

FLORIDA *Catholic*

YOUR FAITH. YOUR LIFE. YOUR COMMUNITY.

OF MIAMI

Give yourself totally to the Lord at Mass

This column was originally published Feb. 28, 2002, but it bears repeating.

My dear friends,



FROM THE ARCHBISHOP

John C. Favalora

When I hear people say, "I don't get anything out of Mass," my response is, "What are you putting into it?"

It is important that people come to church with certain dispositions, chief among them the disposition to pray, to be totally attentive to the word of God.

How well can people do that if they are chewing gum or answering their cell phones?

I realize not everybody does this, but in my visits to various parishes, and even at events in the cathedral, I have noticed more and

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Entréguese por completo al Señor durante la misa

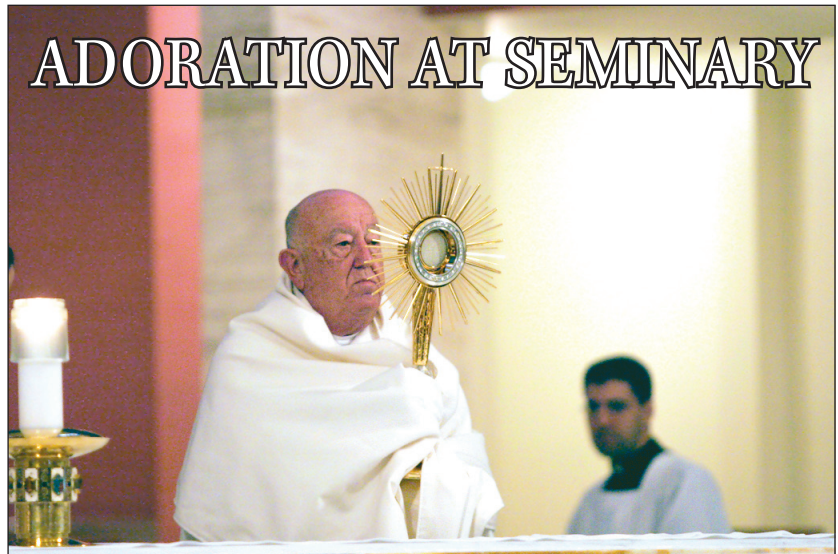
Esta columna fue publicada el 28 de febrero de 2002, y merece ser repetida.

Mis queridos amigos:

Cuando escucho a la gente decir "No saco nada de la misa", respondo, "¿Qué aportan a la misma?"

Es importante que la gente venga a la iglesia con ciertas disposiciones, la principal de las cuales es rezar, estar totalmente atenta a la palabra de Dios.

CONTINÚA EN PAGINA 2, **ARZOBISPO**



ADORATION AT SEMINARY

ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO | FC

To mark its golden jubilee and the Year for Priests, St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami will host three days of adoration with one of the monstrances blessed by Pope John Paul II as a means of encouraging people throughout the world to pray for vocations. The adoration will take place in the seminary chapel, March 1, 2 and 3, from 7:30 to 9 p.m. The adoration will conclude each night with Benediction. The seminary is located at 2900 S.W. 87 Ave., Miami. Pictured above: Archbishop John C. Favalora holds up the monstrance during a ceremony at St. Mary Cathedral in 2008. The monstrance visited every parish in the archdiocese during Miami's golden jubilee celebration in 2008.

'Was any sin as big as mine?'

How Project Rachel helped me heal from my abortion

The following is the unsolicited testimony of someone who underwent Project Rachel counseling with the Archdiocese of Miami's respect life office.

SPECIAL TO THE FLORIDA CATHOLIC

I was a young girl and not very wise, when I had an abortion.

I was 21 years old, raised in the post-feminist days bequeathed to us by my parents' generation. I was raised Catholic and I heard about Catholic moral values at school and at home, but I was surrounded by a much more alluring modern culture. I was taught that no

one went to their wedding day a virgin. That would be prudish. That my body was mine to do with as I wanted, and why should I deny myself the pleasure young men were never asked to do without?

Birth control was everywhere at college, pushed on us from every side. We were told to keep it safe, but have fun. When we turned on the TV, all the characters on the sitcoms we watched were having sex free of hang-ups. Was I to be any different? Anyway, any mistake could be fixed in an hour or two at the

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ARCHBISHOP

FROM A1

more people doing precisely those things during Mass. I have even witnessed a number who chew gum as they are walking up to receive holy Communion and received with the gum in their mouths.

