

# THE TWIN SPIRES

**The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Savannah, GA  
February 2011**



# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

By Peter Paolucci



Beginning before Christmas and continuing throughout January, the Catholics Come Home television commercials were aired on all major networks in Georgia inviting inactive Catholics to return to the faith. Emphasizing the history, beauty, spirituality and accomplishments of the Catholic Church, they also described how Jesus wanted everyone back into His big, warm and loving Catholic family, the Church He founded 2,000 years ago. "We are family. We have missed you. We look forward to seeing you soon in our parishes. Welcome home!" the commercials announced.

By now, everyone has seen one of these commercials or noticed the signs outside the Cathedral and in the lobby warmly welcoming people to our church. Now that the commercials have stopped running, where will we go from here? Will the signs be taken down and will we just go back as before? Or will the steps we have taken as a parish with our Catholics Come Home Campaign promote ongoing growth in the spirit of our parish, making it even more a welcoming place of worship, the kind of faith community Monsignor O'Neill has inspired since his arrival 14 years ago?

The Holy Spirit has blown in new ways here at the Cathedral during the campaign. Things have begun to change and these changes will be with us long after the TV commercials have stopped running. A welcome table has been set up in the narthex, staffed by volunteers at all Masses, to greet people, hand out CCH literature and answer any questions attendees may have. And despite temperatures somewhat below the norm, the center doors have been opened wide before Mass, thereby furthering our desire that people come into the Cathedral and join us for liturgy." Upon

entering the Cathedral proper, ushers stationed at all the doors, have been increasingly engaged in warmly greeting attendees. Our parish has exceptional challenges. With so many visitors attending our church, it is sometimes hard to know all of our regular parishioners by name. There are those people we know by face and name, but there others who we see every Sunday and recognize by face, however do not know their names. So each of us should take the opportunity to introduce ourselves to people we recognize but don't know by name and ask others if they are visiting with us today?

We do not measure success or failure in terms of how many return, but rather whether the seekers leave with a feeling that they will always have a home with us, regardless of where they are on their journey. The Church needs to do more than just minister to its own members; it is about mission, reaching out to the world and bringing Christ into our homes and workplaces. We are all called by our baptism to live the faith authentically every day, not just on Sunday. We need to reach out to the inactive Catholics in our midst, sharing our gifts and talents with those who have drifted away and are now searching for renewed faith and involvement. We should assure them

that God has missed them and there is a place for them here at the Cathedral, where they will feel embraced, supported and fulfilled. Thank you for your willingness to reach out to those who feel alienated from our church for whatever reason, yet know in the back of their minds that they remain Catholics in their hearts and souls.

In a recent homily, Monsignor O'Neill said, "The Church is not a museum for saints but a hospital for sinners." We are all sinners,

but returning Catholics may expect the worst when they come back after a long time away from the Church. Remember when the prodigal son anxiously approached his father after spending all his inheritance. But the father ran out to meet him and warmly welcomed him back to the family. Once a returning Catholic gets up the courage to come back, if they find our parish a warm and welcoming setting, the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

Now that they have taken the first step, we need to nourish their spiritual hunger by creating parish programs that will keep inactive Catholics engaged once they've returned, rekindling their relationship with Christ. By enthusiastically participating, you will be contributing significantly to

building up our family of faith. We are so glad to have you help us spread the good news about Christ's Church to our families, friends and neighbors. We couldn't do it without you!

This is clearly a work in progress, which like the fallow field, will need to be cultivated to yield a crop. Being an eternal optimist, I hold the vision that our cathedral parish will be viewed by all as a warm and welcoming faith community encouraging all Catholics and more to celebrate the Liturgy with us. And that our parishioners will be welcoming, genuinely and evangelically opening to everyone, encouraging them, and treating them with respect. Won't you share this vision and do your part to make it happen?



