

Editor's Note: The following is an edited transcript of a talk delivered by CFN Managing Editor Matt Gaspers at the Catholic Identity Conference last fall (Nov. 2-4, 2018) (subscribe here for access to the full video). It appears in the current print edition (Jan. 2019) of CFN (subscribe here for immediate E-Edition access). We make it available here in view of the Vatican abuse crisis summit next month - "The Protection of Minors in the Church" (Feb. 21-24, 2019) - because, as Mr. Gaspers stresses in his talk, "there is clearly a deep crisis of fatherhood crippling both the Church and the family," the root causes of which he discusses in detail and demonstrates their interrelated nature (including the plague of homosexuality within the clerical ranks).

Through the intercession of St. Joseph, Head of the Holy Family, and St. John Chrysostom, whose feast the Church celebrates today (Jan. 27, traditional Roman calendar), may this talk serve as a helpful resource for all who continue to pray and work zealously for the restoration of Holy Mother Church to her rightful condition.

Introduction

Dear Reverend Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, and friends in Christ, it has been an honor and a great joy to be here with you this weekend at the Catholic Identity Conference! The more of these conferences I attend, the more I am convinced of their value and importance. As Michael Matt said in his welcoming address, we truly do need each other in order to "stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened" (1 Cor. 16:13), as St. Paul says.

Let me begin by thanking Michael Matt and Eric Frankovitch for inviting me to speak and represent Catholic Family News at this important event. Filling the spot long held by our dearly departed friend and brother, John Vennari, is a responsibility I take very seriously, "with fear and trembling" (Philip. 2:12), and I hope that my words here today, which I dedicate in his honor, will do some degree of justice to his mighty legacy.

While preparing this talk, I was thinking about John and I recalled something that he told Michael shortly before his death (which Michael shared on *The Remnant* website). John told Michael over the phone, while lying in his hospital bed: "Please, keep it going. You must continue the fight for the Cause."

These are the words of a true soldier of Christ the King and our Immaculate Queen, a man who in many ways epitomized the theme of this year's conference - "Family and Tradition: Keeping the Old Faith in a New World Order"; and moreover, a man who especially embodied the topic I will be addressing today - "Fatherhood and the Domestic Church:



Restoration Begins at Home." John knew that the Faith is worth fighting for, and he understood better than most that the fight to hand it on "whole and undefiled" (Athanasian Creed) begins in the home - that is, in the family.

The Battle We Face

St. Paul tells us at length in his Epistle to the Ephesians about this battle in which we find ourselves, which "is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Eph. 6:12) - in other words, against the devil and his minions. "Therefore," he continues.

"take unto you **the armor of God**, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God). By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication..." (Eph. 6:13-18, emphasis added)

The armor of God: truth, justice, peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer. These are some of "the weapons of our warfare," weapons that are "mighty to God, unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that exhalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor. 10:4-5). How do we obtain these weapons? And from whom do we learn how to wield them? Ultimately, of course, they come from God; but God, in His infinite wisdom and providence, has ordained that souls receive them through the *Church* and learn to employ them in the family.

These two societies - the Church and the family - were both founded by God and are intimately related by His design. Consequently, the health and vitality of one affects the health and vitality of the other. The Church, as a *supernatural* and *perfect* society ("perfect" in the sense of "containing within itself all the resources needed for attaining its end"[1]), is by nature superior to the family and is not, strictly speaking, dependent upon it (on the contrary, the family desperately needs Holy Mother Church, her sacraments, and her infallible teachings for support). However, since the universal Church is made up of individual families, it stands to reason that if a majority of those families are spiritually and



morally weak, the Church (in her human element) will likewise be weakened and much less effective in fulfilling her divine mission to convert all nations.

The family, as we all know, is in a state of grave crisis, especially in those countries which used to form the Christian West but have since apostatized from the Faith - you know, the ones that jumped off the one, divinely constructed Ark (the Church) in favor of leaky lifeboats of their own making. The family, together with its cornerstone of marriage, is being attacked from without and even from within the Church! As Sister Lucia of Fatima wrote to the late Cardinal Carlo Caffarra in the early 1980s: "The final battle between the Lord and the reign of satan will be about marriage and the family."

Yet we must ask ourselves: How did the family - and even the *Catholic* family - become so vulnerable to the attacks of the evil one? How were its defenses so radically corrupted in order to allow entry and free reign for the world, the flesh, and the devil? The answer is found by asking this question: Who is in charge of protecting the family? Fathers! In both the home and the Church, fathers - whether biological, adoptive, or priestly - are the divinely appointed guardians, and based on the track record of the last several decades, there is clearly a *deep crisis of fatherhood* crippling both the Church and the family.

Crisis in the Church - Known Causes

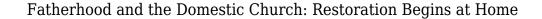
The fatherhood crisis in the Church was exposed in horrifying detail this past summer. After reading as much of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report as I could stomach, one of the questions I had screaming in my head was, How on earth did these wicked men get so messed up?

A couple weeks later, after reading Archbishop Vigano's courageous testimony about "the homosexual current" within the hierarchy that is bent on "subverting Catholic doctrine on homosexuality," again I asked myself, How in the world did this happen? How did the *Church's hierarchy become infested with sodomites?*

I believe the answer to these questions has two parts or *causes*, if you will - a *strategic* cause (pre-meditated, deliberate) and a familial cause (spontaneous, less intentional), which are interrelated.

Strategic Cause: Communist Infiltration

Let's start with the *strategic* cause. We know from the testimony of insiders like Bella Dodd (1904-1969) that the ranks of the clergy in America and elsewhere were successfully





infiltrated by Communist agents. John Vennari wrote about this in his booklet, *The* Revelations of the Holy Face, as follows:

"Dr. Bella V. Dodd was a high-ranking Communist in the United States. She was Attorney General Designate of the Communist Party. Eventually, she returned to the Catholic Faith she had abandoned earlier in life. In the 1950s, however, after her conversion, she delivered numerous lectures about the successful Communist infiltration of religious institutions, and of the Catholic Church in particular.

She explained that in the 1930s and 40s, orders came from Communist headquarters to send radicals into the seminaries to subvert the Church from within. Communist agents started doing this all over the Western world. Bella Dodd said that she personally recruited over 1,000 young radicals to enter Catholic seminaries. And she was only one Communist." (p. 40-41)

John also recounts in his booklet something an acquaintance of his heard directly from Bella Dodd during one of her lectures in the early 1950s: "[I]n 10 to 15 years, you will not recognize the Catholic Church." And she meant it in more ways than we think - not just the changes in the Mass, but the changes to the theology and the soul of the Church and the priesthood.

What does Communism have to do with homosexual clergy? The stunning connection was revealed by Dr. Alice von Hildebrand, who befriended Dodd after her conversion. During a 2015 interview with Michael Voris of Church Militant, Dr. Von Hildebrand shared the following information personally related to her and her husband, Dr. Dietrich von Hildebrand, by Bella Dodd herself in 1965. Alice recalls:

"Stalin, soon after he came to power, ordered his cronies to invade Catholic seminaries ... with young men that had neither faith nor morals. Now ... the **ideal cases: homosexual.** ..." (Emphasis added)

And also, we know from a book called *The Naked Communist* by W. Cleon Skousen (former FBI special agent), which lists 45 "Current Communist Goals" ("current", that is, in 1958 when the book was first published), that one of Communism's strategic objectives was to: "Present homosexuality, degeneracy and promiscuity as 'normal, natural, healthy'" (n. 26) as a means of destroying marriage and family, both of which impede Communism. Interestingly, the goal listed immediately after the one about promoting sexual immorality



reads: "Infiltrate the churches and replace revealed religion with 'social' religion. Discredit the Bible and emphasize the need for intellectual maturity which does not need a 'religious crutch'" (n. 27). Thus, we see that apostasy (loss of faith) goes hand-in-hand with moral depravity. Corruption of morals begins with the loss of faith. It begins in the intellect, because the intellect (where faith resides) leads the will. If your intellect is corrupted, eventually your will (the faculty by which we act) will also be corrupted.

Familial Cause: Poor Fathering at Home

Based on these sources, it's pretty obvious how the priesthood became infested with such "filth," as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Benedict XVI) called it back in 2005. But a deeper, more fundamental question remains: What causes homosexuality? What caused the young Communists who infiltrated the Church, for example, to develop the disorder of samesex attraction (SSA) and embrace the lifestyle in the first place? Or, as I asked myself after reading the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, How did these men get so messed up?

To answer this more complex question - what I referred to earlier as the "familial cause" of the crisis - we now turn to <u>Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons</u>, a renowned Catholic psychiatrist and director of the Institute for Marital Healing outside Philadelphia. Representing the Catholic Medical Association (CMA), Dr. Fitzgibbons wrote the following in an open letter to the bishops of the United States in May of 2002, following the so-called "Long Lent" during which the clergy sexual abuse scandal was blown wide open by the Boston Globe:

"As a Catholic psychiatrist and psychologist who have [sic] treated a significant number of priests from various dioceses and religious communities over the past 25 years for same-sex attraction (SSA or homosexuality) and for pedophilia and ephebophilia (homosexual behavior with adolescents), we believe that our particular expertise and those of our colleagues in the Catholic Medical Association may be of help to the American bishops as they seek to create effective long-term strategies to prevent the recurrence of the problems in which the Catholic Church in the United States now finds itself enmeshed.

Many have pointed out that solving the problem of sexual abuse by clergy will necessarily involve addressing the problem of SSA among priests. Bishop Wilton D. Gregory, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, admitted at a press conference in Rome on April 23 the existence of an ongoing struggle to ensure that the Catholic priesthood is not dominated by homosexual men.



As the revelations of abuse have become public it has become increasingly clear that almost all the victims are adolescent males, not prepubescent boys. The problem of priests with same-sex attractions (SSA) molesting adolescents or children must be addressed if future scandals are to be avoided.

In treating priests who have engaged in pedophilia and ephebophilia we have observed that these men almost without exception suffered from a denial of sin in their lives. They were unwilling to admit and address the profound emotional pain they experienced in childhood of loneliness, often in the father relationship, peer rejection, lack of male confidence, poor body image, sadness, and anger. This anger, which originated most often from disappointments and hurts with their peers and/or fathers, was often directed toward the Church, the Holy Father, and the religious authorities." (Emphasis added)

Concerning the crucial role of fathers in early childhood development, Dr. Fitzgibbons offers similar testimony, together with two colleagues from CMA, in a booklet entitled "Homosexuality and Hope" (most recently updated in 2010):

"Those who conceptualize SSA as a disorder have long recognized the part [that] poor identification with the father plays in the development of SSA in men. Irving Bieber, who conducted a comprehensive study of men with SSA in therapy, wrote:

We have come to the conclusion that a constructive, supportive, warmly related father precludes the possibility of a homosexual son...'" (Emphasis added)

And finally, in his contribution to The Truth About Homosexuality: The Cry of the Faithful (a book by Fr. John Harvey, founder of Courage), Dr. Fitzgibbons wrote:

"When the need for warmth, approval, physical affection, and praise from a father is not filled, an inner emptiness develops, often referred to today as 'father hunger'. In an attempt to overcome this pain, some adolescents and young adults seek comfort in being held by another male."[2] (Emphasis added)



As the father of two young children, these words cut straight to the heart. They are a powerful reminder to me of my vital role in their lives. How I speak to them, how I engage them, how I love them (or fail to do so) makes all the difference in the world. It will literally impact them for the rest of their lives, and potentially for eternity. Fatherhood, like motherhood, is very serious business, and if we ever hope to see a restoration of the Church's hierarchy to its rightful condition, I am convinced that a restoration of true fatherhood in the home must play a fundamental role simply because today's fathers are forming tomorrow's priests and bishops.

Restoring the Church through Authentic Fatherhood

Let's take a few moments to dwell upon this theme of restoring the Church by restoring true fatherhood. Earlier this year, I came across a book called *The Three Marks of Manhood* by Dr. G.C. Dilsaver, a Catholic psychologist who calls upon men to embrace their God-given role as head and leader of their families. He writes in the book's Introduction:

"The Christian family is a patriarchal hierarchy. So teaches the Catholic Church in Scripture, in the Roman Catechism, and in modern encyclicals. As a patriarchal hierarchy it reflects the hierarchy of the Church; it also reflects the hierarchy of the divine government itself, which is manifest not only in God's rule over His creation, but in the relationships of the Trinity, whose absolute unity derives from the subordination of the Son to the Father."[3] (Emphasis added)

Dr. Dilsaver goes on to ask why "this teaching [is] such a hard saying for modern ears", citing hyper-egalitarianism and feminism as two major factors. He then offers some very astute and timely commentary:

"It is characteristic of lay Catholics of a traditional or conservative bent to be ever in search of an explanatory analysis of what went wrong with **society and the Church.** Most of the explanations they find, valid as they may be, are in areas out of their influence or competency, such as liturgical or ecclesiological issues. Hence it is also characteristic of such Catholics to feel a deep frustration. But there is one area that the laity have full competency to reform and make as Catholic as they wish, and this area is the key to all the other besetting problems. It is the family. Order the home and the rest will follow."[4] (Emphasis added)



A few pages later, in Chapter 1, he gets more specific:

"If there is to be a wholesome future for the West, if Christianity is once again to make inroads into a heathen world, then the Christian family must be miraculously restored. For it is the family that will produce the saints of tomorrow: be they bishops, priests, religious, fathers, or mothers. And it is the Christian family that is on the front lines of today's conflict between good and evil: it bears the brunt of that battle ["the final battle", to use Our Lady's words] as the very last defense against the total domination of the secular and the profane. ...

Though many factors have facilitated the destruction of the family, the final and proximate cause is to be found in the jettisoning of its essential structural order; that is, the rejection of the patriarchal hierarchy of the family, in the name of emancipation and egalitarianism. Therefore, the restoration of the family, indeed the restoration of ecclesiastical leadership and Christendom itself, is only possible with the advent of a new Christian patriarchal order: the fatherly rule of family, community, and Church."[5] (Emphasis added)

The Family is the Domestic Church

Earlier this year [2018] at the *Catholic Family News* Conference, I gave a talk entitled "Holiness at Home: The Importance of the Family" (Part 1 and Part 2) during which I described how the family is the ecclesia domestica ("domestic church"), citing Scripture, the Roman Catechism, and the Church Fathers. Unfortunately, I don't have time today to share all of that material with you, but to quickly summarize the central theme: The Catholic Church is the family of God; the Catholic family, in turn, is the domestic church - a sort of microcosm or extension of the universal Church.

This does not mean that the family can somehow replace or do without the Church (as I said towards the beginning, the family depends upon the Church for the sacraments, sound doctrine, and general support). It does mean, however, that the family, as a hierarchical society of baptized persons (father, mother, and children), is called to reflect the hierarchical structure and life of the Church in the home, including the role of the father as head and leader.



A Man After God's Own Heart

In order for us fathers to "take thou courage, and show thyself a man," (4 Kings 2:2) as King David exhorted his son, Solomon, we must first have a clear vision of what it looks like to be "a man after [God's] own heart" (Acts 13:22). Thankfully, Holy Scripture is replete with examples and admonitions. Men simply need to know and follow them.

For starters, every man must acknowledge that God the Father is the source of "all paternity in heaven and earth" (Eph. 3:15) and, therefore, the reference point for all authentic fatherhood. How does He manifest His paternal Heart and character to His children? First of all, He shows Himself to be a *loving provider*. "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change or shadow of alteration" (Jam. 1:17). From the very beginning, when God created Adam and Eve, He provided for all their spiritual, emotional, and physical needs in a superabundant way. And even after they disobeyed His command and sinned against Him, the Lord promised our first parents that, one day, He would provide a Redeemer, and also a Woman who would crush the head of satan (cf. Gen. 3:15). We are also told in Genesis that after the Fall "the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21), thus demonstrating that, despite their offense, their heavenly Father still loved them and wanted to take care of them.

This is not to say He did not punish them for their wrongdoing. On the contrary, God inflicted specific temporal punishments (cf. Gen. 3:16-19), in addition to the loss of sanctifying grace, to help Adam and Eve - and the rest of humanity, down through the ages - understand the evil and destructive nature of sin. God does not punish His children out of cruelty or uncontrollable anger, but rather out of love for the purpose of correction, as Our Lord Himself testifies: "Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous, therefore, and do penance" (Apoc. 3:19).

Fathers must imitate the patience, longsuffering, and mercy of God in their relationships with their children, while at the same time using "the rod of correction" (Prov. 22:15) including a calm but firm spanking, if necessary - to accomplish the same loving purpose. "And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Such discipline and correction, administered with paternal love, will contribute greatly to a child's growth in virtue and holiness.

In addition to godly discipline, which is primarily the father's responsibility, children also desperately need to receive the blessing and acceptance of their father. Recall that when Our Lord was baptized, God the Father publicly proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in

Whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). He said the same during the Transfiguration, shortly before Our Lord was to endure His Passion (cf. Matt. 17:1-9). The Son of God, in His sacred humanity, was no doubt strengthened by His Father's affirming words and galvanized to fulfill His saving mission. Such are the power of words, as the Book of Proverbs says: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Prov. 18:21). Children need to hear and know that their father delights in them, just as "the Lord is well pleased with His people" (Ps. 149:4). Such affirmation, coming from the representative of God's authority in the home, will likewise strengthen children and make them secure in their identity as beloved sons and daughters, ultimately, of God our heavenly Father.

In regard to teaching the Faith, parents are the primary educators of their children; and the father, as the divinely appointed leader, has a particular responsibility to be the "master catechist" of his family. St. John Chrysostom (d. 407), who served for a time as Patriarch of Constantinople and is venerated as one of the Three Holy Hierarchs by our Eastern Catholic brethren, describes what family catechesis should look like in his Second Sermon on Genesis:

"...when you go home from here [referring to the Divine Liturgy, or Holy Mass, in Roman Rite terms], lay out with your meal a spiritual meal, as well. The father of the family might repeat something of what was said here [note the role of the father as *teacher*]; his wife could then hear it, the children too could learn something, and even the servants might be instructed. **In short, the household** might become a church, so that the devil is driven off and that evil spirit, the enemy of our salvation, takes to flight; the grace of the Holy Spirit would rest there instead, and all peace and harmony would surround the inhabitants."[6] (Emphasis)

St. Augustine (d. 430), perhaps the most famous Catholic convert after St. Paul, who served for many years as Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, likewise emphasized the father's spiritual headship of his family. In his Sermon 94 (On Selected Lessons of the New Testament, sometimes numbered *Sermon 44*), St. Augustine wrote:

"Discharge our office in your own houses. A bishop is called from hence, because he superintends, because he takes care and attends to others. **To every man**, then, if he is the head of his own house, ought the office of the Episcopate to belong, to take care how his household believe, that none of them fall into heresy, neither wife, nor son, nor daughter...Do not neglect,



then, the least of those belonging to you; look after the salvation of all your household with all vigilance."[7] (Emphasis added)

Importance of Tending Our Own Spiritual Lives

So, fathers, how do we live out this exhortation? First of all, we cannot give what we do not have. If we as men are not taking our own spiritual lives seriously, we will have nothing of value to offer our wives and children.

We must faithfully and fervently live the sacramental life of the Church. The Holy Mass must be the sun around which the life of the family orbits. As Padre Pio used to say, "It would be easier for the earth to exist without the sun than without the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!" The same is true for the spiritual life of our families.

In conjunction with Holy Mass and the sacraments, I'll quickly mention three more crucial means that all of us must employ: 1) daily prayer (especially the Holy Rosary and mental prayer), **2)** *sacrifice* (especially fidelity to our daily duties), and **3)** *true devotion to Mary*. These are the simple but powerful means that so quickly sanctified the three little shepherds of Fatima. Hence, we must teach our own children the full Message of Fatima and lead them in putting it into practice (e.g. daily Rosary, making reparation, Five First Saturdays, prayers for the Holy Father to consecrate Russia).

One resource I highly recommend to help adults grow in prayer, sacrifice, and true devotion to Mary is a book called *Divine Intimacy* (originally published in 1953) by Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D., a Carmelite priest and renowned spiritual director. The book's subtitle says it all: Meditations on the Interior Life for Every Day of the Liturgical Year. A friend of mine gave me a copy as a gift about a year and a half ago and I will be forever grateful! I can't tell you the number of times that the meditation on a given day has spoken directly to something going on in my own life. I guarantee you will not regret using this book!

Be Strong, Be Courageous

In the fall of 2011, when my daughter (the older of my two kids) was just over a year old, my wife and I went to see a powerful film called Courageous (granted, it was produced by Protestants, but the message on fatherhood is outstanding). The story centers on an average American family and, specifically, the father, who is a sheriff's deputy. The family is rocked to the core when tragedy strikes and Adam (the father) is forced to take stock of the rather



mediocre job he's been doing as a father. He seeks spiritual guidance from his pastor, starts digging into Scripture, and, as a result, he produces a written commitment for himself which he calls the Resolution (full text available here).

The last scene of the film is Adam sharing his testimony and exhorting the men of his congregation to join him and his small "band of brothers" (the guys on stage with him) in committing to the Resolution.

Conclusion - Prayer to Saint Joseph

Let us conclude by invoking St. Joseph, glorious Head of the Holy Family, Terror of demons, and Protector of Holy Church:

"To thee, O blessed Joseph, we fly in our tribulation, and after imploring the help of thy most holy Spouse, with confidence we ask also for thy intercession. By the affection which united thee to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, and by the paternal love with which thou didst embrace the Child Jesus, we beseech thee to look kindly upon the inheritance which Jesus Christ acquired by His Precious Blood, and with thy powerful aid to help us in our needs.

Protect, O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, the chosen people of Jesus Christ. Keep us, loving father, from all pestilence of error and corruption. From thy place in Heaven be thou mercifully with us, most powerful protector, in this warfare with the powers of darkness; and, as thou didst once rescue the Child Jesus from imminent danger of death, so now defend the holy Church of God from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity. Guard each of us by thy constant patronage, so that, sustained by thy example and help, we may live a holy life, die a holy death, and obtain the everlasting happiness of Heaven. Amen."

Notes

[1] Fr. Austin Fagothey, S.J., Right and Reason: Ethics in Theory and Practice, Second Edition (Rockford: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 2000), p. 352.

[2] Fr. John F. Harvey, OSFS, The Truth About Homosexuality: The Cry of the Faithful (Ignatius Press, 1996), p. 309.

Fatherhood and the Domestic Church: Restoration Begins at Home

- [3] G.C. Dilsaver, The Three Marks of Manhood: How to be Priest, Prophet, and King of Your Family (Charlotte: TAN Books, 2010), p. vii.
- [4] *Ibid.*, p. viii.
- [5] *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3.
- [6] Robert C. Hill (trans.), The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 74 (St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 1-17) (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), p. 37.
- [7] Philip Schaff (Ed.), Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 6 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., fifth printing-January 2012), p. 406.