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### FR. JIM BACIK EDUCATIONAL FORUM

#### WHAT THE SPIRIT IS SAYING TO THE CHURCH THROUGH YOUNG ADULTS

OUR LADY OF THE WOODS  
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#### Introduction

**Bishop Thomas Gumbleton**

As always, it's a pleasure to be with all of you, the members of the Elephants. And today, I know many of you who are here are people who have already heard Fr. Bacik; and your presence here today, despite the fact that you have heard him before, is a real testimony to how blessed we are to have Jim with us today. He is a native of Toledo, Ohio and a supporter of the Toledo Mudhens, (Laughter) which is the number one farm team for the Detroit Tigers. Jim grew up in Toledo, entered the seminary there, and then was ordained a priest in 1962. He was a parish priest and did parish ministry; but very soon, he was marked as one who would spend his priesthood in a ministry of teaching primarily. And he was prepared for that, not only by the seminary training, but also by receiving a Master of Arts degree from the Athenium in Ohio, a Master of Science degree from Fordham University in New York City, and a Doctorate of Philosophy degree from Oxford University in Campton, England. And so his educational background is very, very well rounded and very complete. Over the years he has been a teacher in a variety of places: in seminaries in Michigan and in Ohio - Catholic seminaries, Protestant seminaries. He also has taught in public universities, especially the University of Toledo in Ohio. And it is there that he is currently pastor of Corpus Christi parish, which is the university parish. And so he combines ministry to a parish family, but especially a parish family that reaches out to young people at the university.

Jim has written a number of books and also many, many articles, chapters of books which, I presume, some of his writings are available in the back. He also has spoken throughout the country in a variety of places and circumstances; and he is always very, very well received as a speaker. Today, we asked him to speak to us about the situation of young adults in the Church. Among the many elephants in our living room in the Church, I think the fact that young people are drifting away from active practice in the Catholic Church community is certainly a very outstanding elephant, certainly a prominent elephant. And so we're very blessed that Jim is here with us today to share with us his insights on how we can listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church through the young adults in our Church; and I am confident that we will leave here with great assurance, that somehow, Jim enlightens us and shows us the way we can help to bring our young people into full practice in our parish churches and our parish church community. So I ask you to welcome Jim this afternoon. (Applause)

#### What the Spirit is Saying to the Church through Young Adults

**Fr. Jim Bacik**

People came from Toledo to be here today. Anyway, I figured out how you get all these great speakers here. Tom Gumbleton calls them up; and nobody can say no to Tom. (Laughter) That's pretty clear. And I've learned about this group, these Elephants; you can't miss it I guess - impressive group; and I am glad to have the chance to speak with you.

I'm going to talk about collegians. I've been working as a campus minister for more years than I want to remember; and still do that now. I probably should say something about my own limitations in doing that. I actually know almost nothing about their music, or their world, or the TV they watch, and so

on. I brought Tim Dubois, our Ministry Assistant from Corpus Christi, with me. He's an actual young person, (Laughter) an actual student. And so he is here; and when we have the question period, he'll answer the questions that come up. My students said they are going to put on my tombstone, "He never adapted." (Laughter) I don't use a computer; I don't do Twitter or Facebook. In fact, when I say those words, I really don't know what they mean. But none of that is the case. Yet, I do think that I know something about those collegians and something about what they might be saying to us today. So I am going to approach this first by talking in general, about collegians, and then I'm going to look at various examples of individual collegians who might have a voice for us. That's my outline general plan. You received a handout, when you came in, I think, and if not, you can get it on the way out; but that would be a reminder about stuff that I said, and categories that I'm using, and so on. So there is an article that summarizes some of the things that I'm going to say today. (See attachment.)

Collegians, you know, one of the reasons I think I can speak to them is because, we all share a common human nature. So it's not like they're from another planet. We know them. You know, they try to figure out who they are - what their identity is. They're trying to find a career path. They're looking for a mate in life. They fall in love; and they get sad when their grandparents die. All of that are things we share with them, and reasons that we can be open to them, and listen to them, precisely because we share that human nature with them. But we should talk a bit about some of the other influences on them. They're obviously taken by this culture in which we live; and the social media are extremely important to them - Facebook and the Twitter, and all of that - and the way they communicate that is obviously influencing the way they see the world.