Of course, we want people to go to church and we are happy when they come. But what we do once we are there says something about our mental and spiritual disposition toward the Lord. Chewing gum, for example, does not reflect a reverence for the Lord and respect for what is sacred.

As I wrote a few months ago in another column, would you dress in shorts to dine with the president of the United States? Of course not. Would it enter your mind, then, to chew gum

At Mass, we dine at the table of the Lord. Jesus feeds us with his own divine body and blood. Is there anything more awesome we could ever expect to do?

while dining with the president? Of course not.

Everyone appreciates that a visit to the White House is a special occasion where we would dress and behave appropriately. Why, then, would we have such a nonchalant attitude about being in the house of God? Is being in the presence of God less special than being in the presence of the president?

At Mass, we dine at the table

of the Lord. Jesus feeds us with his own divine body and blood. Is there anything more awesome we could ever expect to do?

That is why the Church requires that people fast for an hour before Communion. The point is not that food is bad. The Church simply wants people to realize that the Eucharist is sacred food, not like regular food. It is the body and blood of Jesus himself. The brief fast reminds us of that.

Mass is a time when we communicate with the divine Word of God and what St. Thomas Aquinas called the "bread of the angels." Hence the need for a reverent attitude, disposition and preparation to appreciate that sacred, holy Communion with God.

Gum chewing is out of place. So is talking on a cell phone.

Mass is a time when we communicate with the divine Word of God and what St. Thomas Aquinas called the "bread of the angels."

I realize that sometimes people might simply forget to turn them off before walking into church. But there are others who simply cannot "disconnect" from the world even for one hour a week.

Here is God, trying to speak to them, and the line is literally busy.

To celebrate Mass attentively, you must use your whole body and soul. This Lent would be a good time to reflect on the great privilege we have to eat at the table of the Lord. ■

ARZOBISPO

VIENE DE LA PÁGINA 1

¿Cómo lo puede lograr, si está masticando chicle o contestando sus celulares?

Sé que no todos lo hacen, pero en mis visitas a varias parroquias, e incluso en actividades en la catedral, he notado un mayor número de personas haciendo precisamente esas cosas durante la misa. Hasta he visto a un número de personas masticando chicle mientras se dirigen a recibir la Santa Comunión, y la reciben con el chicle en sus bocas.

Por supuesto, queremos que la gente vaya a la iglesia, y nos alegramos cuando va. Pero lo que hacemos cuando nos encontramos allí dice mucho sobre nuestra disposición mental y espiritual hacia el Señor. Masticar chicle, por ejemplo, no refleja reverencia por el Señor y respeto por lo que es sagrado.

Como he preguntado en otras

En la misa, cenamos en la mesa del Señor. Jesús nos alimenta con su propio Cuerpo y Sangre divinos. ¿Podríamos imaginarnos algo más maravilloso?

columnas, ¿se vestirían con pantalones cortos para cenar con el presidente de los Estados Unidos? Por supuesto que no. ¿Masticarían chicle mientras cenar con el presidente? Por supuesto que no.

Cualquiera apreciaría una visita a la Casa Blanca como una ocasión especial en la que nos vestiríamos y comportaríamos apropiadamente.

Entonces, ¿por qué tenemos una actitud indiferente cuando estamos en la casa de Dios? ¿Acaso estar en la presencia de Dios es menos importante que

estar en la presencia del presidente?

En la misa, cenamos en la mesa del Señor. Jesús nos alimenta con su propio Cuerpo y Sangre divinos. ¿Podríamos imaginarnos algo más maravilloso?

La Iglesia requiere que la gente ayune una hora antes de la comunión, no porque el alimento sea malo, sino porque simplemente desea que la gente se dé cuenta de que la Eucaristía es un alimento sagrado, que no es igual a cualquier otro alimento. Es el Cuerpo y la Sangre del mismo Jesús. El ayuno breve nos lo recuerda.

La misa es un momento en el que entramos en comunicación con la Palabra Divina de Dios y lo que Santo Tomás de Aquino llamó "el pan de los ángeles." Por eso se necesita una actitud, disposición y preparación reverente para apreciar la sagrada, santa comunión con Dios.

Masticar chicle es incorrecto, como también lo es hablar por el

La misa es un momento en el que entramos en comunicación con la Palabra Divina de Dios y lo que Santo Tomás de Aquino llamó "el pan de los ángeles."

teléfono celular. Sé que hay ocasiones en que la gente se olvida de apagarlo antes de entrar a la iglesia. Pero hay otros que, sencillamente, no pueden "desconectarse" del mundo, aunque sea una hora a la semana. Dios trata de comunicarse con ellos y la línea está ocupada, literalmente.

Para celebrar la misa con atención, deben utilizar todo su cuerpo y alma. Esta Cuaresma puede ser un buen tiempo para reflexionar sobre el gran privilegio que tenemos de cenar en la mesa del Señor. ■

COMMUNITY EVENTS

St. Mark carnival, March 4-7, 5601 S. Flamingo Road, Southwest Ranches. Discounted ride session passes may be purchased through the church office until March 2. stmarkcarnival@bellsouth.net.

Archbishop Curley Notre Dame Art Gallery, 4949 N.E. Second Ave., Miami, adjoining Monastery Gardens. Opening Saturday, March 6, exhibit featuring works by Father David G. Russell, sculptor and renowned homilist, after a hiatus of almost a decade. 305-751-8367, ext. 29; www.acnd.net or news@acnd.net

Broward Council of Catholic Women spring general meeting and luncheon, Saturday, March 6, 9:30 a.m., Palm Aire Club and Resort, Pompano Beach. Hosted by St. Vincent CCW. 954-227-8330.

Our Lady of the Lakes 36th annual festival, March 11-14, N.W. 67th Ave. and Miami Lakeway North, Miami Lakes. More than 20 popular carnival rides, international food booths, live shows and performances. 305-558-2202, ext. 616.

Dinner and dance in honor of St. Joseph, Saturday, March 20, 6 p.m., St. David Parish, 3900 S. University Drive, Davie. Dance to the music of "Poppy's Band" and enjoy traditional Italian food. Tickets: \$20. Sponsored by the Women's Club of St. David. 954-966-2427.

CONCERTS

Cathedral concert series, St. Mary Cathedral, 7525 N.W. Second Ave., Miami. Free. 305-759-4531 or www.cathedralofstmary.com: Sunday, Feb. 28, 4 p.m., Greater Miami Youth Symphony, with musicians ages 5-18, led by Huifang Chen, director.

St. Pius X concert series, 2511 N. Ocean Blvd. (A1A), Fort Lauderdale. Tickets: \$10; free for children under 8. 954-565-9935: Sunday, Feb. 28, 4 p.m., Kristen DiNonno performs music from her new CD, "If I Only Knew," with songs ranging from intensely spiritual to classical.

FAITH EDUCATION

Instituto Pastoral del Sureste (SEPI), Certificado

en Ministerio Pastoral Hispano, y cursos para ampliar conocimientos sobre pastoral hispana. 305-279-2333, www.sepimiami.org: "Teología Hispana en Estados Unidos", jueves, 7:30 p.m., 4 de marzo-13 de mayo. Profesor: Padre José P. Burgués, Sch.P.

MASSES /PRAYER SESSIONS

Abba spiritual mission, March 8-10, 7:30 p.m., St. Patrick Parish, 3716 Garden Ave., Miami Beach, with Father David G. Russell; music by Roger Grenier. 305-934-8319.

Songs and prayer in the spirit of Taizé, Tuesday, March 9, 7:30 p.m., Barry University, Cor Jesu Chapel, 11300 N.E. Second Ave., Miami Shores. Chant, Scripture, silent reflection, intercessory prayer. 305-899-3650 or 305-458-9919.

Ultreya en español, martes, 8 p.m., iglesia de St. Stephen, 2000 S. State Road 7, Miramar. Todos los cursillistas son bienvenidos. 954-893-7898, 305-596-5246.

RETREATS/DAYS OF REFLECTION

Emmaus retreat for women (Church of the Little Flower), March 5-7, in English, MorningStar Renewal Center, 7275 S.W. 124 St., Pinecrest. Take some time to strengthen your relationship with God and to grow as a person. Registration: 305-905-3714.

Marriage covenant retreat, March 12-14, St. John Neumann Parish, 12125 S.W. 107 Ave., Miami. Revisit the vows you took and the covenant that you made with your spouse and the Lord. 305-223-7557.

Retiro de Emaús para Caballeros 15, Church of the Little Flower, 12-14 de marzo, Miami Youth Center, 3333 S. Miami Ave., Miami. Tome tiempo para fortalecer su relación con Dios y crecer como persona. 305-776-2790, 305-519-5336.

