

Dangers of assimilation for Catholics?

Russell Shaw's *American Church* Analyzes Catholicism in America

Longtime Catholic author, journalist and noted intellectual Shaw's new book examines the remarkable rise, meteoric fall and uncertain future of American Catholicism. (Ignatius press, \$16.95) It comes at a time when American cultural influences of materialism, secularism and relativism seem so diametrically opposed to everything we are called to be as members of the Catholic Church.

Have Americans identified so uncritically with American secular culture that we've become much more American than Catholic? Despite two centuries of anti-Catholic bigotry in various forms, Catholics have thrived and become leaders in our society. The historic emphasis within the Church was to show that Catholics, especially Catholic immigrants, were as patriotic as other Americans. All of this was a necessary step in building an authentic American Catholic Church.

Shaw notes, however, that in the last 50 or so years, it has become increasingly problematical as American culture has become increasingly hostile to traditional religious and moral values. Many Catholics, instead of evangelizing the culture, have been evangelized by it, have accepted its values and attitudes and practices while shedding those of their religious tradition.

Many American Catholics seem to be assimilating into the secular culture and adopting its mindset.

There has been a collapse of traditional religious faith and moral values among elite groups in the academic and intellectual worlds, a loosening of sexual mores, increased challenges to authority, legalization of abortion, dissent and confusion after Vatican Council II, the priestly abuse problem, and increased relativism and self-centeredness.

Shaw calls for Catholics to rebuild a healthy subculture of its own, not inward looking but with a strong evangelistic dynamic. Signs of this are already found in many parishes in the form of community service ministries and other programs of outreach. He also believes that what is needed is spiritual renewal and conversion, building up the spirituality of Catholic lay people. In the current crisis, mediocrity won't do. [Source: *Our Sunday Visitor*, June 30, 2013.]

Mixed Messages for Teens

It is a sad irony that a 13-year-old cannot get a tattoo without parental permission, nor see an R-rated movie, but can now walk into a pharmacy and purchase a pill to prevent - and possibly terminate - pregnancy. This lack of monitoring has many implications, including any sort of medical oversight for the use of such a powerful hormonal chemical. Also, obvious questions about inappropriate relationships or potential rape won't be asked.

Once again we find ourselves sliding deeper into a moral black hole. As our cultural values and priorities become degraded, there is a growing threat to Catholics: How do we protect ourselves, our families, our children from this same degradation? A whole series of items that used to trouble the Catholic conscience are glossed over in favor of being inclusive, sensitive or politically correct.

For example, starting August 1st, small-business owners must choose between buying health insurance that covers contraceptives, abortifacients and sterilization, or facing ruinous financial penalties. These and other realities are here and now. We as Catholics are being challenged to take our beliefs into consideration when choosing how to live. Mirroring the cross, we sacrifice for what we believe.

The Fight for Religious Freedom

The U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services issued its final rule, mandating employee health insurance for contraceptives and abortion-causing drugs. This will put many Catholic-sponsored institutions at risk of closure if they don't comply because the "religious employer" exemption is defined as those institutions serving primarily members of their faith. But most Catholic institutions do not discriminate on the basis of faith and serve all those in need. So the government's exception does not apply to most Catholic organizations.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said: "We are concerned as pastors with the freedom of the Church as a whole to carry out the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ." [Source: Richard Sokerka, ed., *The Beacon*, July 11, 2013.]

Church Receives Phone Calls from Around the World

The Washington Times reported on a church where more than 900 families called to offer to adopt a baby with Down Syndrome who was saved from abortion. Children with the condition are victims of abortion 90% of the time. And when it comes to the issue of adoption, abortion activists frequently use it against pro-lifers, falsely claiming they are unwilling to adopt children, especially those with special needs.

When the Fr. Thomas Vander Woude (Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Gainesville, VA) learned about a young couple planning to abort their unborn baby that had been diagnosed with Down Syndrome, the priest told them: Deliver the child and he would help find an appropriate adoptive family. The woman was just shy of six months pregnant and lives in a state that prohibits abortions past 24 weeks - which meant he had a short time to find a family willing to make a lifelong commitment. So the priest approached a volunteer who helped manage the church's social media pages, and she posted an urgent plea on Facebook early Monday morning.

"There is a couple in another state who have contacted an adoption agency looking for a family to adopt their Down Syndrome unborn baby. If a couple has not been found by today they plan to abort the baby. If you are interested in adopting this baby please contact Fr. VW IMMEDIATELY," the post read. "We are asking all to pray for this baby and the wisdom that this couple realize the importance of human life and do not abort this beautiful gift from God."

"All day long, we were receiving phone calls from people who wanted to adopt the baby," church staff member Martha Drennan said. "Fr. Vander Woude has gotten over 900 emails in regard to the baby." The offers were narrowed to three families, which the unborn child's parents are reviewing with the help of an adoption agency. Ms. Drennan said the church received calls from all over the USA and around the world, including England, Puerto Rico and the Netherlands. [Source: LifeNews.com, 7/10/13]

Real Healing After an Abortion

For persons who have struggled with the emotional or spiritual pain of an abortion, there is help. Call about Rachel's Vineyard's (973-437-9735) next weekend retreat.

Planned Parenthood abortion business to file lawsuit to stop women from seeing ultrasounds of their unborn babies

Sonya's Law just passed in Wisconsin provides that abortions would not be available after the 19th week of pregnancy. The law also requires that in order to legally perform an abortion, a doctor must have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of where the abortion will occur. Planned Parenthood says that provision will force its Appleton clinic to close, and will lead to long waiting lists in Milwaukee.

Currently, when a woman experiences hemorrhaging or other life-threatening complications after an abortion in Wisconsin, the clinic puts her in an ambulance and sends her to a hospital alone where she is left to her own devices to explain her medical issues to the emergency room staff. The abortionist who performed the abortion is nowhere to be seen. The new law will empower women to make truly informed decisions regarding how they will proceed with their pregnancies and will protect the lives of women who experience complications after their abortions.

The new law also requires that women seeking abortions in Wisconsin be given the opportunity to see their unborn children through ultrasound.

A lawsuit is being filed to overturn the new law. Note: nine other states have passed laws requiring abortion doctors to have hospital admitting privileges. Missouri's admitting privilege law was challenged and upheld by the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.

[Source: LifeNews.com, 7/8/13]

Americans United for Life pushing for a court challenge to Roe v. Wade

AUL has been helping various states which, in the first six months of 2013, have passed a total of 45 new restrictions on abortion. North Dakota passed a law that bans abortions once a heartbeat is detected. Texas now restricts abortions after 20 weeks. AUL's book, *Defending Life*, states: "Legislative and educational efforts that only emphasize the impact of abortion on the unborn are insufficient." Women's health is now being emphasized.

Under the "women's protection package", AUL circulated six proposed abortion-restriction bills on Capitol Hill, including one barring most abortions after 20 weeks and another imposing federal restrictions on abortuaries. [Source: *Business Week*, July 15, 2013.]