Remember the word of Walter Ong and the past? Walter said how, "When the media changes, the consciousness changes." So when people begin to write, things begin to look different. And when we had printing, things changed, and the way we see the world. So there is no doubt that our young people see the world; their consciousness works in a way different than the way my consciousness works. So, in giving this talk, I have a clear outline in mind. I have Roman numeral I, and a, b, and so on. I think in that linear fashion. I think in many ways our young people think, in more circular terms, greater images, and so on. There's a different consciousness that emerges. I'm not sure we understand what that's all about yet, and what differences it makes, and what we can learn from that. But, clearly, their mode of thinking, their consciousness, is changed precisely because of the social media that they're so used to. And they're influenced by this culture in which we live. And when we say that, we got to remember that this culture is fundamentally ambivalent from the viewpoint of the gospel tradition that we represent. So there are obviously positive things in this culture.

There's a wonderful book. Some people know Charles Taylor, the Canadian philosopher, and so on. Well, he has a small book in addition to the big ones: *Secular Age* and the small one is, *The Ethics of Authenticity*. And in there, he speaks to the young people today; and one of their great ideals is to be authentic. And certainly the young people I deal with are like that. The desire to be an authentic person, to be true to myself, to follow my own instincts, to in various ways develop my talent and gifts as much as possible - an ethics of authenticity that, I think, is admirable.

At the same time, and probably because of the social media, it is much harder, it seems to me - they have this glut of information - it is harder for them to make critical judgments. You know, they have this glut of information; it's all coming in, but they're not terribly programmed. When you read, something different happens than when you watch TV. Reading, there's a critical mechanism that is at work; and I think, very often, maybe, we don't find that in our younger. So they drink in messages from the culture that is sort of a rugged individualism, and a consumerist mentality, and maybe an excessive nationalism. So the common *isms* are very much a part of their own consciousness; and, I think, in some ways, not critically taken in. I see that in my students every day. If it's on the Internet, it's true. They'll write papers that quote something on the internet that is weird, or strange, or not backed up, or not scholarly, and so on, and really not think much about it. They have to be trained in order to think through that glut of information in some critical way.

One of the interesting things about our young people today - this is generally known statistically - is their closeness to their parents. Our young people, you know, they call their parents often. They don't

seem to be embarrassed by them like some of us were. They seem to accept that. In fact universities play to that these days. They spend more time thinking about, how do we reach out to parents? They have to. In fact, we have a word for it now, right? "the helicopter parents." They're there; they're hovering over all the time. If I asked my students, "Who's your great role models in life?" Parents come up over and over. Usually, it isn't Tiger Woods, or Charles Barclay, or somebody ... my parents. Even when they're divorced, many of them from broken families, but still ... where did I get my cues? A common thing, morality: "How would I explain that to my dad?" You hear it over and over; and it isn't just anecdotal. We've got statistics now that will back that up - great care for their parents, influenced by their parents, want to be close to their parents.

Well that's a little background in dealing with these millennials - that's what we tend to call them, right? They came of age during the change to the new millennium; so we call them millennials. There are a lot of them. And there are a lot of them who are collegians. You know, we are about 25% of the population in the United States - we Catholics - and we're over 30% of the collegiate population. That tells you something! In fact, I happen to have written the Pastoral Letter for the American Bishops on Campus Ministry many years ago, back in the middle 80s, called, *Empowered by the Spirit*. And, at that time, in doing my research around the country, Catholics were 38% of the collegial population in the country. That includes the South. We're 38% of the collegiate population; that helps explain why we're so affluent. We've moved up the socio-economic ladder. There's no doubt about it! And we're still over 30%, over represented in the collegiate population. So these young people are important. They are more educated; and they come from more affluent backgrounds; and they're going to have a bigger say in how this society runs. That's why this topic is so important, why we have to deal with these young people, and think about who they are, and where they fit.

