

Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church

July 31, 2016/18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

PASTOR'S CORNER

News broke Tuesday morning of a priest in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray (in Normandy) who was killed while offering Mass. The priest's name was Fr. Jacques Hamel, and he was 85 years old. The terrorists slit his throat before then taking others hostage, and finally being killed by police.

Some thoughts. First of all, this priest is a martyr for the faith, and while we are shocked and saddened to hear of his gruesome killing, we should, like the early Church, rejoice that this priest of God was found worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. And make no mistake, that is exactly what he did. Muslims may seem indiscriminate in their contempt of human life, but their targets are usually those with symbolic value. The vehicular massacre in Nice on Bastille Day was obviously a show of hatred for secularism. The attacks on the Church and clergy and religious are a display of hatred for non-Muslim religions, and especially Catholic Christianity. Foiled plots against the pontiff are constantly making headlines.

Fr. Jacques died a martyr, and we should rejoice for him, while we fear for and pray for our world. This is obviously something about which we're going to have mixed feelings, but that's life this side of heaven: joyful for having been loved by God and saved by his Son, yet still needing to persevere through the journey of life and being found faithful. Saint Augustine says that "keep singing" a song of hope to help us muddle through—while the blessed sing in security, we have to sing with a sense of our great need, yet with the sure and certain hope that Jesus is Lord and he will not leave us without the grace needed to bear what we must.

The same day Fr. Jacques was martyred, an Iranian-born American journalist (Sohrab Ahmari) came forward to announce that he was becoming Catholic, through the London Oratory. This is a courageous expression of solidarity with all Christians suffering under the thumb of Islamic persecution. Please pray for Mr. Ahmari, as well as the Oratorians in London and their parishioners. Sohrab Ahmari is most likely Muslim-born and if he is, he's courting a fatwa by becoming Christian.

Fr. Athanasius arrives this weekend. Don't forget the four week course he'll be teaching on Evangelization in Rosary Hall Tuesday evenings. First talk is this Tuesday, August 2, at 7:00 p.m. Please come. And bring friends.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP All parishioners should participate fully in parish life (*this especially means worshipping at Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation*), be registered here, and support the parish. We often get requests for recommendations and permissions for parishioners to serve as godparents and sponsors. If we don't know you, we can't give that testimony on your behalf. You may have been baptized here (or gone to Catholic schools) but you need to be currently practicing and registered in your local parish (children are obviously registered with their parents; adults need to make their own arrangements). The Church requires that baptisms and marriages be celebrated in one's own parish. If one is not an active parishioner, problems could arise at those important times.

Baptisms Usually 1st and 3rd Sundays. Contact the pastor to schedule. First-time parents please also schedule a "pre-Jordan" preparation class.

Weddings Active parishioners contact the parish office no later than six months prior to the desired wedding date.

Eucharistic exposition Every Wednesday following the noon Mass until 7:00 p.m. Benediction. For information, and to volunteer to take hours of adoration, contact Regina Cano at (614) 582-8588.

Knights of Columbus Contact Trinidad Cano at (740) 819-8002. The K of C offer a hot breakfast every 4th Sunday following morning Masses, and lead the Rosary after the 11:00 Mass on 5th Sundays.

Choir We're always in need of more voices in the choir. Contact the parish office or the choir director. Weekly rehearsals are Wednesdays, after Benediction.

Funeral luncheons Contact Mary Margaret Murphy at (740) 452-4454.

Rental information To reserve Rosary Hall or Activity Center (i.e. the school gym) contact Mary Ann Ewart at maewart@gmail.com or (740) 319-2449.

Pregnancy counseling Heartbeat Family Center/ Pregnancy Distress: (740) 450-5437, www.heartbeats.org.

Rosary Altar Society Contact Lori Gnau at (740) 453-8501

Prayer requests (740) 454-2700, (740) 297-7164, (740) 588-0314, or (740) 704-3136

"Can you not watch one hour with me, and pray?"

We have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday afternoon, following noon Mass until 7:00 p.m., with Benediction.

Venite, adoremus. Come, let us adore.

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Mass Intentions

It is a holy and pious thought to pray for the dead.
cf. 2 Maccabees, 12.