Matrimonios en Victoria, 13-14 de marzo, salón parroquial de Our Lady of Lourdes, 11291 S.W. 142 Ave., Miami. Para fortalecer su compromiso como esposos y padres, y su relación con Dios. 305-490-0903.

SCHOOL EVENTS

St. James School seeks alumni from class of 1978 for reunion in March. marzayas@bellsouth.net.

St. John the Apostle School open house, Wednesday, March 17, 8:30-11 a.m., 479 E. 4th St., Hialeah. See Catholic education in action. Educating children in the faith for more than 60 years. Step Up For Student scholarships, McKay and VPK accepted. 305-888-6819 or bimonte.sjacs@gmail.com.

St. Agatha School, 1125 S.W. 107 Ave., Miami, is accepting applications for enrollment for the 2010-11 academic year, grades PreK2-eight. More than 25 years of academic excellence; among the top five archdiocesan schools in standardized test scores. Call for personal tour: 305-222-8751.

Alumni soccer tournament, Saturday, May 29, Archbishop Curley Notre Dame High School, 4949 N.E. 2nd Ave., Miami. Registration is now open; secure your team's spot! 954-682-3678, bdtrigator@aol.com.

SUPPORT MINISTRIES/ PEER GROUPS

"Schott Saturdays," 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Schott Communities, 6591 S. Flamingo Road, Cooper City. For individuals 18 and over with special needs. Life skills, exercise, light academics, fun time and weekly specials such as dancing, yoga, crafting or art classes. Fees based on days participants enroll. Space is limited. 954-434-3306.

Courage, for people with same-sex sexual attraction who want to live chaste Christian lives. Miami: 786-394-0069, couragemiami@yahoo.com; Fort Lauderdale: 954-778-2101, ftlaudcourage@yahoo.com.

Grief Share, Sundays, 10:15-11:45 a.m., St. Gregory Ministry Building, second floor, 200 N. University Drive, Plantation. 954-473-6261, ext.167; or javerell@cherubim.org.

Nuevo Caminar, para alcohólicos, adictos a drogas y familiares co-dependientes. 1030 E. Eighth Ave., Hialeah. 305-863-3355.

Deadline for Calendar listings

The Florida Catholic welcomes calendar items of parish/organization events that are open to the whole archdiocese. There is no charge but items must be in the Miami office at least six weeks before the event. To list an event both on the Web site and in the newspaper, go to www.miamiarch.org, click on the banner "announce your event for free" and follow the instructions. Notices may be sent by e-mail: arsoto@theadom.org; fax: 305-762-1132; mail: The Florida Catholic, 9401 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, FL 33138.

YOUNG ADULTS

In Christ United, Wednesdays, 8 p.m., Prince of Peace Parish, 12800 N.W. 6th St., Miami. For young adults 18-25 to grow in the love of Christ through fellowship, weekly meetings, holy Mass and service. Prayer of the rosary on the 13th of the month. icu_yam@princeofpeacemiami.org.

VOCATIONS

Vocations Awareness Weekend, March 12-14, St. John Vianney Seminary, 2900 S.W. 87 Ave., Miami. For males (high school seniors through age 35) interested in the priesthood. Must register to be considered. 305-762-1137, vocations@theadom.org.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

HIV/AIDS ministry of Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Miami, needs volunteer mentors for work with HIV-positive individuals. Meeting, Wednesday, March 10, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., 1503 N.E. 26 St., Wilton Manors. Must attend Virtus training, undergo fingerprinting, background screening. 954-630-9793.

Respect life, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., English-, Spanish-, Creole-speaking, to work in Respect Life office, 3600 S.W. 32nd Blvd., West Park. 954-981-2922, ilovelife@bellsouth.net.

RACHEL

FROM PAGE 1

doctor's office. It would just be a bunch of cells that was being removed.

I got pregnant using the birth control that was so widely available, and using it properly. My boyfriend, who loved me and would have married me if I had asked, immediately did the right "feminist" thing. He said, "It's your body, your decision. I'll pay for whatever you need."

In a panic — for I was a nice girl who was starting graduate school in a month and didn't think that this boyfriend, good as he was, was the man I should spend my life with — I chose abortion. I couldn't face the horrors of single motherhood, the loss of my education, my parents' disgust and heartbreak, and mostly the humiliation. My gynecologist offered the procedure with alacrity, right there in his office. No pain, no mess and no one would know. It would all be over, as they had promised, in an hour or two.