Now, let me talk about them. Again I'm in general. I'm moving to more particular later on. But in general, when we think about them religiously and spiritually, one thing is important to see is, that their view of the world is different from the view of most people in this room, in terms of religion and Catholicism. I was teaching a course - it was a big course, a room bigger than this actually, I think - and I had a hundred undergraduates sitting in the first three rows, okay? Behind them, I've got three or four hundred adult learners; and the course is on theology, and so on. So, on purpose, I tell that old familiar joke, that is: Cardinal Ottaviani is at the Council. Cardinal Ottaviani comes out; he's late. He rushes out to the cab and says, "Get me to the Council." And the driver drives him to Trent. (Laughter) Now, visual image: I have three rows of people who look at me, "What?" And I have 300 people laughing, like happened here.

Vatican II is ancient history. The categories of conservative and liberal that we use to talk about ourselves and our peers, and so on, have relatively little meaning to the collegians today. They're in a different world. It's an absolutely crucial thing to see about them. To talk about our young people in terms of liberal and conservative misses the mark of most of what we would need to know about them. It just isn't the way to approach them. They are not in reaction to Vatican II. Vatican II is as old as Trent. They don't know who Ottaviani is. They don't know what it means to say, "The driver drove them to Trent." It's all one thing back there in the past - ancient history. So that seems to be an important thing to keep in mind, as we think about our young people this way. When we are trying to probe more deeply into where they're at religiously, we're going to have to come at them in terms of what's going on in their own hearts, what part of human nature is at work, and so on.

Now, by survey and anecdotally, it is fascinating to see that our collegians, generally, the majority of Catholic collegians have in their religious sensibility many of the major themes from the Second Vatican Council. It's not like they read the Council documents and knows it; but it's in their soul, in their heart. They picked it up in various ways by living in this pluralistic democratic culture, by interacting with other people, by living on campus ... they picked it up in a lot of different ways. But think of some of these things. First of all they are clear on the notion that we are the Church. We like to think: "That's Vatican II; we are the Church." They see that. They know that. They expect that. They expect to have a say in what goes on. We are the Church - that is part of their general consciousness. They understand that liturgy is communal worship. You come to Mass at Corpus Christi University Parish, at our 6:00 Mass when all the students are there, you're not going to see anybody saying the rosary during Mass.

(Laughter) Now, some of them say the rosary before Mass, some of our students gather to say the rosary, but they don't do it during Mass. They're not sitting there with their private prayer book. They understand, by whatever means, I don't really know, that liturgy is communal worship. They've got that down. They're not where a previous generation was that didn't know that. They'd think liturgy was odd if there was no singing, no greeting of peace, or no communal elements in it. That would be strange to them.

There's a book out called, *Reclaiming Catholicism*, edited by Tom Groome. I contributed a chapter to it, and I realized that our young people know nothing of that previous world; so that book was written, so they would know something of *Reclaiming Catholicism, Treasures Old and New*. It's written from the very viewpoint that these young people don't know anything about what the Legion of Decency was, or a hundred other things. It's all in that book. That's a foreign world to them. But they caught some of these major messages: religious liberty, it's in their bones and blood, I mean, that ancient controversy, Leo XIII, and all of that, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, John Courtney Murray, and all that stuff; that's ancient history. Murray's position is simply accepted by our young people. It's in their bones and blood. "Of course it's true; I can't believe people ever thought that Catholicism was in the majority, it had to have privilege and preference. I can't believe that was ever like that." They simply accept it. They understand the importance of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. Generally there's a greater tolerance that way.