Sunday, July 31

18th SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

5:00pm (Sat.)	Schaumleffel Family
7:00am	Roy & Eleanor Teeters (+)
9:00am	Josie Basalla (+)
11:00am	Jacob Iczkowski
6:00pm	People of the parish

Monday, August 1

St. Alphonsus Liguori, bishop and doctor

8:00am	Sam Rosta (+)
12Noon	Larry & Margaret Murphy

Tuesday, August 2

Feria	
8:00am	Eleanor Barone
12Noon	Mike Nelson

Wednesday, August 3

Feria	
8:00am	Gerry Kuhn (+)
12Noon	Ted Paulus

Thursday, August 4

St. Jean-Marie Vianney, priest (M)	
8:00am	Robert & Mary Jo Finan (+)
12Noon	William & Betty (+) Carrell

Friday, August 5

Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary Major (Opt. M)

8:00am	John & Peg Mattingly (+)
12Noon	Ernest Noll (+)

Saturday, August 6

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD (S)

9:00am	Wayne Barrett Family
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Sunday, August 7

19th SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

5:00pm (Sat.)	Dolores Montgomery (+)
7:00am	John & Anna Beardsley (+)
9:00am	Pat McLoughlin (+)
11:00am	Mary L. Crawford (+)
6:00pm	People of the parish

Nota bene: Incense may be used at any Sunday Mass except the 7:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m. Masses

Weekly Calendar

Sun, July 31

Coffee and doughnuts after all morning Masses
K of C Rosary following 11:00 Mass

Mon, August 1

7:00 p.m. Scouts (parish center)
7:00 p.m. Prayer Group (parish center)

Tue, August 2

2:00 p.m. Bible Study (Acts of the Apostles)
6:00 p.m. Rosary for Life (church)
7:00 p.m. Evangelization (1): Conference with Fr. Athanasius

Wed, August 3

Eucharistic exposition following noon Mass
7:00 p.m. Benediction
7:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal

Saturday, August 6

Following 9:00 Mass: St. Monica Novena prayers

Sun, August 7

Coffee and doughnuts after all morning Masses

Parish Finances

July 24, 2016

Envelopes	\$6,704.76
Loose	1,002.75
Total.....	7,707.51
[Total other.....	141.11]
Weekly Budget.....	11,538.00
This week's deficit.....	-3,830.49

Bishop Fenwick School News

Back to school kickoff!

Both buildings will be open 10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. Sunday, August 21. Come see the classrooms, meet the teachers, and enjoy time together! School starts Tuesday, August 23 and we're still enrolling! Questions? Call principal Kelly Sagan at (740) 454-9731 or email at ksagan@cducation.org

**Please remember
Saint Thomas Aquinas Church
in your will**



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Christian Marriage: A Union Made by Christ (Part 3)

Forty-eight years ago (July 25, 1968, to be exact), Pope Paul VI published the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* (Latin for “Of Human Life”). It landed like a nuclear bomb. For decades the Catholic Church stood alone in opposing contraception, ever since the Anglican Church approved of the pill (provided it was used only within marriage) at the 1930 Lambeth Conference. Prior to that, all Christian churches were unanimous in condemning contraception as a grave sin against marriage and chastity, and as something that would degrade society. Then came Lambeth 1930, and the crack in the dike began to widen.

There was nothing new about contraception; even the ancient world knew ways of preventing pregnancy. They were crude and icky, but they were known. What was new in the 20th century was *chemical* means of contracepting, especially with the anovulatory pill. This was thought to be totally different from, say, barrier methods of contraception, because it didn't interfere physically with the marital act—it simply acted by suppressing ovulation, by making a woman's body think it was pregnant so it she wouldn't ovulate. (And here's something many still don't realize: it also works by preventing implantation of fertilized eggs in the uterine wall in those cases where fertilization actually happens. And a fertilized egg is a new human person at its earliest stage. The pill is an abortifacient; it causes the expulsion of tiny human lives from their mothers' wombs.)

