



FORUM

Latenight Laundryroom Philosophy

By TIM POWERS
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"That They May Be One," was the title of the latest letter addressed to Christians by Pope John Paul II. What message could this vestige of the Middle Ages have for today, especially when he faces a virtual second Reformation rising from the laity of the Catholic Church, and seemingly centered in America?

Taking the United Nations to task on accepting the will of the majority over searching for what is right, the pope told the General Assembly to overcome fear of the future in order to build a civilization of love. The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. Things may seem hopeless, but the Christian tradition and the traditions of virtually all world religions, have shown that there is always hope as long as there is trust. It is both absurd and prideful for humankind to believe that its perspective is the only perspective. Society must look beyond itself, and rely on wisdom beyond itself.

One need not, as Tom Janofsky said in *The Aquinas* on October 12 "question the reasoning and motives of anyone today who asserts that the use of artificial birth control is immoral." One must question any society that claims that the sacredness of life in all its stages should be prostituted to the comfort of any person or society. The Catholic Church has been faithful to a message central to its teaching: every human being reflects the image of God, and therefore that human being must be treated with dignity and respect.

On the first Saturday in October, I had the good fortune to take part in Mass with the pope in Central Park. What amazed me most was not the music, the incense, the processions, or the pomp. What amazed me most was the great patchwork of people who were brought together. One hundred and thirty thousand people gathered early on a sunless and drizzling Saturday morning because of something intangible, but easily visible. John Paul II drew these people together on the Great Lawn of Central Park because they knew that he was there in the name of truth, a truth which stands firm throughout the ages, which all people need to know, and many people want to hear.

The Catholic Church is not about unchanging dogma. Over the centuries, the Church has changed its approach to meet the needs of its people, so that today it tells women that they are important, protects children and the elderly from abuse, provides compassion and care to people suffering from AIDS, and gives the poor an option in the world. The Church does this by teaching, living, and bringing people together because of the belief that there is a value to every human life, even when society proclaims the exact opposite.

"Pontifex Maximus" is a title which has been assigned to the popes for many years. Normally the title is interpreted as "High Priest," but that translation is dry and ineffective. From ancient times, the title "Pontifex Maximus" was (and has been) applied to the Chief Bridge-BUILDER of Rome. Since 1978, John Paul II has been the Chief Bridge-BUILDER, a vocation he has taken seriously, and continues to exercise quite effectively. What message does the Pope have for today? The simple, yet forgotten message that we are one, and that our lives are worthwhile.

Farrakhan marches wrong way

By DOM SCARCELLA
Managing Editor

Anyone watching Nation of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan speak on October 16 at the Million Man March in Washington, D.C., could not help but remember the late Rev. Martin Luther King.

King, like Farrakhan, lent his charisma and talents to a movement designed to benefit blacks. King also led rallies, including a famous one in 1963 in front of the Lincoln Memorial, a gathering that contained all the electricity and expectation of Farrakhan's March on The Mall.

However, the similarities stop there.

King succeeded in helping blacks attain greater civil rights and better social, economic and political relationships with whites, but he did it by focusing on the larger American society that he hoped would come more and more to include blacks.

Who can forget his "I have a dream" speech, in which he hoped for an American culture containing people of all races living together in peace?

Apparently, Farrakhan forgot.

Farrakhan's March was about exclusivity and isolation of the black community.

Sure, Farrakhan frequently used the words "brothers" and "sisters" in his speech, but it became clear as he addressed his all-black-male audience that "brothers" meant black men exclusively and "sisters" meant black women exclusively.

Despite parts of his address—and there were many—that called for healing and improvement on the part of individuals and society as a whole, Farrakhan's entire speech had "us vs. them" overtones filled with prejudicial generalizations of both whites and blacks.

Farrakhan at one point listed a few evils which plague black men, and described them as "winds."

The names of some of these winds were "drugs," "violence," "Dole" and "Gingrich," the latter two referring to the Senate Majority Leader and Speaker of the House, respectively.

He offered no explanation for his equating two congressmen with drugs and violence, but one can assume it had something to do with their being white.

Ironically, Farrakhan talked about the evils of the arts and entertainment industry, and he called on artists to stop using their talents to feed the negative aspects of culture.

Sounds like Bob Dole.

Farrakhan also spoke of the need for black men to be good husbands and fathers and community leaders and to take responsibility for their lives and actions.

Sounds like Newt Gingrich.

A person does not need to be violent to be racist, nor does he need to be hateful in order to be divisive.

Farrakhan's speech at the March was not violent, but it was still racist; his words were not always hateful, yet they remained divisive.

Other demographic groups have faced the difficult task of integrating fully into American culture.

To the extent that new immigrants of the early 1900's, Hispanics, Asians and Middle Easterners have actively included themselves in American society, American culture has included them and recognized their contributions.

Indeed, many blacks have en-

joyed the same success in becoming participants in America rather than detached observers: Frederick Douglass, George Washington Carver, King, Thurgood Marshall, Clarence Thomas, Colin Powell, Alan Keyes, to name some of the more popular figures.

American history is a history of a culture slowly moving away from the compartmentalization of racial and ethnic groups.

The culture that began as an isolated race of northern Europeans has gradually broadened to contain many different peoples united by the universal qualities of rights, responsibilities and mutual cooperation between very different members of a civilized society.

From the national motto *E pluribus, unum* (which means, "Out of many, one") to the melting pot of the 20th century, the hallmark of American culture over the past 219 years has been its increasingly inclusive nature.

Farrakhan and others like him insist on isolating the black community rather than teaching blacks that they are an integral part of a larger whole.

This separatism will ultimately keep blacks down and prevent them from sharing fully in the benefits of the greatest society in the world.

Instead of standing on the tall, broad shoulders of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Minister Louis Farrakhan would rather strike at his knees.

To the extent that he is successful, American culture will, sadly, not include enough blacks.

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