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ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS

Finest Wheat
 A newsletter for the New Evangelization

MARCH 2009

The following e-mail was submitted by Aimee Milburn Cooper, a recent graduate of the Augustine Institute. The e-mail was a response by a young woman in Texas to Aimee's blog: www.historicalchristian.com. The woman's inspiring message is an excellent example of how the internet can be an invaluable tool in reaching out to others for the sake of the Gospel.

"When I began this journey of Catholicism/Protestantism, I was confused and depressed. How could I ever sort through these issues? Would I have to read every major Protestant and Catholic theological tome before I could make an informed decision? Would my husband understand why I thought this was necessary? Would I lose friends?

... I pondered these things as I sat in the bible college library where I work while a storm raged outside. The storm passed to the eastern sky. I saw a large orange orb reflected on the lacquer of a table to my left. I tried to look towards the western window and watch the sunset, but the walls were blocking my view. I rose and went out the front door of the library to see what appeared to be a glorious sunset. But again, a building impeded my view. But while turning to go back to my work, I saw a large rainbow arch in the sky, stretching over the entire city, underscored by the black backdrop of thunderclouds.

I was thunderstruck (no pun intended). Scripture began to pour into my mind:

"The gates of hell shall not prevail against it..."

"This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you..."

I danced in the orange puddles surrounding me and marveled when a butterfly landed near my feet. *No fear. God has promised. He will lead.*

That marked one of my first sacramental experiences, where heaven touched earth to teach me about God. I later took a course on Flannery O'Connor from my rather reformed English professor, and gained a deeper appreciation for sacramental theology. While researching that very issue for a paper on the famed writer, I discovered that the divorce between matter and the spiritual had kept my sensitive self bound in a dark cloak of depression. After all, what's my worth as a human being if God doesn't speak through the earth, dreams, words, visions, His creation, but is solely an intellectual experience (this was the ideology I inherited from a repressive Baptist upbringing)? While doing my homework, of all things, God burst in and obliterated a black ooze that had form-

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OUR MISSION

The Office of Evangelization & Catechesis provides support, training and resources to catechists, evangelists, pastors and directors of religious education in order to help them fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and to teach the Catholic faith confidently in accord with the *Magisterium* under the direction of the Archbishop.



ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

**"Our Hearts were Burning!"
 Evangelization Symposium**

March 14, 2009

John Paul II Center—Denver, CO

With Fr. Ray Gawronski, SJ, Keynote

Sean Dalton, FOCUS

Aimee Milburn Cooper

James Cavanagh

Judd Baretta

Please see copy ready flyer inside this edition of *Finest Wheat*

Papal Intentions for March



General: That the role of women may be more appreciated and used to good advantage in every country in the world.

Mission: That in the light of the letter addressed to them by Pope Benedict XVI, the Bishops, priests, consecrated persons, and lay faithful of the Catholic Church in the Popular Republic of China may commit themselves to being the sign and instrument of unity, communion, and peace.

Pope Benedict has signaled that his primary focus for 2009 will be the drive to proclaim the Gospel, energetically and unapologetically, throughout the world during the remainder of the Pauline Year, always relying confidently on the power of the Holy Spirit to guide the Church

Continued on Page 3...

SILENCE

-James Cavanagh, Metro Area Director

"For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation." (Ps. 62.1)

In his Lenten message for 2009 Pope Benedict XVI chose to focus on the spiritual discipline of fasting. Fasting has several benefits. First, he says, fasting helps us avoid sin. The first commandment of God to Adam and Eve involved fasting: "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gn 2, 16-17). One of the purposes of fasting, then, is to strengthen our relationship with God by enabling us to do what Adam and Eve were unwilling to do. Another purpose for fasting is to awaken hunger for God's word. At the end of his forty days in the desert, Jesus' rebuked the devil saying, "Man does live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Mt. 4:4) Fasting directs our attention to heavenly things, especially God's word and the bread of life. In both cases, fasting strengthens the will and is an enormous benefit to prayer.

Another form of fasting is silence. We are bombarded with noise everywhere we go, making it almost impossible to pray well. Just as fasting from food intensifies our hunger for God so fasting from noise intensifies our sensitivity to God's word. At the risk of stating the obvious, we simply pray better it's quiet. Think of all the areas in your life where there's noise. I get up early in the morning to read and pray because it's the quietest time of the day ... except for the furnace ... and the refrigerator ... and the neighbor's flushing toilet, and ... well, you get the idea. It's amazing how noisy quiet places can be.


Of course, if I'm honest with myself I have to admit that a good deal of the noise in the world comes from *me*. Words are the 'tools of the trade' for catechists and preachers. We could hardly do our jobs without them. Imagine trying to go a whole day, or even ten minutes, without talking. Words are necessary for those of us who are responsible for teaching the faith. But words are also an occupational hazard. "Better to be silent and be thought a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt." The Bible repeatedly warns against the careless or malicious use of the tongue. "Who has never sinned with his tongue?" the author of Ecclesiasticus asks. St.