Many people were thinking that the Pope would reverse centuries of Catholic teaching on contraception—especially in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, which was interpreted by many as the jettisoning of tradition (it wasn't). Pope John XXIII at one point during the Council tabled discussion about a possible change of Church teaching for another time, and many saw in this a signal that a change would be coming. That was wrong, of course, but people see what they want to see. Worst of all, perhaps, is that priests all over the world, and many bishops as well, supported rumors of a change, probably to turn the heat up on the Pope, and definitely out of embarrassment at the Church's fuddy-duddy position. Many married people in counseling and the sacrament of Penance were told simply to follow their conscience, without any further explanation. It was not a golden age for the clergy in the history of the Church, to say the least.

And then the long-awaited day came, when the encyclical hit the press. Pope Paul VI wrote that he sensed the great anxiety felt by many people in modern times over this pressing question, but expressed very clearly it was not his or any Pope's business to overthrow the Creator. It is rather the job of the Magisterium of the Church to interpret Scripture and human nature and pass on what has been received in every age going back to the apostles. And one of the key phrases of the encyclical is that moral goodness requires that “each and every marital act remain in itself ordained to the procreating of human life.”

Notice what this *doesn't* say: it doesn't say that married couples must have as many children as possible. It doesn't even say that couples must *want* large families. It means just what it says: that the marital act has an integrity and a dignity of its own, and that couples must not compromise that integrity (before, during, or after) by doing anything to interfere with the natural generative nature of the sexual act. To do so is treading on the creative arena God has reserved for himself, for he is the *Creator* of life, and it is in the marital act that God has called couples to

be *pro-creators* and *co-creators*. Moreover, contraceptives do not enable marital intimacy but thwart it—even the pill. Neutering an act of sexual intercourse simply empties it of its natural meaning—which is two becoming one flesh in a very real way, in offspring—and makes it instead open to expressing whatever subjective meaning the parties have in mind on any given day. With the life-giving power suppressed, sex becomes a matter of mutual pleasuring—or perhaps simply the pursuit of one's own pleasure, without regard for one's spouse.

Most of all, the pill was supposed to ease the situation of overburdened women and make better marriages. But this was a deal with the devil, and deals with the devil always result in a mugging where the devil takes all and leaves us nothing. Are women better off now? Are they less burdened? The birth rate has decreased, to be sure, so women are having fewer babies. That might be agreeable to some for a while, but what about when they reach the twilight of childbearing years and regret their choices, or have made it to old age and have no spouse or children to care for them? And I wonder whether women feel more respected than they did in previous generations, since many are expected to “put out” on demand—after all, why shouldn't they, the fear of pregnancy being gone?

Far from being a great boon to fair sex, Pope Paul predicted that women would come to be used as sexual playthings and wind up being cast overboard when their youth faded, and shouldering the burden of child-rearing alone after divorce. And as for divorce—the Pope predicted that the divorce rate would accelerate once contraception became widely accepted, and that indeed happened. No mystery there: it removed a natural and obvious source of marital unity: children. Not to mention that it facilitated infidelities, and pre-marital sex which only damages subsequent marriages.

Most of all, the pill does no good service to women by seeing the female body as the prime obstacle to a well-adjusted marriage and social bliss. When do we take pills? When we're sick, right? So, what does it say of our culture's view of women that we expect them to take these pills to mute their fertility? Men are fertile 24/7, but women are fertile just a few days out of the month, and yet it's *women* who are stigmatized as needing to have their fertility “cured.” Seriously, what is more a sign of physical perfection than fertility—the capacity to reproduce another member of the species? Isn't that precisely how we judge maturity? Until that time, a human being, or just an animal, is considered a young 'un, a pup. The capacity to beget is part of God's amazing plan, and it's a mark of something powerful and great. Angels, being pure spirit, do not reproduce, and all are created directly by God. God creates each and every human being, too, but only in and through an act of sexual union: this is what's meant by procreation. Granted, that can be done well or badly, no need to get all misty or romantic about it. Not all acts of sexual intercourse are loving. Some are cruel and unhappy. But to deface what is meant to be something free and open to life with attempts to undermine new life is just wrong, and it's telling how most young people (say, those just learning about the facts of life) immediately see something wrong with it. Cosmically wrong, deeply unsound. It takes a bit of compromising to get to the point where certain things all of a sudden seem acceptable. I think we should be thankful to hear unfashionable truths preached by a Church that can weather the storm of the world's contempt.

