

Fall Conference is here; don't miss it

EDITORIAL

"Bold Faith, Vibrant Traditions" is the theme of this year's Fall Conference, and nothing could be more appropriate. The Diocese of Boise, in the midst of its All at the Table pastoral plan, is facing a critical period in its history, and it will require every measure of faith and the cultural wealth of the traditions of all of its members to move into the future with confidence.

At the last major gathering - Convocation in June - Bishop Michael P. Driscoll called for continued efforts on ministry to and with youths and young

adults. Meanwhile, other issues await careful study. As leaders continue to bring focus to the process, bold faith and vibrant traditions will be critical to moving the plan forward.

Everywhere you look in the Fall Conference program, there is bold faith: In Tricia Hoyt's Saturday keynote "Living the Sacraments Boldly, Ordinarily, Always and Everywhere," and in Jerry Goebel's afternoon address "Those Who are Not

Against Us are For Us." The times ahead are not for the indecisive or weak of will. The bishop's vision to draw the disenfranchised and peripheral Catholics to the table has always demanded determination and unflagging courage. Fall Conference will provide the nourishment that will continue to sustain us on that bold mission.

Vibrant traditions represent the bounty to be shared when all are at the table. Whether the pioneer heritage of untold numbers of Idaho Catholic families, or the gritty, determined

faith that has been a hallmark of immigrant Catholics, or the tribulations borne by Native American Catholics, each has a resilience that secures the future of Idaho's Catholic legacy. It is the traditions of dozens of cultures that must be nurtured and woven into our state's Catholic tapestry. Every unique tradition is a gift from God; each one is irreplaceable.

In the end, the beauty of Fall Conference is in its reflection of God's plan for the church. It provides exactly what we need, precisely at the time it is needed. Don't miss out!

Why marriage vows struggle to survive troubled times

You make vows when mere promises won't last. In the church, three groups of people make vows: Priests, male and female religious, and married people.

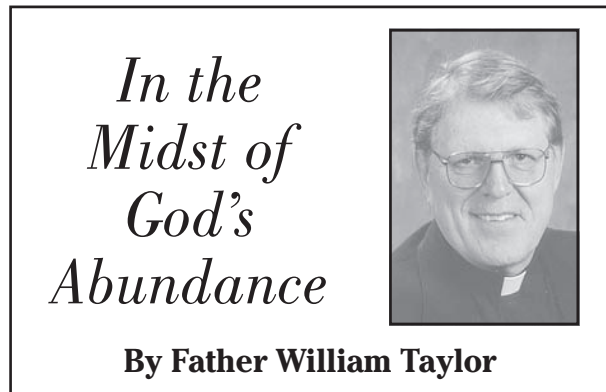
Vows have to be supported by a solid foundation that resembles a three-legged stool. After all these years, I can name these three necessary elements: Emotional maturity, a strong understanding of boundaries and a solid spirituality.

I have learned the hard way that life does not wait until you are ready. I was 26 going on 16 when I was ordained, with no sense of boundaries and without an adult's commitment to a spiritual life. I had to build the three legs of my foundation in an up-and-down process that goes on to this day.

I cannot believe that it is any different for married people. On the day they make it to the altar, most of them have barely shed their emotional baby teeth. What experiences helped them set the boundaries that will hold their boat together on a shark-infested stormy sea? Above all, where do they find the spirituality that will enable them to follow Christ in their chosen vocation?

Married life makes my life look simple. In my home, it is God, me and my dog. It is much different if you are married. Someone compared marriage to two porcupines trying to snuggle together in a very small box soon shared with equally prickly children. Marriage links people without identical levels of maturity, without an identical understanding of values and without the same spirituality - or sometimes with no shared spirituality at all.

We tell young people that they have to work at



By Father William Taylor

their marriage, but you can't work if you don't have a place to plant your feet. The fact that Catholic divorce rates now approach the national norm is an indication of how badly we are doing.

I think of the journey married people travel: First years of marriage ... the first child ... discovering the dimensions of real intimacy ... the jobs ... the realization that the person I'm married to is not the person I married ... boredom ... the seven year's itch ... life-changing catastrophes ... teenagers ... the empty nest ... retirement years ... then, the long final decline. Whew. That sort of thing needs emotional maturity, boundaries, a vibrant and resilient spirituality - and then some.