Now all of that is extremely important. What that tells me is, that the victory of the majority in the Council is going to prevail; the reform movement is going to fail. What these young people do is solidify in my own mind that famous article by my own mentor, Karl Rahner, a great German Jesuit, died in '84, one of the most famous articles or talks he ever gave was right here in the United States. Karl Rahner! It was on a theological interpretation of Vatican II. And what Rahner said was that the standard interpretation of Vatican II is absolutely wrong. Standard interpretation was, "Well, we had going on in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, an ecumenical movement, and a liturgical movement, and a theological revival, and new biblical studies, and then we all came together; and John XXIII brought the Council; the Council was sort of a culmination of those wonderful movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Rahner said that standard explanation, in his opinion, is absolutely wrong. That's not what Vatican II was about. For Rahner, Vatican II was the tiny, tiny beginning of the second great change that was going to happen in the history of the Christian Church. First change, most important, it came in the first century, when we moved from being a Jewish community to open to the Gentiles, a work of Paul and all of that. The second great change is, we're living through it now: tiny, tiny beginning of the Church becoming for the first time a World Church, for the first time, a Church where we celebrate indigenous cultures: a Chinese Christianity, and Indian Christianity, an African Christianity, a Latin American Christianity.

For the first time, we are moving in that direction - the tiny, tiny beginning of a major movement, that's it's hard to imagine what it's all about. And he says, in that viewpoint, "The centralizing tendencies in the Vatican will be seen to be totally anachronistic, totally out of tune with the direction in which the Church is moving towards greater pluralism, towards indigenous forms of the faith. It will be seen to be out of step with the time, like a last ditch effort to reform the reform.: What it says, and what my students tell me is- I'm interpreting, I'm not saying - they say this: those students, the stuff they got in their heads, and consciousness about the Church, you're not going to be able to force a reform of the reform on them! You're not going to be able to go back to stuff, pre-Vatican II stuff, and make it somehow stick with them, or make a difference. They are, to me, a sign of great hope that Karl Rahner's exactly right: that we are at the beginning of a major change, and these young people are going to be in the vanguard of that change as we move through it. I see that as a great sign of hope coming from our young people. All right! That's sort of my first thing here about where we're at.

So let me try something. How about if I ask you to just turn to the person next to you for just one minute and say something positive. I mean don't say that was all a bunch of B.S.; but turn to the person next to you and just say something positive that you saw in that. I'm only going to do this for a minute or so.

(After the time is up) Lot of conversation! If you want to read that Rahner article, it's in Volume 20 of the Theological Investigations. It is one of the most important articles he ever wrote, and one of the touch stones for the way we interpret our world today, it seems to me.

Anyway, now let me move to what I am thinking of as more particular, and add part of my talk. What I wanted to do is raise up a number of individual collegians - in many ways they are composites - and see what they're saying to us. I'm not saying, "Well, the Holy Spirit is speaking," but we certainly need to stay open to that, stay open to the fact that the Spirit might be speaking through these young people. So I've got, I don't know, seven or eight individuals I have in mind, and what are they telling us.

You know, as I'm talking, I forgot a really important point in Part 1. Can we redirect? Young people do that easily. Tim will redirect easily. I forgot a really important part, and that is: what has been commonly called the demise of the Catholic sub-culture. So, many of the people, looking around, grew up in a thick Catholic sub-culture: saints, Mass, rosary - got in the car on a trip, you said the rosary. Saints were important. You know, a whole world was created - a Catholic sub-culture. Early on we had to be defensive, defend ourselves against the WASPish culture. We have people in Toledo who remember signs on the docks in Toledo, "Irish Need Not Apply," right Ann? Yeh! Irish need not apply. Anyway, we were in a defensive posture, and the Catholic sub-culture was big, surrounding; I mean: some people grew up in an all Catholic world, never met a Jewish person 'til later on. Anyway, with all the sociological changes we've got now, a thin attenuated version of the Catholic sub-culture, our young people didn't grow up in that. They don't have it in their bones and blood in the same way that many of the older generations did. They are not in rebellion against anything that way. Max Weber's *Iron Cage* did not apply to these young people. They're world is amorphous; it's thin, the culture. There are all kinds of options: many of them from divorced families; they've know nothing but chaos and change, and that has dictated, in great measure, how they respond religiously. Anyway, that's really an important thing to see about our young people. They don't know the Catholic sub-culture that way. It's not in their consciousness in the same way as the older generations. Maybe we'll keep that in mind as we go along.

