

The Death Penalty, the Crusades, and Fornication

The Death Penalty

With all the due respect I can muster, I would like to say that I think that the Holy Father's present policy of equating the abolition of the death penalty with the abolition of abortion, is a big mistake. For one thing if it was an attempt to ingratiate himself with the Liberal Establishment, especially the media, it has not succeeded. The media are more Pro-Death than ever. But more importantly, it is against all Catholic Tradition.

The story of St. Therese's "first soul" is well known, but not so well known is the story of an Italian nobleman, who was beheaded for a crime he did not commit. St. Catherine of Sienna reconciled this rightly embittered young man, knelt at the block and received his head into her hands. Also practically unknown is the story of St. Joseph Caffasso, the "priest of the gallows," who reconciled about fifty condemned men before their execution. These men all went right to heaven, who most probably, if there were no death penalty would not have saved their souls. He never missed reconciling one of his condemned men

The Crusades

When our present Holy Father came out and apologized to the Mohammedans for the Crusades, I was at first terribly upset. It seemed like such a betrayal of one of the most heroic chapters in the history of Christendom. But now I also think the Crusades were a mistake, but for completely different reasons than those of the Holy Father. St. Odillo, the fourth Abbot of Cluny, who is remembered primarily for his institution of Masses for the Poor Souls in Purgatory, was opposed to the Crusades when they were at the height of their popularity, and for the right reasons. He thought that rather than a crusade of soldiers, there should be a Crusade of prayer and penance to win back the Holy Land from the Moslems. This is now my position, though Godfrey de Boullion, Richard the Lionhearted, the leper king, Baldwin the Firth, and others remain my all-time favorite soldiers

St. Francis of Assisi had the right attitude towards the Mohammedans. He went all alone to the Holy Land and tried to convert them. He proposed to their "King," or whatever, a challenge to his "Mullahs," or whatever they were called, an ordeal, a trial by fire. He would go first through a blazing fire, and the Mullahs would follow. Whoever survived, his was the true religion. The King was greatly amused when his Mullahs began to slink away. But when St. Francis proposed that he go through the fire alone, it was the King's turn to slink away. Had St. Francis been successful, it would have meant the conversion of the Mohammedan world. But the Mohammedans were not ready for conversion, nor were the Christians worthy of it.

There are many lessons to be learned from this present war in Iraq. I completely agree with the Holy Father in opposing the war. It is just being fought for the international oil magnates and the Zionists. This is why either Bush or Kerry, if elected, will do nothing to end the war. Cecil Chesterton, Gilbert's wonderful brother, wrote an excellent little pamphlet entitled "The Party Question," which completely explains the Bush-Kerry syndrome. There is no distinction of parties in the United States, they both have the same Masonic-Jewish goals. But of course Present Bush is the better of the two because he is Pro-Life, Kerry, supposedly a Catholic, is one of the biggest Pro-Death pols in the country.

But the American people are now completely opposed to the war. When it first began, there were American flags draped over every bridge across Route 495, and every other car was flying an American flag. This is gone now, indicating the American people have lost their confidence in the war. This of course will mean nothing to Bush or Kerry. I used to say a Hail Mary for our boys, every time I passed an American Flag on 495 on my way to Maine, which meant I was saying Hail Marys continuously.

The atrocities committed by the Moslems are just a reflection of their "Religion of the Sword." After the battle of the Horns of Hattim, which ended the Christian Kingdom of the Holy Land, Saladin personally executed all the Knights Templar, because he hated their vow of celibacy. But the Americans are much worse, because they are, at least nominally Christian. Just because your enemy fights like a beast, doesn't mean it is then OK to fight back like a beast. Being an old soldier, I, of course, continuously pray for our troops, especially the Marines. I don't know what percentage of the Marines, are Catholic, but I suspect it is very high. As far as I know, none of the American atrocities have been attributed to the Marines.

We have a young friend, Jerrit Heaster, who was expelled from a local snob school. He wanted to join the Marines, and while he was waiting to turn eighteen or seventeen, he used to work at the Abbey, on what we call "the list," the worst jobs in the community. He finally joined and visited us just before being shipped out. He looked like a million bucks - the long hair and his ridiculous sideburns were gone. His attitude, which used to be that of the typical wise guy teenager, was now changed to the All-American boy. Miraculously, in a recent issue of *Time* magazine (May 10, 2004), there was Jerrit, a full page picture of him, in action at Fallujah.

Fornication

Our Lord says in the Gospel of St. Matthew:

“And came up to Him Pharisees, tempting Him and saying, ‘Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for any reason?’ Who answering said to them: ‘Have you not read that He who made man from the beginning “male and female made them?” and He said: ‘On account of this’ “a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they shall be two in one flesh.” ‘Therefore, now they are two in one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.’ They say to Him: ‘Why then did Moses command “to give her a bill of divorce, and then put her away?’” He said to them: ‘Because Moses on account of the hardness of your hearts permitted you to put her away; from the beginning it was not so. I tell you, that whoever puts away his wife, **except for fornication**, and marries another, commits adultery, and whoever marries the one who has been put away, commits adultery.’” (Matt. 19: 1-9)

The “except for fornication” phrase, has been the occasion of a false Protestant interpretation of Our Lord’s teaching on divorce. They claim that divorce is acceptable by God in cases where one of the partners is discovered in adultery. This false interpretation was the basis of a New York State divorce law of not so long ago. The estranged husband and wife would often set each other up for the sake of the divorce. The wife would burst into a hotel room with a photographer, and catch her husband in the very act of adultery. Of course this law is long gone. The wife can now take away the father’s children, his home, most of his salary, assisted by professional woman’s organizations. If he even wiggles his eyebrow in protest, she can put him in jail.

But St. Paul gives us the correct interpretation of this passage:

“Everyone has heard that there is fornication among you, and such fornication unknown even to the Gentiles, that a man should marry the wife of his father (his step-mother)” (I Cor. 5:1)

The correct interpretation of Our Lord’s words: “except for fornication,” is except for marriage within the forbidden degrees of kindred. This is also brought out clearly in St. James’ address to the Council of Jerusalem concerning the Judaizing heresy, that is that it was necessary for the Gentile converts to be circumcised in order to be saved: .

“Therefore I judge not to disquiet those who have been converted to God from the Gentiles, but to write to them that they abstain themselves from contamination from idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood.” (Act 15: 19-20)

The Douay-Rheims translates Jerome's "fornication, as "impurity" which is misleading. I usually prefer the Douay-Rheims reading, but in this case I must admit that newer translations are clearer. The Revised Standard, for example, translates this word as "illicit sexual unions." So there are **no** exceptions (how many guys are going to marry their step-mothers?) to Our Lord's command, that divorce is absolutely forbidden.