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Q & A about Marriage in the Catholic Church

Q. One more question here about annulments: what about non-Catholics who are divorced and now want to marry Catholics? They don't need to get an annulment, do they? Annulments are just for Catholics, right?

Yes, they do, and no, they're not! Because they're married to their first spouse. It's not just Catholics whose marriages are indissoluble—we may seem to be the only ones who really *believe* it, but in fact *all* true marriages are by nature indissoluble, whether it is the union of a Catholic and non-Christian, or of two Buddhists or two atheists or whatever. “I take you until death” is as binding for non-Catholics as it is for Catholics. Just because a marriage isn't *sacramental* doesn't mean it isn't valid. Only marriages between two baptized persons are *sacramental*. But non-sacramental marriages can be *valid*—otherwise you'd have to say that only Christians can marry, which is absurd. Sacramental marriages are like all other marriages, but have more going for them: a guarantee of God's grace working through the marriage bond tying them together. But to return to the question: if a divorced non-Catholic wishes to get married to a Catholic, the non-Catholic needs to go through the same steps that a Catholic would have to go through: petition for a decree of nullity. And if the annulment isn't granted, that person remains bound by his or her first spouse.

Q. The rule against contraception is binding on Catholics only, right? Like not eating meat on Fridays?

No, that's not true. It may be that only the Catholic Church teaches this now, but it wasn't always so: it used to be the consensus of *all* Christians, and also Jews and certainly Muslims and even many non-religious people. It was considered a corruption of sex. Some of the early Protestant Reformers thought that contraception was as great a sin as murder. Yes, you read that right.

And it's not a “rule.” That makes it sound arbitrary, like rules of a game that can be changed. Life isn't a game, it's for keeps. This is a law of God, and God's law for the human race, is wise beyond our understanding—and also immutable.

So, while there are some laws binding only on believing Christians and Catholics, much that the Church teaches applies to all humanity. They may not accept the Church's authority from Jesus, but that doesn't matter: it still applies to them. Jesus is Lord whether they accept him or not, and his Church preaches and teaches with his authority whether they accept it or not. And anyway, are commandments like “Thou Shalt Not Murder” and “Thou Shalt Not Steal” supposed to be for Jews only just because they are written in the Old Testament? Ridiculous. It's the difference between God's law and the Church's law: laws the *Church* makes are for Catholics. The laws of God and Christ are for everyone.

Q. But my priest told me when I got married that if my wife and I prayed and found our way to accept using the pill in our marriage, we could do so in good conscience. Why should we believe you?

Don't believe me. Believe what the Church teaches. Look, there are some priests who deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Some also deny the dogma of the Real Presence of the Eucharist. Priests can be wrong and lose their faith too. No individual priest or bishop (even the Pope!) has the right to invent doctrine, or slight some teachings and favor oth-

ers. Everyone in the Church is called to accept with faith all that the Church teaches to be revealed by God, period. And all priests are called to teach those things, without exception.

It's true that many priests in the nuttiness of the 60s and 70s did some real harm, and we'll all be feeling the reverberations of those decades for a long time to come: some demons are only driven out by prayer and fasting. But for those with ears to hear, and who knew where to turn in the cacophony of conflicting voices, the Church has spoken with one voice: marriage is until death, and marriage as a sign of God's love and fidelity (and fruitfulness) is destroyed by the use of contraception. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says (quoting *Humanae Vitae*) that contraception is “intrinsically evil” (para. 2370)—that is, it is always and everywhere wrong, wrong in essence, not because of circumstances or one's motives or intentions.

Q. This is hypocrisy. The Church allows people to use the Rhythm Method or Natural Family Planning (NFP). Aren't NFP and the pill just the same thing?