### **Abraham**

Now I'm down to my first voice. My first voice comes from Abraham. Abraham came from a Catholic world. In many ways, he's sort of a throwback to the older sub-cultures. So Abraham gets to the University of Toledo, and he feels free. He can do whatever he wants now. And one of the things he does is not go to Mass; he gets away from going to Mass. And he does a lot of binge drinking. Thursday night starts long weekends of binge drinking, a lot of partying, and so on. And there's a little bit of sexual promiscuity thrown into all of this, and experimentation with drugs, and spending a lot of money he doesn't have, and so on. He's got a busy world going on. And the religious part that he got from his parents, and so on, is just not part of his world. When he goes home at Christmas, he goes to Mass with his parents; but on campus he doesn't come. So I'm calling his spirituality: **Eclipsed**. So I have to ask myself: "There's a lot of Abrahams around."

On our campus, we put a big effort into reaching out to the young people when they first get there; and one of the cards they sign up on to raffle off t-shirts and all kinds of things to get their names. And one of the categories is Catholic; and another category is inactive. Well, Tim, we did that last year; and we had something like 120 some young people self-identified as inactive Catholic. That's Abraham. You know the common joke is that Catholics have the largest denomination. Second largest is inactive Catholics. So that's Abraham's part of the inactive Catholics; he self identifies as inactive Catholic.

So when we think about Abraham, what message is there in there? Well, one of the main things, I believe, about Abraham is that he remains a religious creature. He remains that person who has infinite longings and finite capabilities. He remains a person who fundamentally has to deal with the mystery dimension of life. He is, in various ways, self-transcendent. That world of drinking and promiscuity is going to prove to be empty at some point along the line; and we all know that. St. Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee," right? Rahner says, that: "We are the question for whom there is no answer." Aquinas says, "We have a natural desire for God." Abraham still has that; and that's an important thing to remember. You know, sooner or later, Abraham comes to some point. Now when is that going to happen? That's hard to tell.

We run a program called "2 by 2" in our parish. We've got Abraham's name. We trained two young people. This is based on the gospel where Jesus sent them out 2 by 2. So we have a program "2 by 2" that people will now go, two people who are active in our parish will go out and knock on Abraham's door and invite him to join a discussion group in his residence hall and eventually to come to Corpus Christi Parish for Mass. So Abraham is like calling out. He's a reminder that we have to be an evangelizing community, that we have to have outreach, that we have to be trying to invite to come in. And, the other thing that Abraham is telling me is, that when he gets around to seeing the limitations of that world, which may be when he gets married, but more likely when he is sitting there with a small one like this. Now, that's more likely is a time when he is going to say, "How am I going to keep my little daughter off drugs like I was?"

And at that time, it's so important for our Catholic parishes to be welcoming. It's so important to be welcoming at that point. I mean, you hear horror stories, one after another, at a parish, "Well, I'm trying to get back in," and, "Are you registered here? Well go someplace else; you're not registered," and whatever. Anyway Abraham is going to be coming back. The message is: "Open your arms for me, when I see the light, when I want to change my life, when I gotta take care of my little girl;" you know, "Be there for me." That's part of the message, it seems to me, that we get out of Abraham. Okay, I got a number of those like that. His spirituality I'm calling *eclipsed*. It's not destroyed. His spirituality isn't gone. It didn't die. God didn't die. God is eclipsed, covered over by partying, promiscuity, all right?

### **Sarah**

Now let me try another one. This will be Sarah. Sarah's spirituality, I call, *private*. So Sarah again, comes from a Catholic family. parents are divorced; but she did go to Catholic grade school, and so on, and in that a Catholic grade school, she got into a certain sense of spirituality. And she's on campus now, and Sarah loves to read spiritual books. She goes to the bookstore, and finds the section on Spirituality. And she reads things like Rolheiser, or she reads about Buddhism. She's even interested in Daoism out of China. She likes that stuff, and she actually meditates regularly. She went to a class on Transcendental Meditation; and she does that regularly. She loves it! It makes her feel peaceful, quiets her down. She feels more centered when she does that Transcendental Meditation. And she loves to walk outside. She loves nature, looks at trees. Trees remind her of God, and flowers remind her of deeper realities, and so on. So Sarah has this great spiritual interest; but Sarah does not come to Mass at Corpus Christi University Parish. Sarah's idea of religion is that it is negative - she has a negative notion; religion is institutional; religion is laws; religion is a lot of strange doctrines that don't make any sense to me. So what she has set up is fundamentally a dichotomy between her spiritual quest and a religious tradition, especially the Catholic tradition that she grew up in. Those things in her mind are dichotomous. Thus, I'm calling her spirituality *private*.

