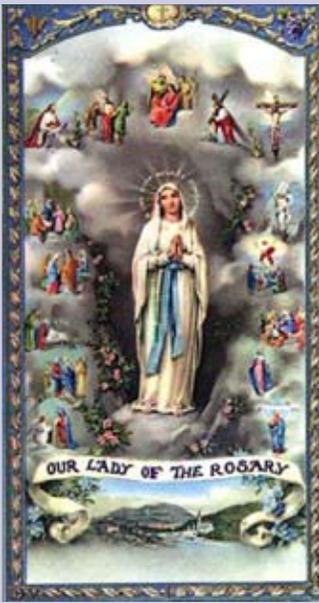
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Our Lady of the Rosary October 07



The origin of the Most Holy Rosary is quite ancient. Anchorites and monks in the early centuries of the Church's history daily recited the entire Psalter (150 psalms). The Christian laity would imitate this practice by reciting 150 Ave Marias, using small pebbles as a way of keeping track of the numbers of Aves they had said.

According to tradition, Our Lady gave the Most Holy Rosary to St. Dominic (1170-121) to combat the errors of the Albigensians in southern France. Albigensianism, a form of the Manichaean heresy, asserted that a good Deity created the spiritual world and an evil Deity created the material world. Albigensians opposed marriage and favored suicide. The heresy proved especially difficult to extirpate until St. Dominic's holy preaching and promotion of the Rosary prevailed. The Dominicans have down through the centuries been

great promoters of Our Lady's Rosary.

Numerous popes and saints have acclaimed the efficacy of the Rosary. It is indeed a most powerful spiritual weapon. Pope John XXIII called the Rosary "the Psalter of the poor." Theologians have called the Rosary "the school of contemplation" because it introduces the faithful to meditative prayer.

Now is the time that Christians need recourse to Our Lady of the Rosary. Now is the time for the devout recitation of the Rosary to win spiritual victories for the Church and souls. (www.stfrancisnid.com/october_saints.htm)

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Mission Statement :

The mission of Catholic Social Workers National Association is to promote the implementation of Catholic Social Teachings in social work practice as we support competent professional social workers living out their baptismal call by being the hands and feet of Christ.

Mother Teresa described two types of poverty, the first being material poverty. Developing nations suffer from severe material poverty, where children actually die of malnutrition and starvation. There is no Salvation Army or Multi-Service Center to act as a safety net for these people. They live day in and day out in survival mode, with no regular source of water, food or shelter. Material poverty is the result of economic and political instability.

Mother Teresa cautioned us about a second, far worse form of poverty. This type of poverty afflicts wealthy nations in particular. It's called spiritual poverty. While our free market economies have managed to pull more people out of material poverty than any other economic system in history, our cultural malaise and declining spiritual practice has given way to a cultural ghetto. Spiritual poverty is a cultural problem that occurs when an entire population has become accustomed to instant gratification, constant entertainment and never ending busy-ness. It is not an economic or political problem, but a cultural one.

In our constant quest for the next high, the next gadget, the next self-improvement fad, the next boyfriend, pay raise or bigger house, we end up losing our sense of humanity. Gone is the ability to delight in the simple things, like baking a cake from scratch (we don't have time), reading a classic novel (not enough sex or chase scenes to hold our interest) or writing a letter (with a pen, not the phone or computer) to someone you care about. I am as guilty as anyone in these failings, by the way.

It's no wonder that our ability to sustain meaningful relationships also gets lost in our attention deficit world. Spouses, children, neighbors, co-workers are reduced to consumer goods. We move them around, change them, pay for them, and send them away to suit our momentary needs. Or, we just don't make time for them in our constant pursuit of activity. And while we have more medicines, more food, more conveniences to make our lives "more manageable," maladies like depression, anxiety and stress related disorders are near epidemic.

This is due to spiritual poverty. It is a severe lack of interior peace created by the vacuum of incessant



self-focus, and a compulsion for busy-ness, which eventually numbs us to a sense of what is eternal. When we feel alienated from eternity, we feel abandoned and become spiritual orphans, which creates an interior emptiness that gives way to anxiety, depression and stress. We were created for lives of meaning. We need relationships more than we need food and entertainment. We need only to look at how we come into the world to understand this truth.

We were created in the context of a family. Each of us reflects the reality of a mother and a father. I suppose we could see the parental relationship as meaningless and

accidental, but then that means our existence would be meaningless and accidental. I believe that we were created with an interior need to sense eternity and that sense is best fulfilled through our family relationships. Our family members should reflect to us our value to the world and a sense of belonging.

We lived in Okinawa when we had our first child. I remember feeling guilty for not being back at work after six weeks. A Vietnamese neighbor scolded me for this attitude. I'll never forget her thick accent saying, "You AHmericans run around like chicken [sic].....chicken with no head!"

Her scolding reminded me that my baby was a gift from God, not a hindrance to my career. It took a woman from another culture, a materially poorer culture, to remind me of my humanity. Being an intentional mother, rather than jumping back into the rat race right away, is a spiritual response to my child's value as a human being. My baby was not a pet to be transferred around my busyness, but a little reflection of eternity.

It's a very different world when you define yourself according to your relationships and not just your functional roles. My neighbor's traditional cultural view enriched my spiritual life forever....there's that eternal thing again!

We will always have inequalities of material wealth. Political and economic solutions can help generate material wealth. But our humanity demands more than material well-being and is best fostered at the beginning, with the family. And that, my friends, is what is meant by "charity begins at home."



Friends of St. John the Caregiver

"Well, duh!" Stating the - Unstated -- Obvious: The Catholic Church and Family Caregiving

By Monica and Bill Dodds

"Well, of course!"