So life went on. A few weeks afterward, a niggling doubt emerged. Had I done the right thing? I went to confession at a random parish and was given a generous absolution. I also broke up with that boyfriend, who somehow had been tarnished in my eyes. I soon after met my husband, married him in the Church, and along came our first child.

FIRST CHILD: SHOCK

It was the birth of our first child that sent me into shock. Here was the result of a pregnancy, just like the other. And he was perfect in my eyes. He was clearly a miracle, a gift from God.

I looked around at all the other people I passed day by day. I felt, for the first time, that each and every one was a miracle in his or her own right. I felt, in the phrase by C.S. Lewis, their "weight of glory." I could see quite perfectly

WHERE TO GO?

Project Rachel is a one-on-one session between the counselor and the women (or men) seeking assistance with post-abortion healing. Project Rachel counselors are available in each of the archdiocese's five emergency pregnancy centers.

"We find out what area the girl lives in and then refer her to a counselor in her area," said Maureen Freeman, administrative assistant for the respect life ministry. "It is all confidential, one-on-one. It is not a group thing."

After the individual counseling, which takes about eight or nine weeks, the women can attend a Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreat in English or Spanish.

To reach a Project Rachel counselor, call 954-981-2984 or e-mail ilovelife@bellsouth.net. The toll-free number for Project Rachel is 1-877-908-1212.

in my little baby's every yawn and smile that here was something to give my life for, a person who was worth any amount of trouble, pain or humiliation.

The guilt set in then, very badly. So badly, sometimes, that it felt crippling. As though I had bathed myself in ink and no matter how hard I scrubbed, I would always be stained.

When I was caught behind a car with a "respect life" bumper sticker, the ones with a little embryo and a beating heart, I would recoil in horror. The knowledge of what I'd done was something I kept tripping over, when I least expected it. And it was painful every time.

I felt like a terrible hypocrite. Here I was, a regular churchgoer, with this albatross around my neck that only I could see. I had several more children and everyone I knew considered me an exemplary mother. Little did they know! I was that monster who had killed her own child.

Several times in confession I told the various priests that I could not possibly be forgiven by God for the terrible thing that I

had done. They assured me of my absolution and of God's forgiveness and mercy. Those were mere words that didn't penetrate my fog of guilt. I knew that God could forgive any sin, but was any sin as big as mine? I doubted it. There had to be limits to God's mercy, I told myself.

One side effect to all this was my inability to give myself over completely to Church doctrine. I was a cafeteria Catholic, since accepting the whole truth would be to face definitively the ghastly fact that I had murdered.

I was pro-choice, of course. Who was I to tell other people to deny themselves the relief that I myself had taken? Dared I ask other people to be more courageous and self-denying than I? Nope.

'TRUTH WAS KILLING ME'

But of course I knew the truth. I had my five children to tell me of it, every day, in a million ways. And the truth was killing me.

I read about Project Rachel on the Internet. I never was told about it by any priest. I never saw it advertised on any church bulletin. I never heard it talked about around church.

I decided to try it. It took all my courage to call. I called and started the process. It took several weeks.

The kind facilitator led me through what was one of the hardest things I ever did in my life. I dreaded each session. I was asked to review it all. How I got pregnant and what were my circumstances. How I decided on abortion. Who participated in the act, and who counseled me for and against. Who performed, when and how? How did it feel and how did I feel afterwards?

Then we turned to the soul of the child. How do we know all people have souls? How does God tell us that he treats each person's soul? How is my little child's soul

being cared for right now in heaven? Does the child know me, does the child forgive me? Can I ask for my child's forgiveness? What is forgiveness? Am I worthy of it? Why would God forgive me?

'YES, HE LOVES ME'

Because he loves me. Finally, finally, it all sunk in.

Yes, he loves me. And he, who gave his only Son that we might have life and have it more abundantly, can forgive even me. Because that is how much he loves me.

The world is a new place for me. I can walk now, thanks to Project Rachel, with the confidence of one who knows she is forgiven. My soul has been washed clean. Thank God for the Catholic Church that knows how to throw us poor sufferers a lifeline!

I keep these words from Pope John Paul II ("*Evangelium Vitae*") in my desk and I read them often:

"Do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourself over with humility and trust to repentance. ... To the same Father and his mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child. With the friendly and expert advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life."

That is who I am now, after Project Rachel — a staunch and confident defender of human life; a mother of many children, even one by adoption; and a woman who, with sure hope, has entrusted my first child to our Father.

— Grace