**Now that Christmas is beginning to fade into our memory,**

it's appropriate to take one last look back, through the years, at the glory of the coming of the Lord. The next two pages witness that Brother Robert Sokolowski continues to present that familiar tableau to us every year, with a freshness that makes it seem as if we are seeing it for the first time. Thanks Br. Robert for making the Lord's birth come alive for us again.



Christmas  
Over the  
Years





# A Nation that kills its own children is a nation without hope



Michael Clancy

I lived in Washington, DC for nine years, and during that time I witnessed a lot of protests. Most of these were ad hoc affairs organized by anti-war organizations and were known for featuring miscellaneous mischief, violence, and crude behavior on the part of those gathered to exercise their First Amendment right of redress. Not surprisingly, these protests made a lot of news, though the substance of the gatherings was lacking and provided very little in the way of constructive discourse.

Not so for the annual March for Life, which has been held faithfully each year since the first anniversary of the disastrous 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* which fabricated an unrestricted right to abortion. The March itself is a peaceful convergence of hundreds of thousands of Americans near the National Mall. It is at heart a political protest; the route of the March always terminates in front of Supreme Court (which is always empty that day and barricaded by police). But the March goes beyond protest. The shambling multitude carries a message of real, abiding peace up Capitol Hill, and speaks the truth of a generation lost to the violence of infanticide to the power of selfish materialism.

What's more, this message of peace is brought in peace. These protesters, shivering in the bitter January cold (this year, it was 23 degrees the day of the March) pray and sing on their way. While the authorities long ago stopped releasing official crowd estimates, the annual gathering of nearly a quarter million people in Washington is widely recognized by the police as the most peaceful gathering of its size in DC, and

possibly anywhere in the country.

And, as you might also expect, the March for Life gets almost no news coverage, even from the local media. I have often thought the reason for this was a mixture of the media's disdain for the pro-life message

and the lack of salacious detail emanating from the staid, predictably peaceful March.

I have joined with the marchers in their sacred witness eight times, and I intend to join them as frequently as I can in the future. Our own Cathedral parish was well represented this year, and they will join me, I am sure, in recommending the March as an event of astonishing power, grace, and love, filled at once with sadness and reparation for the crime of legalized abortion, as well as the joy that attends any gathering of men and women in the name of life and humanity.

A friend of mine, a Catholic, asked me after last year's March if the cause of overturning *Roe* seemed futile after nearly 40 years of protest. I responded by telling him two things. First, as a Catholic, I believe that prayer rather than protest is the only thing that will effect the moral miracle required to overturn *Roe*. Second, as a lawyer and as an American, that I can never accept the jurisprudential phantasmagoria that has given us over 40,000,000 dead babies and an untold number of broken lives in the name of "freedom", "privacy", and "choice", and that I was prepared to protest abortion for the crime it is until Judgement Day if need be.

And I know at least 250,000 Americans who feel exactly the same way.

—Will Cubbedge, JD, KHS

# My favorite stained glass window

By Peter Paolucci

Light filtering through the stained glass windows is one of the defining elements of the Gothic style, contributing a unique beauty and splendor to the Cathedral. As you progress up the center aisle, your attention is immediately drawn to the three windows in the apse, above the old high altar, now called the reredos. Each of these represents a scene from the life of St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of the Cathedral.

My favorite window is the center one, which presents the Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan by St. John the Baptist as recounted by Luke 3:21-22. John's followers understood that the baptism he offered symbolized a cleansing of all sins. When Jesus approached John and asked to be baptized, John protested. Recognizing that Jesus was both sinless and the Messiah, John correctly believed baptism was unnecessary for Jesus.

However, Jesus wanted to set an example for his followers. He insisted on being baptized by John as a means of demonstrating the human need to be cleansed of sin.

After Jesus' baptism, the heavens opened and a spirit like a dove descended to Jesus. A heavenly voice proclaimed the identity of Jesus as the Son of God. Inscribed in Latin on the scroll behind Saint John's shoulders are the words "Behold the Lamb of God."