They're not even remotely the same thing. Someone may kill a person in a tragic auto accident, and someone else may kill a person with malice aforethought. The latter is called murder and you can be prosecuted for it; the former doesn't make you a murderer. You could lose your leg to gangrene, or you could lose it in a stupid bungee jumping accident. One is a dumb risk, the other a sad medical condition. Same outcome, perhaps: but we don't say that the way someone got there is “the same thing.” And so when a couple use contraception, they are deliberately rendering an act of sexual intercourse infertile. When another couple practice NFP, they are simply not having sexual intercourse—they abstain during fertile periods and wait for infertile periods. The outcome—no conception—may be the same in either case, but in one case there's a distorted sex act and in the other case there is refraining.

Can NFP be used wrongly—for a couple to never have children and still stay within the rules? Yes, of course. Couples are called to be generous and trusting in God. There may be times when having a pregnancy can be dangerous, or when times are tight and you need to space pregnancies. But to go indefinitely even with NFP trying to avoid conception because it might upset a nifty lifestyle is also wrong, though not for the same reasons. Contraception is unchaste, a corruption of sex. NFP doesn't corrupt sex, but it can be (in those cases mentioned) selfish and fearful.

Q. It seems impossible to live the kind of life the Church is proposing.

Things seem different to different people. It often depends on the way people are living. I think everyone (even faithful Catholics avoiding contraception) would agree that what the Church proposes is difficult; but it's not impossible. There are many Catholic families still living according to these teachings, and they tend to be happy families, also with much lower divorce rates. People often say something seems impossible without trying it, and then just leaving it at that. What it means to say that marriage is a sacrament between baptized Christians is that God gives grace through the very bond of marriage; he also gives actual grace to others and refuses no one who turns to him. Striving to live chastity, with the help of God and especially fortified by the sacraments, is one of the surest ways to make a marriage a success.

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From the Parish Finance Council

Dear Parishioners:

July marks the beginning the new fiscal year, and the Parish Finance Council would like to share a summary of the budget covering that time period; it appears in the opposite column of this page.

Additionally, we would like to make a few comments about the fiscal year that just ended. Despite not meeting revenue projects from the offertory, we were blessed to receive some generous bequests. Expenses were also below budget. Year-end net income is expected to be \$722,250.00. Saint Thomas prudently invests gifts and surpluses for emergencies and the long-term capital needs of church and school. We deeply appreciate our generous benefactors and all they have done for the parish. Nonetheless, it would be unwise to budget on the assumption of ongoing large gifts, and so as a matter of practice, ongoing operations need to be supported through the weekly collection. Please continue to support the parish.

We would also like to stress that our blessings should not lead to complacency. We have done much work on the physical building of this place (including concrete walkways and the ramp), but we need to ensure that St. Thomas is financially viable for the next.

We have one final important request—not a new request, but an ongoing need. The measure of a parish is more than the number of Mass attendees, the condition of its buildings, or the amount of its weekly collections. To maintain the tradition of our parish and its service to God and neighbor, please consider sharing your time and talents in addition, to your treasure. Parishioners are needed to serve in manifold capacities as volunteers, from parish festival workers to the filling of various liturgical roles at Sunday and weekday Masses, to aiding the poor through the Saint Vincent de Paul Society—to mention just a few possibilities. If you would like more information on how to get involved, please contact either the pastor or the chairpersons of various parish organizations.

Sincerely,

Tom Barone (chair), Tam Bowman (*Parish accountant*),
Brian Kaufman, Ruth Ann Lynn, Brent Mirgon

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish

Budget 2016-2017

Income

Gifts.....	116,000.00
Offertory.....	588,100.00
Fundraisers.....	52,500.00
Other.....	59,950.00
Activities.....	24,100.00
Religious ed. receipts.....	1,800.00

Expenditures

Salaries.....	264,929.68
Employee benefits.....	100,893.00
Rectory supply & expense.....	15,000.00
Office supply & expense.....	10,000.00
Church supply & expense.....	18,000.00
Travel.....	7,400.00
Parish charities.....	1,500.00
Utilities.....	40,290.00
Maintenance, supply & repair.....	22,800.00
Insurance.....	21,000.00
Property tax.....	400.00
Diocesan assessment.....	50,000.00
Major capital expenditures.....	30,000.00
School subsidies (BRHS).....	16,900.00
School subsidies (BF).....	198,000.00
Religious ed. expenditures.....	45,337.32
TOTAL PARISH EXPENSES.....	842,250.00