You know, in Robert Bellah's book, *Habits of the Heart*, he interviewed a lot of people. Remember, he interviewed that one young woman, Sheila. And he talked to Sheila about her religious sensibility. Sheila said, "Well, I got a little bit of Christianity in here, and I got a little bit of Buddhism, a little bit of Hinduism," and so on, "and I even got a little bit of Wiccan stuff in here. I got my own religion, its call Sheilaism. Well, whatever is going on, it's my own thing. I make it up myself. I put the component parts together." She's got Sheilaism! It's a religion!

So, our friend Sarah here is part of that dichotomy between religion and spirituality. So we ask ourselves, what is Sarah saying to us? Well, what Sarah is saying, in part, is that: Look! We have to show Sarah that this Catholic symbol system, this rich package that we've got, is all about spirituality. That's what it's about. It's about bringing us into a closer relationship with Christ. It's about listening better to the call of the Father. It's about spiritual progress. It's about becoming a more authentic person. That's why liturgy is a spiritual experience. Our great sacramental system speaks to the heart. That's our job! That's what Sarah is saying, "Show me how this tradition I grew up in is going to further my spiritual search. How's it going to make me a better person? How's it going to bring me in closer touch with the transcendent dimension of life? How's it going to help me to be a more dedicated human being? How's it going to help me make a better marriage?"

There's another book out, *Reclaiming Catholic Culture*; and it lauds the nuns, the sisters who created these people here, created the Catholic sub-culture, praises the nuns with their great strategy. And what their strategy was, in part, was that this whole package will help you; it will help you become a better person; it'll help you become more successful in life; it'll help you be happy, help you to make a better marriage. They sold that! It's a great book - it's not a great book; it's an interesting book. The point is: we've got to do the same thing today, in our parishes that the sisters did so well in the past. The package works! The symbol system is powerful! It's spiritual! That's what it's about, not just going to Mass. So that's my point out of Sarah.

### **Isaac**

Let me try another one. This would be Isaac. So Isaac. I'm going to talk about him in terms of an **ecumenical** outlook. So Isaac, again Catholic - these people are all Catholic I'm talking about. Isaac is a Catholic. But Isaac is very tolerant, open minded. He attributes that to his father. His father is a very open minded man, taught him to be open to other religions, and so on, and Isaac has a sense that, "Hey! Let's all unite. How come we have Lutherans and Presbyterians? And that's crazy." Isaac knows nothing about the historical debates over the Reformation, or any of that; and Isaac wants us all together, all followers of Jesus. So Isaac has no problem going to the Lutheran church with his roommate. He even goes to communion there. So Isaac has what we call an almost zero institutional loyalty. If Isaac gets married, and his wife is a Presbyterian, and they move to a new city, and the Presbyterian Church has got a great program for youngsters and so on and the pastor preaches good sermons, Isaac's going to the Presbyterian church. He's never going to think a thing about it. He's just going there. It's simple. He's not going to feel guilty about it. He's not going to feel upset about it, whatever. So Isaac is, I'm calling that, he has an **ecumenical spirituality**.

There's both a hard and a soft version of this, but let's just stay with that. He's tolerant. He's open. He comes to Corpus Christi now. Why? Because he likes the liturgy. Because we feed him a free meal after every 6:00 p.m. Mass on Sunday. (Laughter) Because he has friends there, he's at home; he's not going anywhere else; he loves it there. But where's he going to be in the future? He has no institutional loyalty. He thinks in general terms. Anyway, what's Isaac saying to me and us? Hey! We're in a competitive situation us Catholics. We're in competition with other churches for the loyalty of our people. We have to win the loyalty of people. It doesn't come automatically any more. There are people in this room who are loyal. They don't care who the pastor is, or what stupid things he does. "That's my parish! I love it! My grandparents helped build it." You know that. Isaac doesn't have that at all. So, we have to win Isaac: we have to compete. And how do we compete? I can tell you one thing: the parishes have to be vital. They have to be interested in Isaac, when he gets out of the University of Toledo, and goes to a new parish. They've got to think of Isaac.