Yes, we realize that's a polite way of saying, "Well, duh!" And that's OK with us. In fact, we're pleased we often get that response when we're out making presentations on the Friends of St. John the Caregiver. We are, after all, simply stating the unstated obvious:

1. Family caregivers need the support of the Catholic Church.
2. The Catholic Church needs to be supporting family caregivers.
3. Caregiving is pro-life.
4. St. John the Apostle is the patron saint of family caregivers.

Officially, our "elevator message" is Being a non-profit, we have to have one of those, don't we? Our elevator message is: The Friends of St. John the Caregiver is an international Catholic organization addressing the growing needs of family caregivers by providing:

- spirituality, information and resources to individual caregivers: www.YourAgingParent.com
- training and educational material to dioceses and parishes: www.CatholicCaregivers.com
- a membership association offering spiritual support for those who need care, those who give care, and those who assist others giving care: www.FSJC.org

And then, we like to add: "No membership dues, no meetings! All we ask is that you pray for family caregivers and those receiving care."

As a social worker (and perhaps as a family caregiver, too), you know family caregivers need the support of the Church.

As a Catholic, you know the Church needs to be supporting family caregivers.

As an intelligent person, you know caregiving is pro-life.

What you may not know is why St. John is the patron saint of caregivers. The truth is the Church had no official patron for family caregivers. (We researched it!) So – in the great Catholic tradition of how patrons are selected -- we picked him ourselves. Why St. John? Because, from the cross, Jesus chose him to take care of his mother. Who could be better for a patron? Who could be more obvious? "Well, of course!" you're thinking. We encourage you to read more about all these resources at our Web sites, particularly "The Basics of Catholic Caregiving": www.youragingparent.com/caregiving_basics.pdf.

One final point: Everything we offer is free. Yes, free. No strings attached. We've designed it so individuals, parishes, groups and dioceses can use it without taking up staff time or budget.

The two of us have worked for the Church and for non-profits for a long, long time and we figured that would be the best way to get material to caregivers and care-receivers and to get others involved in supporting both. We thought . . . "Well, duh."

Monica and Bill Dodds are the founders of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver. Monica is the author of "A Catholic Guide to Caring for Your Aging Parent" (Loyola Press). She can be contacted at MonicaDodds@youragingparent.com.

Students: Practicing for Divorce or Preparing for Marriage? by Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse

When students go back to school, will they practice for divorce or prepare for marriage? That's the question I asked myself as I read the recent Pew Center Report on the Generation Gap. The report shows that young Americans are fed up with the divorce culture. Unfortunately, many of those same young people are embarking on a lifestyle that is setting them up for marital failure: cohabiting in their co-ed dorms.

The table entitled, "Views About Divorce, by Gender, Race and Age," illustrates the younger generation's tougher line on divorce than their elders. In response to the question, "Should (divorce) be avoided except in an extreme situation, or (is divorce) preferable to maintaining an unhappy marriage?" only 30% of Baby Boomers and 32% of those over 65 thought divorce should be avoided except in an extreme situation. These two generations institutionalized the Divorce Revolution. The immediate post WWII generation implemented no-fault divorce. The Boomers practiced it with a vengeance.

Their children, and their younger siblings are not so enthused. Nearly half of the youngest generation surveyed, those between the ages of 18 and 29, believe divorce should be a last resort. The next older generation, born between 1958 and 1977, are Baby Boomer kid siblings and first offspring. Forty-two percent of this group think divorce should be avoided.

In my experience giving speeches on campuses, I have been stunned by how many students are sick of divorce. They'll tell me about their parents' four divorces. Or they'll tell me how horrid it was when their mom kicked their dad out of the house. One young man described his humiliation watching his mom's parade of boyfriends. Even students who disagree with me about things like gay "marriage," admit I'm right about the problems of children of unmarried parents. These young men and women want lifelong marriage for themselves, and for their children.

Unfortunately, some of their other views will not serve them well in their ambitions for life-long married love. The same Pew report showed them to be tolerant of cohabitation. The trend toward cohabitation is partly due to fear of divorce: people view cohabitation as a safe alternative to marriage and as a test-drive for marriage. Unfortunately, neither of these perceptions is accurate. Cohabiting does not protect a person from



the pain that breaking up so often causes. And, cohabiting couples are more, not less likely to divorce, if they ultimately do marry.

Many cohabiting couples don't exactly "decide" on their status: they make a series of non-decisions. One sleep-over leads to another, with a few possessions being moved in each time. People tell themselves they are having a "test drive," sitting back rationally deciding whether this relationship is really right for them. But their bodies have a different agenda. People attach to each other through the

sexual act.

For women, the physiology of attachment takes place through a hormone called oxytocin, which we release when we are making love or nursing a baby. This hormone tells us to relax and connect to the person we're with, whether it is the nursing infant who is radically dependent on us, or the partner who could become the father of a child. This attachment hormone is our body's way of trying to create a family.

Although men famously do not attach to their partners as easily as women do, men do nonetheless bond. The cohabiting couple may believe they are testing out their relationship. But in fact, their bodies are creating an "involuntary chemical commitment," whether they are really a good match for each other or not.

This is one reason why cohabitation is so often disappointing. If the couple breaks up, as they are statistically more likely to do than married couples, the pain of the breakup can be just as intense as if they were married. And if they do get married, they may not be as well matched as they think they are. They may wake up one morning and wonder who the heck they are in bed with. They may feel themselves to be in an "arranged marriage:" arranged by a couple of kids buzzing with hormones on the brain, rather than by adult parents. Their bodies have connected, in spite of their belief that they are hedging their bets.

Preparing for marriage or for divorce? The young want life-long married love. They deserve accurate information from us: cohabiting in the dorm rooms is a set-up for marital failure.

— Jennifer Roback Morse is a senior research fellow at the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty.