

Maintain the truth lovingly and
always love truthfully.
St. John Paul II

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Submit to Jesus

PRESIDENT’S LETTER

Dear Friends,

As we begin our 17th year, CPO continues to be fully committed to our mission and with God’s grace will remain deeply rooted in Christ and His Church. As Catholics we must strive to remain strong in the face of evil which surrounds our Church and our families.

During the Synod on the Family in Rome last October, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput had these powerful words to say: *None of us are welcomed on our own terms in the Church. We are welcomed on Jesus’ terms. That’s what it means to be a Christian. You submit yourself to Jesus and his teaching. You don’t re-create your own body of spirituality.*

Tragically, many Catholics have been deprived of solid catechesis for over 40 years. This fact brings to mind the verse from Luke 18:8, “...when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Last month Pope Francis baptized 33 precious babies at the Sistine Chapel. He urged families to set an example. He said, *Teach your children that you cannot be a Christian outside the Church; you cannot follow Jesus Christ without the Church, because the Church is [our] mother and makes us grow in love for Jesus Christ.*

Our new outstanding video series entitled *Beauty, Truth, Goodness: The Fundamentals of Catholicism* by Fr. Robert Altier is an exceptional tool for teaching the Faith. We are excited to be near completion of the 60-episode series. With God’s help we plan to reach families and parishes across the country that are seeking an authentic Catholic Religious Education program that will truly teach and nourish souls!

The *Catholic Parents OnLine website* (catholicparents.org) continues to be a critical tool providing authentic Catholic education resources to parents, grandparents, teachers and clergy. Recently a Catholic parent wrote to us saying: *Dear CPO, thank you so much. I am nowhere near Minnesota, but for years I have found your site and emails so helpful and a totally reliable source of orthodox Catholic information and materials. I have been blessed by other CDs featuring Fr. Altier and look forward to receiving these. Thank you so much*

again. May God richly bless you and your ministry and everyone involved in it.

You won’t want to miss the annual CPO Lenten Retreat! This year’s theme is: *Spiritual Warfare: Our Daily Struggle against Satan*, featuring Father Robert Altier. The Retreat will be held on Saturday, March 21, 2015 at St. Agnes Catholic Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. For more information and to register, please see the flyer on the back cover. Seating is limited, so register early!

*God bless you and yours,
Colleen Perfect*



Michelle Virnig and Colleen Perfect at the CPO exhibit booth at the 2014 Rediscover Catholicism event.

Rest in Peace, Richard

BY MARILYN GRUTSCH

In July of 2014, we lost a beloved Board Member and friend, Richard Layer. He lived in this world for 65 years, and to most observers, his life was unremarkable. He appeared to be just an ordinary man, who lived out his years, doing what the average person does. He grew up in the state of New York, graduated from college with a Marketing degree, worked on the East Coast for a few years, married, had 3 daughters, moved to Minnesota to work for 3M, became quite successful in the business world, bought a home, eventually started his own business, and it seemed that life was good.

Richard was born and raised in a strong Catholic family. Many times, he would refer to the sound, rigorous Catholic education of his childhood, which, along with his family's faith influence, was the seed planted early on that left him with a hunger to continue to grow in his relationship with our Lord. However, like many others in this confusing world, for a period of his life, he fell away from the Catholic faith. Even during the years he was inactive in his Catholic practices, Richard was always a witness as he lovingly taught youth Religion classes at his spouse's Lutheran church and, at one point, wrote a document entitled, *Roman Catholic Apologetic Compendium of Common Non-Catholic Inquiries*.