The inscription on the scroll in the cinquefoil at the top of the window translates to "Thou art My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." It is particularly notable that this is the first time in human history, where all three persons of the Blessed Trinity were manifested in some physical manner recorded in scriptures.

At first glance, the Baptism of the Lord might seem an odd feast. Since the Catholic Church teaches that the Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for the remission of sins, particularly Original Sin, why was Christ baptized? After all, He was born without Original Sin, and He lived His entire life without sinning. Therefore, He had no need of the sacrament, as we do.

In submitting Himself humbly to the baptism of St. John the Baptist, however, Christ provided the example for the rest of us. If



even He should be baptized, though He had no need of it, how much more should the rest of us be thankful for this sacrament, which frees us from the darkness of sin and incorporates us into the Church, the life of Christ on earth!

His Baptism, therefore, was necessary—not for Him, but for us. Many of the Fathers of the Church, as well as the medieval Scholastics, saw Christ's Baptism as the institution of the sacrament. His Flesh blessed the water, and the descent of the Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove) and the voice of God the Father announcing that this was His Son, in Whom He was well pleased, marked the beginning of Christ's public ministry.

What happens when we are baptized? Baptism is the Church's way of celebrating and enacting the embrace of God who first loved us from the moment of our conception. Baptism also celebrates a family's and a community's experience of that love in the baptized. There are other life experiences...birth, death, washing,

growing and so forth, that are celebrated in Baptism. The water represents life, death, cleansing and growth, and it recalls the floodwaters of Noah's day and the saving waters of the Red Sea parted by Moses.

The candle symbolizes our status as an "Easter people" and signifies the way that the Church "passes the torch" of Christian commitment to those being baptized. The white garment represents the Church's belief that Baptism sets us free from Original Sin. Baptism happens not only to the individual, but also to Christ's body, the Church. That is why the rite insists that we celebrate Baptism in the Christian assembly, with the community present and actively participating. It is the community, after all, who is welcoming the new members journeying with them, providing models for them, supporting and nourishing them.

Baptism begins with God's love and care revealed to us through Christ. It continues with us, the Church, living and enacting God's love and care through Christ to the world.

A new English translation of the Roman Missal, the ritual text containing prayers and instructions for the celebration of the Mass, has been approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. In this new translation of the Mass, which will be introduced in the United States **on the First Sunday of Advent, November 27, 2011**, the style of worship will be more formal, but it will also be deeper theologically and more evocative emotionally and intellectually. The Vatican's intention was not so much to make the liturgy more formal as to make the English version conform more closely to the original Latin, from which all modern liturgy translations in the Roman Catholic Church emanate.

The original translation of the Roman Missal into English was carried out under 1969 Vatican rules that stressed simplicity, modernity and other factors that would make the language of the liturgy more comprehensible and participatory. However,



concern ultimately arose that the language has been too “laid back” and failed to convey the rich liturgical heritage of the Roman rite. Pope John Paul II promulgated the third edition of the Missale Romanum during the Jubilee Year in 2000 and newer rules, set out by the Vatican in 2002, emphasize greater fidelity to the original Latin. The new translation shows an effort to heighten the language a bit and capture the transcendence as well as the imminence of God.

In the days ahead, leading up to the first Sunday of Advent when we will begin using the new text, you will be hearing more about these changes to help prepare you receive the revised text with enthusiasm. The long-term goal of the new translation is to foster a deeper awareness and appreciation of the mysteries being celebrated in the Liturgy. It has the potential to enrich your spiritual life and lead you to a more active participation in the liturgical celebration.

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Msgr. William O. O'Neill, Publisher • Peter Paolucci, Managing Editor • Walt Kessel, Page Design/Layout

**Address Service Requested**

Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist  
222 E. Harris Street  
Savannah, GA 31401-4616  
912-233-4709  
<http://www.savannahcathedral.org>

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