The homily has got to include him and his struggles in a descriptive part. They've have to have programs to help Isaac. And I can tell you, that one of the most important things is, that the liturgy has to be good. Liturgy is good in terms of a couple of different things. One is the homily; and the other, even more important, is the music. So if we're gonna spend money, we've gotta spend it on the music. If I have twelve scholarship students in a class, and I'm asking, "What is the thing that grabs you about the liturgy? What is it?" Eleven out of twelve: "The music." I must say, the homily got zero. (Laughter) The deflating moment. The homily got zero. But music: you've got to spend money to get music and the programs, because young people expect that. It's vital to them. The world of music is there.

So we're in competition for Isaac. Do you understand that? We're in competition. We've got to have better parishes; and liturgies are important. Another important part of having a vital parish is to tap his talent. He wants a parish where what he knows and learned at Corpus Christi can be put into practice. We have a Christian Leadership Program; we give twelve \$5,000 scholarships every year to incoming freshman. That's a lot of money every year; and at the end of four years, they get a certificate. The certificate tells them to be able to go to the pastor and say, "I've had training. I've studied Karl Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith*. I've had leadership training," and so on. Give it to the pastor. Now what is the pastor going to do with it? That becomes the question. Is he going to say "Ah, I've got a

valuable resource in Isaac; I'm putting Isaac to work. I'm going to get him on my Liturgy Council." Anyway, there's the open. Something like that has to happen.

### **Rebecca**

Who's next? Rebecca. And I'm calling her spirituality **evangelical**. So when Rebecca was in high school, she went to Franciscan University of Steubenville for a retreat; and Rebecca was very taken with that, and very influenced by that experience there. Rebecca, in many ways, resembles the evangelical Christians on campus. In fact, she goes to Corpus Christi, but she also goes to Campus Crusade for Christ, and their bible gatherings. And she loves the witnessing that goes on there. And Rebecca is one of those who says the rosary before the 6:00 Mass. She gathers in the daily chapel, and she says the rosary. And Rebecca is very interested in adoration. In fact, she takes charge of having adoration on Wednesday nights for the other students. She loves that: being in front of the Blessed Sacrament; and she speaks openly about her faith. I mean, she talks about Jesus to her friends and to her roommates. She talks about Jesus, how important Jesus is in her life. So, I'm calling Rebecca, her spirituality, I'm calling that evangelical; it looks a lot like Campus Crusade. She belongs to the Praise and Worship Group. The Praise and Worship Groups always have a screen; and they project onto the screen the words to the Praise and Worship music. If you don't have a screen or projector, you have to call the meeting off. (Laughter) Now, what are we learning from Rebecca? Rebecca is a call for a big church. It's like being Catholic means: you all come. Rebecca reminds us that the spirituality in the Catholic Church is pluralistic, it's multifaceted: it's not one piety; there's not one spirituality; there's not one theology; there's not one ecclesiology.

It's a big Church; and I want to make sure that Rebecca feels at home at Corpus Christi University Parish. I want to make sure we got adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for her. I want to make sure that if she wants to say the rosary, she can do that. I want to make sure that we have a Praise and Worship group for people of that piety. Now is that everybody's piety? No! Is there something essentially immoral about it? No! No, there isn't. No! Is that her way to try to come closer to Christ? Yes! And I want a big tent. I want my parish to be open to Rebecca. I want her to feel at home there as much as anybody else. And the other thing that Rebecca tells me is: follow the passion; follow the energy. Where's the energy? She's excited about it. She loves it. She's into her faith. She talks about it. I want to raise that up. I don't want to rule that out. Follow the passion. Where's the energy in the Church today? There's a certain number of Rebecca's who've got energy; they want to do things. I want her to feel welcome to carry that on and to do that.

