

# COLUMNISTS

## Catholics, feminists can learn from each other

Sometimes we get into an "all or nothing" mentality. I fall into that mode all the time. Since it's genuinely harder to make the commitment to exercise critical thinking, to consider developments thoughtfully, to make necessary distinctions, we often just click into the "all or nothing" mode.

In a way, we're probably all susceptible to the peculiarly modern mindset that suggests that reality consists of opposing extremes. In this view, we falsely think we have to reject one extreme totally so that we can completely embrace its opposite. The fact that there may be some truth in a movement or idea makes things harder to deal with. This kind of thinking surrounds many of today's more "controversial" topics especially. Here's an example:

A few weeks ago the National Basketball Association (NBA) announced it was considering adding women referees — which it did do. But Charles Barkley, a player, didn't like this new prospect, so he's quoted as saying: "I don't like it, I don't want women in the Citadel, I don't want women in the Army and I don't



the moral life

By PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

want women in the NBA."

Now we may reasonably assume that while Mr. Barkley rejected those particular roles for women, he is very likely to have some ideas about which roles he would approve for women. And I'd be willing to bet that I, and many others (including quite a few parents of daughters) would be likely to disagree with him about those prospects!

While we may not approve of women refereeing NBA basketball, we may not like Mr. Barkley's supposed version of women's roles, either. I'm willing to go out on a limb here to suggest that we've all changed our assumptions about the

abilities and roles of women over the course of our lifetime, and changed for the better.

But when we talk about that loaded term "feminism," we decide that we're either *for* or *against* it. We think we have to be one or the other. When we think about the relationship between Catholicism and feminism we might even become more polarized in our assumptions. Surely, we think, the church is either *for* or *against* feminism.

Alas, I think we have to be a bit more discriminating than that — about feminism and a whole host of other issues, too. For example, there's a terrific little book by Sister Maria Riley, OP, called *Transforming Feminism*. In her book Sister Riley takes some teachings from Catholic social thought, and suggests that much of the feminist movement actually upholds many of those teachings. She draws from some documents from the Congregation for Catholic Education in the Vatican and lists tenets from our social doctrine that correspond with some of the goals of feminism.

Among these she includes the link be-

tween the religious and the social dimensions of life, our beliefs about the dignity of the human person, our endorsement of participation of all in helping to make the decisions that affect our lives, our promotion of solidarity among all peoples on the globe, our strong promotion of the good stewardship that would encourage the wise use of all our human and other resources.

Sister Riley also points out that some parts of the "feminist movement" could benefit from some contact with the Catholic tradition. For example, she is critical of some versions of feminism that criticize motherhood and that demean male-female relationships.

But the overall effect of reading her book, I think, is good because she raises the possibility of endorsing some directions in the feminist movement while rejecting others. She also makes it clear that dialogue between Catholics and feminists can be enormously beneficial — for both Catholicism and for feminism.

Sister Schoelles is president of St. Bernard's Institute.

## Lateran church reflects Christianity's history

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Matthew 5:23-24. (R1) Daniel 12:1-3. (R2) Hebrews 10:11-14, 18.

Sunday we celebrate the anniversary of the dedication of the "mother church" of Roman Catholics — the basilica of St. John Lateran. The Lateran, not St. Peter's, is the cathedral church of Rome.

In the early church, worship was carried out in private houses and the Mass was offered on an ordinary table (no doubt specially reserved for this purpose). In the third and fourth centuries, buildings were being set apart as Christian churches. When Constantine the Great gave the church religious freedom, there followed great activity in building new churches.

The Jews dedicated their Temple and the pagans their temples of worship, so the church also set apart her places of worship by a dedication rite. At first it was a simple rite: the altar was consecrated by the solemn celebration of Mass, then relics were added, followed by certain sprinklings and anointings.

Also, every year the anniversary of the dedication would be celebrated. That



a word for sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

was the custom of the Jews. Judas Maccabeus instituted such a feast in 164 B.C. to celebrate the rededication of the altar and reconsecration of the Temple after their desecration by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Since then, the Jews annually celebrated the Feast of the Dedication, an eight-day festival of lights, called Hanukkah, held in December, three months after the Feast of Tabernacles.

The palace of the Laterani family came into the hands of the Emperor Constantine through his second wife, Fausta. Constantine gave the palace to the pope. The popes resided there until the end of the Avignon captivity of the

popes (1307-1377). Pope Gregory XI, responding to the pleas of St. Catherine of Siena, brought the papacy back to Rome in 1377. However, the pope feared to take up residence again in the Lateran palace, for the Romans were ready to use violence to see that Avignon be not repeated. So the pope went to Vatican Hill, which could be easily defended should hostility break out.

The church built next to the Lateran palace was dedicated to the Holy Savior and its marvelous octagonal baptistry to St. John the Baptist. The practice of calling the basilica St. John Lateran arose from the fact that the monks who cared for the basilica came from the adjoining monastery of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Apostle.

In its fifteen hundred years of existence, the basilica had been pillaged by barbarians and ravaged by earthquakes and fire. In the 17th century Francesco Borromini made it the church we see today. It is one of the four basilicas which have a "Holy Door," opened only during holy (or jubilee) years.

It is believed that the high altar has the

skulls of St. Peter and St. Paul. In the atrium is an ancient statue of Constantine the Great.

The dedication of St. John Lateran should be celebrated by going to confession and to communion, then the temple of our souls will become holy like the temple of God.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

### Daily Readings

- Monday, November 10**  
Wisdom 1:1-7; Luke 17:1-6
- Tuesday, November 11**  
Wisdom 2:23-3:9; Luke 17:7-10
- Wednesday, November 12**  
Wisdom 6:2-11; Luke 17:11-19
- Thursday, November 13**  
Wisdom 7:22-8:1; Luke 17:20-25
- Friday, November 14**  
Wisdom 13:1-9; Luke 17:26-37
- Saturday, November 15**  
Wisdom 18:14-16; 19:6-9; Luke 18:1-8

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