In the later years of his life, he reverted back to Catholicism. God's grace was apparent in this man as he was moved by the Holy Spirit with a determined longing to return to the faith of his childhood. There was much rejoicing, both here in this world and in Heaven. His mother said it best in a letter she wrote to him in April of 2003, expressing her joy about his return to the Church:

*Dearest Rhonda and Richard,
How can I express the tremendous joy and happiness that has come over me since I read your most wonderful letter and what has occurred to you recently, Richard...that of returning to your one Holy, True Catholic Faith, with Rhonda's agreement, also. I can just picture all the joy and love that occurred both from all the angels and all our family members up in Heaven. And Richard, I can see your Dad and brother, Joe, doing a Heavenly jig...for your tremendous accomplishment, too. You'll never regret it, either! How the Dear Lord answers our prayers —mine, in particular—about your beautiful heavenly occasion. Your letter is in my heart and in my possession forever. My heart swells and jumps with heavenly joy, whenever I dwell on this Heavenly occasion for you and your family.*

Richard, what's in my heart and soul, I can't put on paper because it would have little meaning to what I feel in your behalf and your family. May God and His Blessed Mother bless you all—always in Jesus and Mary, Mom

His devotion grew in everything involving his Catholic faith and he would defend it to his death. He had a rather "sons of thunder" type of passion and zeal in his affection for Christ and His Church. He wanted to be a part of the Church militant, who stood for the Truth, loyally following the teachings of the Catholic faith, with a holy desire to accompany fellow brothers and sisters in Christ on their journey in this world. This led him to numerous charitable service works such as pro-life activities, serving at Masses, Knights of Columbus, and joining the Board of Catholic Parents OnLine.

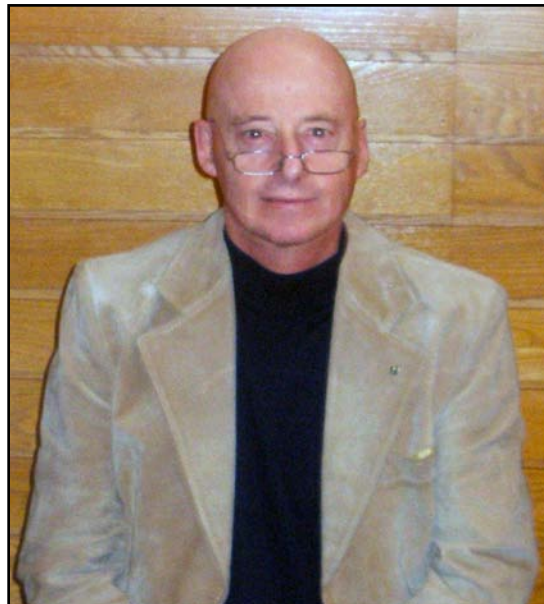
At this point, one would think that now his life is complete and he could sit back and enjoy his accomplishments: strong faith life, wonderful family, great career, nice home...but God

doesn't look at our world from a human perspective. One wonders if God saw in this man the same thing he saw in Abraham and Job from the Old Testament. *Do you love me, Richard? Would you suffer with Me, Richard?*

And so, suffer he did. He lost his business, his marriage, his family, his home, and, in the end, even though he had a brilliant mind, he began to suffer with dementia. Many of us would ask, *Really, God? Just when I give everything to You completely, You would allow me to be all alone and without dignity in my life? You wouldn't reward me for choosing to follow You?* But this was not his

attitude at all. He picked himself up and began the journey of trudging through his broken world, putting his trust in God.

He humbly took a job as a cab driver so he would still have income to help support his estranged family and provide for his own meager living expenses. Even in his agony, he continued to proclaim the good news of the Lord. One wonders how many people who rode in his cab were affected by his jovial and no-nonsense witness, as he evangelized with his apparent love of the faith and of our Lord and the Blessed Mother. He did not become bitter and angry at God for these traumatic and painful events in his life. Instead, he seemed to have said, *Let it be done unto me according to Your Word*. He began to live a life of prayer. He picked up his rosary and began to offer an individual rosary every day for each of his



Richard Layer, CPO Board Member and Friend

family members and for a number of other intentions, up to 23 rosaries every day. And then he went to daily morning Mass at St. Agnes and evening Mass at the Cathedral, receiving our Lord in Holy Communion twice a day, and made frequent Confessions for the last years of his life.

One of his favorite prayer books was *My Daily Bread*. He would occasionally interrupt our Board meetings with an overwhelming and uncontrollable enthusiastic desire to read aloud something that he had discovered in this book. It is obvious, when one picks up his old copy of this book, that it was well-read and the words deeply pondered by the fact that he had 28 post-it tabs marking special passages and numerous highlighted sections throughout. In the front of the book, there are handwritten notes (on Post-It Notes, which were sort of his “baby” as he was product manager for Post-It notes for 3M for many years). This is what he had written:

Eucharistic Fortress

2 x's/day Communion

Protection against sin

In some cases protection against temptation

Spontaneous Prayers

1. Lord please help me!

2. Lord please make some sense out of my suffering, for others, my family and me.

3. Lord I offer this suffering up to you!

4. I give up Lord! You take care of it!

One of the highlighted sections is a message from Christ: *My Child, let Me do with you as I please. I know what is best for you. I alone can lead you to eternal life. For this reason, I will place you at times in a spiritual darkness of doubts and confusion. Then again I will let you enjoy the light of My truth and joy. Be just as ready to experience suffering as to have joy, just as glad to be poor and needy as to be well off.* And then the response, *Make me equally willing to receive from Your hand the sweet and the bitter, the joy and the sorrow.* Richard, indeed, learned how to live as St. Paul said in Philippians 4:12: *I know how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things, I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need.* He experienced pain and deep sorrow at the end of his life, but Richard continued to exude joy in the Lord. This is what the world's eyes saw...not the hidden grief that was offered as a suitable sacrifice for his loved ones and in reparation for his own sins. Richard's love for his fellow brethren was deep and profound and he let not a minute of his time be wasted in idleness. At his funeral, two of us who attended experienced a similar inner vision of Richard during the Mass. It was one of him running around in joyful glee, with an almost hysterical laughing voice, looking through his thick glasses, proclaiming, *You guys, this is great!*

Richard's main priorities in life were God and family. Everything he did on the natural plane was with his wife and daughters in mind, including his pension, social security, and the home he purchased. This was apparent upon discovering some of his treasured

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Honoring dear friend and fellow board member, each one is holding a beautiful holy image of Richard's to remember him by.

papers found in his home after his death. In a note to his children, he wrote:

I heartily apologize to you for getting divorced. It's the worst thing that has ever happened to me and I am totally ashamed that it happened. I have rededicated myself to God because I cannot love you girls and your Mom without loving God first. This is the way God designed human existence, in time and space and you must love Him first before you can properly love anyone else. I will keep wearing my wedding band, even though legally divorced, because Mom and I remain spiritually married. As the Bible says, 'Let no man put asunder what God has joined together.' In fact, this is why the marriage vows indicate 'not until death do us part,' because our souls have been joined together as a result of receiving the Grace from the Christian Marriage Sacrament.

He wanted his family back together and offered all of his suffering for his family. We, on the Board of Catholic Parents OnLine, are honored and blessed to have known Richard. He was always so energized, trying to think of new ways to market our media, not for profits, but to use every avenue to pass on the faith. Another highlighted excerpt from *My Daily Bread* reads,

My child, in a little while this earthly life of yours will be over. Live in such a way that death will never find you unprepared. Live each day as you would want to live the last day of your life.

It seems as though Richard heeded those words. He died with a broken heart, but a blessed soul. We can be hopeful that God greeted him with the salutation, *Well done my good and faithful servant*. We miss him dearly. May he rest in peace. †

Doctrine or Discipline?

BY FR. ROBERT ALTIER, CPO SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Following the deliberations of the Extraordinary Synod in Rome this past October, the media (Catholic, mainstream and social) were all excited by the question of whether or not the Church was going to change her teachings regarding marriage. We were assured, of course, that there would be no change in doctrine, but perhaps there would be some changes in the practice or application of the doctrine. Such a change, we were told, might come in the manner in which the Church processes cases in which people are seeking an annulment of their previous marriage. However, what caught the attention of the media did not seem to have anything to do with annulment procedures, but about questions revolving around the divorced persons who are remarried outside of the Church and the possibility of these individuals receiving Holy Communion. There were also questions about whether the definition of marriage could change so that it was no longer understood as being a union of one man and one woman.

First, we need to make a couple of distinctions. The Church set up the system for investigating marriages in order to determine whether or not there was valid reason to question the sacramentality of the marriage. Because the Church set up this system, the Church can change the system. This is a discipline of the Church, not a doctrine, so the Church can make adjustments to such a process if it is determined to be necessary. Regarding marriage itself, however, no changes can be made in the definition of marriage. God is the One Who has established marriage as a union of a male and a female for the purposes of the procreation and education of children and for the unity of the couple. This is Divine Law and cannot be changed by anyone: not a bishop, not a Council, not a Pope, no one. The same is true when it comes to the reception of Holy Communion for those who are in the state of mortal sin. If someone is in an invalid marriage, meaning that it is not sacramental,

such persons are not allowed to receive Communion unless there are abstaining from any sexual contact. This restriction regarding Holy Communion is true for anyone who is in the state of mortal sin. This is a doctrinal issue which also cannot be changed by anyone. This brings us to the deeper issue. It was the Lord Himself Who taught clearly that anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. This is written in the Gospels of both Matthew and Mark. Any

attempt to suggest that the Church should recognize such civil unions and allow people in these unions to receive Communion is not just undermining the truth about marriage, but is denying the direct teaching of Jesus.

In other words, it becomes a question of whether or not we believe Jesus is God. If He is God, then what He spoke is true and absolute. If we can deny what He said, then it is a proclamation that Jesus is not God. Beyond that, it is also a denial of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

If we can deny what is in the Bible, then it is no longer the inerrant Word of God. So we see that this is not just an attack on marriage

and family, but on the foundation of our Faith. If Jesus is not God and the Scriptures are not the Word of God, then there are no objective truths. The Faith becomes a matter of subjective ideas where anyone can believe whatever they want. So, in the midst of all the chaos surrounding this issue and in the build-up to the second part of the Synod this coming October, keep in mind that the basic teaching on marriage cannot change because it is Divine Law. If anyone tries to tell you differently, no matter who they are, reject their teaching and stay faithful to Jesus. Jesus is God, the Scriptures are the Word of God, marriage is the union of a husband and wife until the death of one of the spouses, and persons in the state of mortal sin commit sacrilege if they receive Holy Communion. Those are doctrines and no one can change them. †



Father Robert Altier speaking on Saint Joseph at the 2014 CPO Luncheon.

The Courage to be a Counter-Cultural Catholic: Living Our Faith in a Secular Age

BY FREDERICK BLONIGEN

The late Fr. John Hardon, S.J., truly a saintly priest and arguably one of the greatest Catholic theologians of the 20th century, frequently reminded his audiences that the most desperate need of our time is for Catholics to rediscover and emulate the heroic faith of the early Church and the early martyrs. It is only heroic Catholics, according to Fr. Hardon, who will maintain their faith in today's morally and spiritually toxic culture. The days of mediocre or "Sunday" Catholics are over. Catholics today must either choose to live their faith with real conviction and commitment or risk being converted to the many Godless ideologies of our time.

In today's post-Christian society, choosing to follow Christ and His Beloved Bride, the Catholic Church, requires genuine courage, a virtue that is in short supply today among many, if not most, Catholics—whether they be clergy, religious, or laity.

It takes real courage today for a bishop to not only preach and teach the divine truths of the Catholic Church, but also to make sure that these truths are being implemented in his diocese, and to charitably but firmly discipline theological dissenters, end all liturgical abuses, and vigilantly safeguard the deposit of faith in all the institutions under his jurisdiction.

It takes real courage today for a parish priest to preach the faith boldly and to use his Sunday homily to challenge his flock, addressing the burning issues of the day in the light of Gospel truths. This is especially needed due to widespread moral confusion among Catholics who need to hear explained from the pulpit, but rarely do, the Church's clear and authoritative teachings on the sanctity of human sexuality and marriage, and the grave sinfulness of fornication, contraception, abortion, and homosexual activity.