The church is making huge effort to support those who make priestly and religious vows. Its effort for supporting married people is somewhat less. To make matters worse, most married people don't seem to realize they need that three-fold

foundation, and their commitment to its perpetual construction.

Many experts recommend Pope John Paul's teaching on Theology of the Body. This is a good start, but I can't help thinking that even a man as holy as John Paul II is limited by virtue of his experiences. Karol Wojtyla was an only child whose mother died when he was eight. He did not witness first hand an average married life. He never served as a parish priest ministering to families in their struggles. Finally, though he had a golden opportunity before he became pope, he never sat down to listen to mature married people as they talked at length and with great insight about the glories and crosses of their lives.

Pope John Paul was also celibate, and the core ideas in his Theology of the Body were based on the writing of St. John of the Cross - another celibate. Might there not be some things married people know about their state that escapes even the wisest celibate's experience or insight? I think so.

To become more than a celibate's vision, Pope John Paul's Theology of the Body needs to be filtered through the lives of ordinary married couples, old and young. That is beginning to happen, but it is going to take a while.

Lend with this solid belief: When married couples begin to learn to approach their vows with the same foundation that priests and religious use, the church will explode with unbelievable life and energy.

Father Taylor is the author of two books on Mormonism and has penned several award-winning pieces for the ICR over the years.

A generation passes and now we must carry on

By Stephen Kent
Catholic News Service

So ends the Kennedy Generation.

For us of that generation who were beginning college when John F. Kennedy was elected president of the U.S. and then preparing for graduation when his brother, Edward M. Kennedy, was first elected to the U.S. Senate, it is the end of an era. There was never a time in our adult lives when a Kennedy was not on the public stage.

Tragedy and irony abound when we reflect upon the life of Sen. Edward Kennedy, who died Aug. 25.

"Our country has lost a great leader who picked up the torch of his fallen brothers and became the greatest U.S. senator of our time," said President Barack Obama of Kennedy. Perhaps so.

There will be many with Pulitzers to their credit and advanced degrees who will

appropriately assess the place Edward Kennedy will hold in the nation's history. A few personal reflections also come to mind.

The Kennedy era, which began with John Kennedy's election as president, was often referred to after his assassination as "Camelot," a reference to the Broadway musical celebrating a mythical kingdom where life was perfect.

The life of Ted Kennedy, however, more resembles a tragedy in the classic dramatic sense. The tragic hero is one who ascends to great power and prestige, then falls as a result of a tragic flaw in his character.

Few find redemption, but Ted did, rising from the disgrace of personal failure to become a competent and respected senator.

For those of us of the Kennedy Generation, Ted was a national man of sorrows on the public stage for six

decades. We saw him walk behind the caisson carrying the body of his assassinated brother, President Kennedy, and less than five years later deliver the eulogy at the funeral of another assassinated brother, Sen. Robert Kennedy.

Ted was the only son of four to die of natural causes. Tragedy and irony intertwined throughout his life and career.

Chappaquiddick came early the same morning of one of the nation's magnificent achievements: putting a man on the moon.

Initial reports of Kennedy's driving accident that killed a young woman passenger were all but lost as all eyes were on the moon. He later pleaded guilty to leaving the scene of an accident.

Ted was part of our lives through Vietnam, the horrible year of 1968, the resignation of one president, the impeachment of another, still more

Wars and a terrorist attack on the U.S.

There will be questions and criticism about how Catholic Ted was, as if this were for us to judge. He supported legislation advocating immigration reform, rights for those with disabilities, family and medical leave, increasing of the minimum wage and universal health coverage.

He also stood in sharp opposition to Catholic teaching by supporting abortion and opposing the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act.

He acknowledged his personal faults and took responsibility for them in a public act of contrition in 1991 at Harvard University: "I recognize my own shortcomings - the faults in the conduct of my private life. I realize that I alone am responsible for them, and I am the one who must confront them," he said in that speech.

"I believe that each of us as individuals must not only

struggle to make a better world, but to make ourselves better, too," he added.

Unlike his brothers, Ted was blessed with time, well aware his end was near. He gave President Obama a personal letter to deliver to Pope Benedict XVI earlier this summer. His last public act was to ask Massachusetts to expedite the process for choosing his successor.

Reflecting on the Kennedy era brings to mind contrition and redemption. This very public member of the pilgrim church on earth was able more than once to stumble, fall and recover.

Mindful of the power of redemption and mercy of God, may we of the Kennedy Generation continue on our journey to the same reward.

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