James tells us that the tongue "is an unrighteous world among our member, staining the whole body and setting on fire the cycle of nature and set on fire by hell. It is a restless evil full of deadly poison." (Js. 3:6-9). I suspect that the majority of sins disclosed in the confessional have to do with sins involving speech. Pope Benedict pointed out that fasting helps us avoid sin. Silence, which is a form of fasting, also helps us avoid sin. Thumper's advise is still sound.

Anxiety is big problem for many people. It is a form of interior noise which silence can help alleviate. Silence teaches us to focus on the simple things of life and not to worry about things beyond our control. The opening scene of the movie "Into Great Silence" shows a monk silently praying in his cell. Sometimes he sits. Sometimes he kneels. For several long minutes the audience simply watches him. As time ticks away you start to become restless, waiting for something to happen. Suddenly the stillness is interrupted as the monk reaches over and adjusts the damper on the wood stove and then resumes his prayer. That simple gesture is the dramatic highpoint of the whole scene. Ordinary actions, even the simplest ones, can be charged with sensational drama when it emerges from silence.

Silence is an indispensable spiritual discipline. Like fasting, it can help us avoid sin, strengthen our relationship to God, open us to God's word, stimulate prayer, relieve anxiety and help us to appreciate the simpler things of life. What better time to practice silence than Lent? ❖

Catholic Biblical School Presents
Divine Mercy and Hope
 with Msgr. Stuart Swetland
**Divine Mercy Saturday,
 April 18
 St. Joan of Arc, Arvada**
**For more information
 please call 303-715-3195**



Jesus I Trust in You!

UPCOMING EVENTS



**NATIONAL
CATHOLIC BIBLE
CONFERENCE 2009**

**June 26-27, 2009
St. Thomas More, Centennial
To register visit
www.catholicbibleconference.com**

Catholic Biblical School Presents
**First Corinthians The Church and the
 Christian Community**
 Dr. Tim Gray and Dr. Ted Sri
**Saturday, March 21
 St. Mark, Westminster**



Call 303.715.3195 for more
information



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

-ed over my soul. I cried for hours when I realized God loved me, body and soul.

Since then it's been a whirlwind ride. I've read Patristics and St. Thomas; Peter Kreeft and Flannery O'Connor; encyclicals and Catholic blogs. I purchased a copy of the Catechism for personal use. I've prayed the chaplet of Divine Mercy and actually have a of copy of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska's diary beside me that I plan to dive into as soon as I'm done writing this email.

... Your assistance has been instrumental in breaking spiritual bondage and forming and reforming a broken view of God.

... When it comes to understanding Catholicism, solid arguments and theological explanations are important. Apologetics is useful. But to be perfectly honest, it's been the *beauty* and *mystery* of the Catholic faith that has romanced this soul, for it's the Groom singing a love song through His Bride. It's loaded with layers of meaning and substance, depths to be plunged not for the sake of having all the theological ducks in a row, but to know Christ more intimately. And from that intimacy true theology springs, a rational and cohesive system that is also mysterious and deep."

... (name withheld) ❖

Excerpt from Pope's Lenten Message



For this year's Lenten Message, I wish to focus my reflections especially on the value and meaning of fasting. Indeed, Lent recalls the forty days of our Lord's fasting in the desert, which He undertook before entering into His public ministry. Jesus through prayer and fasting, prepared Himself for the mission that lay before Him, marked at the start by a serious battle with the tempter...

The faithful practice of fasting contributes to conferring unity to the whole person, body and soul, helping to avoid sin and grow in intimacy with the Lord...Denying material food, which nourishes our body, nurtures an interior disposition to listen to Christ and be fed by His saving word.

Through fasting and praying, we allow Him to com and satisfy the deepest hunger that we experience in the depths of our being: the hunger and thirst for God...At the same time, fasting is an aid to pen our eyes to the situation in which so many of our brothers and sisters live.

Voluntary fasting enables us to grow in the spirit of the Good Samaritan, who bends low and goes to the help of his suffering brother. By freely embracing an act of self-denial for the sake of another, we make a statement that our brother or sister in need is not a stranger. It is precisely to keep alive this welcoming and attentive attitude towards our brothers and sisters...

Fasting represents an important ascetical practice, a spiritual arm to do battle against every possible disordered attachment to ourselves. Freely chosen detachment from the pleasure of food and other material goods helps the disciple of Christ to control the appetites of nature, weakened by original sin, whose negative effects impact the entire human person. ❖ To Read full message visit www.vatican.va