It takes real courage for a religious brother or sister to be faithful to their vows and consecrated life when their fellow religious are being seduced by the devil to follow the ways of the world rather than Christ. It is not easy, for example, for a religious brother or sister to wear their habit when the majority of their community does not, and, indeed, may even criticize and ridicule them for doing so.

It takes real courage in today's world for a young Catholic man or woman to resist the pressure to conform to the hedonism and materialism characteristic of our youth culture and continue to practice their Catholic faith when the majority of their peers are immersed in worshipping the "self" rather than the living and true God. These fine young men and women who do choose to reject the modern way, need our

prayers and support. Being a teenager or young adult who is "different" from the culture is not a smooth path. It takes great inner strength and character to hold fast to Catholic principles under the tremendous peer pressure of those sensitive years.

For all of us—whether teenager, ordained clergy, or grandparent in the pew—acquiring courage requires God's help and the humility to realize that without His grace we cannot accomplish anything good or supernaturally meritorious. Through our wonderful Catholic Church, we are privileged to have this grace readily and always available through so many different avenues, from the sacraments, to fasting, to acts of charity, to prayer, to offering up our sufferings. Participation at Holy Mass, the "Sacrament" of sacraments, should be our number one priority. As Pope St. John Paul

II used to say, *One Mass is more powerful than all the evil in the world.* The Church today needs deeply Eucharistic-centered Catholics. Frequent attendance at Mass, weekly holy hours, regular visits to the Blessed Sacrament—these are some of the essential ways to grow in holiness and courage.

In addition, to be effective evangelists in a world that has forgotten God, Catholics must devote a generous amount of time daily to personal prayer. Prayer in general, including private prayer, is more necessary today than ever. As Fr. Jacques Philipppi, one of the greatest spiritual writers of our time, says in his most recent book, *Thirsting for Prayer*:

What the world most needs today is prayer. It is prayer that will give birth to all renewals, healings, deep and fruitful transformations we all want for society today. This world of ours is very sick, and only contact with heaven will be able to cure it. The most useful thing for the Church to do today is to give people a thirst for prayer and teach them to pray.

When our prayer life is deep and strong, remarkable things begin to happen. Our life of virtue will grow. We will begin to develop good habits and gradually overcome vices that keep us from making spiritual progress. And, yes, through prayer God will give us the strength to witness to Him, by word and deed, with ever increasing fervor and courage.

Through our daily encounter with Christ in prayer we will discover the deep joy that comes from following Jesus and living the Gospel. In one of the most memorable sentences from his recent exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), Pope Francis, in talking about the need for a personal encounter with Christ, says so beautifully,



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We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being.

Living the Gospel with joy is critical in our time. No one is attracted to the Catholic faith when those who profess it are constantly sad, disgruntled and forever complaining about the state of the Church. People are attracted to the Catholic faith by those who are joyful witnesses to Christ and His Church. It is Pope Francis's special calling in our time to not only preach a renewed and joyful living out of the Gospel but to also model this joyful spirit in his own pontificate. From the day of his election on March 13, 2013, to the present, Pope Francis has led by example. His humility, simplicity, and joyful demeanor has won the hearts of millions, Catholics and non-Catholics alike.



Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, became man in order to suffer and die on the Cross for the redemption of mankind. But Christ also became man to teach us by His life how to live our own. Christ is the one who teaches us what it means to live a truly human life. Because they imitated Christ most perfectly the saints are our heroes and heroines, our heavenly friends, who pray for us and show us how to be authentic disciples of Jesus. They are models of holiness for us. And, as Pope Benedict XVI used to say, *The saints are the greatest treasure of the Church.*

The best way for all Catholics today to serve God and His Church is to make personal holiness their primary goal in life. God has called and destined all of us to be His saints. In fact, one might say that the principal work of the Church is to produce saints for the kingdom of God. The single greatest contribution each of us can make to the Church and the world is to strive daily, in cooperation with God's abundant grace, to be holy, indeed, to be saints.

Forty three years ago in 1971, just a few years after the conclusion of Vatican II, a brilliant young German theologian named Fr. Joseph Ratzinger wrote a prophetic book called *Faith and the Future*. Near the end of this profound work the author says,

The future of the Church, once again, as always, will be re-shaped by the saints, by men, that is, whose minds probe deeper than the slogans of the day, who see more than others see because their lives embrace a wider reality.

May we all see more than others see. May we all embrace a wider reality. We must beg God for the grace to see life with the eyes of the saints and in all humility learn to see Christ in others and be Christ to others. It is only the humility, love, and, yes, courage of faithful disciples of Christ that will bring light and clarity to the darkness and confusion of our times and allow others to discover that "wider reality" Who is God Himself. †



Happy family who had winning bids on several of the Silent Auction items at the 2014 CPO Luncheon & Fundraiser.

ARTHUR A. HERKENHOFF AWARD

Art Herkenhoff was a true friend and one of our founding Board members. He was a hero in all the areas that truly matter: in Faith, Family and Pro-life involvement. Art had enormous courage in the face of opposition to proclaim the Truth of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, and he always exhibited true charity, humility and joy. Each year CPO receives many outstanding nominations for the Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award. The Board of Directors chose to present the 2014 Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award to a remarkable gentleman, Mr. Tom Bengtson.

Tom Bengtson co-founded the Chesterton Academy, a private, independent high school offering a rigorous classical curriculum taught through the lens of the Catholic faith. It was decided the motto for the school would be *Cultura Vitae* with the hope it would be a reflection to the students and families (and the greater community) of the culture of life. He has helped it to become one of the top Catholic high schools in the country. The curriculum is centered around the Catholic faith; there is daily Mass and an oath of fidelity to the Magisterium. It was Tom's idea to make it a school with a pro-life charism, which meant getting the students involved in pro-life activities (Tom takes a group of students to the March for Life in Washington DC every other year). Even more importantly, he decided to keep the tuition family-friendly, so it is less than half of 70% of the private schools in the Twin Cities. And now people from around the country are starting schools based on the model Tom has helped build.

Tom and his wife Susan have adopted 4 children at different times, from South America, after years of infertility. They have been active with the Couple to Couple League for two decades, and they are also involved at their parish, Holy Family Catholic Church in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. Tom is committed to building a *Culture of Life*.

Tom Bengtson received the 10th Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award at the CPO annual Luncheon & Fundraiser held at the Southview Country Club in St. Paul on October 25, 2014. For more information about Chesterton Academy, please visit their website: www.chestertonacademy.org.



From left to right:

Brian Thauwald shares fond memories of time spent with his beloved Grandpa Art.

Dale Ahlquist explains why he nominated Tom Bengtson.

Below:

A. Herkenhoff Family Members



Tom Bengtson receives 2014 Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award



The CPO Board of Directors seeks the names of individuals who would be worthy of nomination for the 2015 - 11th Annual Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award. The persons nominated should exhibit the same qualities, principles and values which characterized the life and person of Art Herkenhoff: Faith, family, pro-life involvement, courage, charity and joy. This year's award will be presented at the CPO Annual Fundraising Luncheon to be held on Saturday, October 24, 2015.

Please submit your nomination by October 1, 2015. You may complete the Online Nomination Form at: www.catholicparents.org/herkenhoff/index.html or contact us at 651-705-5409 and we'll be happy to mail you the form.

Lenten Retreat



Saturday, March 21, 2015

8:00 AM - 2:30 PM

Spiritual Warfare: Our Daily Struggle Against Satan



Presented by Father Robert J. Altier

Church of Saint Agnes
535 W. Thomas Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55103

The day begins with Mass at 8:00 AM at the Church of Saint Agnes, followed by a continental breakfast, and includes three dynamic presentations by Fr. Robert Altier, a delicious lunch, the Rosary and more.

Please join us!

Register early, seating is limited.

REGISTRATION FORM

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Cost is \$25 per person or \$40 per married couple.
Please send check made payable & mailed to:

Catholic Parents OnLine

P.O. Box 130815

St. Paul, MN 55113

Number Attending _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Includes continental breakfast and lunch

Special dietary needs (please state) _____

Tickets will not be mailed out in advance; name tags will be waiting for you at the registration table after Mass.