### **Jacob**

Let me try another one. This is different from the hand out that you got. I revised my categories here; so if you're reading afterwards and say, "Well you didn't say that." Well, that's true; that is because not all the evangelicals are the same.

And there is another group I'm going to call Jacob. This is Jacob. At four generations of patriarchs, I'd better get going. I'm calling his spirituality **fundamentalist**. Jacob's got an edge to him. Jacob does not like what has happened in the Catholic Church. Jacob doesn't like it that I don't wear a collar, walking around Corpus Christi University Parish. Jacob thinks that the theologians he's heard about, not that he knows them in any depth, that they're off the mark. In fact, we were going to have a talk on one part of our campus, and Jacob led the charge to keep that particular theologian, a perfectly orthodox fellow, from giving that talk. Jacob writes the bishop when he doesn't like the bread that's being used at Mass. Jacob is a Catholic fundamentalist; and he's aggressive about it. Now, it's important to understand Jacob, really important to understand Jacob. Jacob wants to go to the seminary and become a priest. And Jacob thinks that his job, when he becomes a priest, is to straighten the Church out that's so screwed up. (Laughter) Jacob is going to make sure that we stand for orthodoxy, and overcome all this bad stuff that's been going on in the Church.

Now, one of the most insightful things written, in my mind, about fundamentalism was done by Martin Marty and Scott Appleby. They had millions of dollars to study this. And the first volume of it is called - there were seven volumes - the first volume is: *Fundamentalism Observed*. And what Martin



Marty essentially says is that fundamentalism is a worldwide movement. It's found everywhere. In Islam, we know that we have Islamic Fundamentalists, right? It's found in Buddhism; it's found in Judaism; it's found in Christianity; it's found in Catholicism; it's found in Marxism. It's all over. And the fundamental dynamic of fundamentalism is that the modern world is scary; that the modern world is attacking religious identity; and the post modern world is even worse, with all of its relativism, and so on; and that needs to be fought.

Jacob is not going to just sit back and say, "Well, I don't like that world; I'll not mess with it." No, the fundamentalists are aggressive. They're going to fight back. And he's going to fight back with weapons from his own tradition, just like Osama bin Laden. What set him off? Western stuff in the Holy Land, in Saudi Arabia, troops, pornography, western ways, women exposing themselves, that's all that upsets him. They're going to try to find something in that tradition to fight against modernity or post-modernity. That's the dynamic. That is, to me, so crucial to understand what's going on among some segment of our young people today.

So, why is the modern world so scary? So many of these people have grown up in a world where there's no security. There's nothing to hang on to. Parents are divorced. You know they've know chaos; they've know trouble all the way along the line. The media is always filled with problems. They've known terrorism. Terrorism has a special edge to it. It's not like fighting a nation enemy. No, the terrorism is surreptitious; it's stealth; it's hard to get a hold of; it creates another kind of anxiety. Terrorism does! It's an unknown violence that will come. So, we need to understand that. Now, I want to remain in dialogue with Jacob. I want Jacob to understand that there is a larger Catholic tradition there, that there's a big Catholic sense of life. I want to help him to see that. I want to engage him, if I can, and this is very hard; but I want to engage him in conversation. I want to know what makes him tick. When we have our priest conferences, and so on, I try to spend a big part of my time with the young priests to learn what the dynamics of fundamentalism are; and I want to hear the call to enter into honest dialogue and open approach to this.

### **Rachel**

Let me try another one, I'm getting close here. This one is obviously Rachel. So, Rachel's spirituality I'm calling **prophetic**. Now, Rachel has a wonderful sense of the social dimension of the gospel. Rachel is part of our Christian Service Program. She likes to go into the inner city and tutor sixth grade girls. She takes the opportunity to go to Guatemala to spend a week there trying to help the poor. She's part of our Pizza for the Poor Program, where we make pizzas and take them to the food distribution centers. Rachel loves it when at Mass she hears a social message in the homily that calls people, not just to be at church on Sunday, but we have an obligation to care for the poor. She loves all those wonderful themes of the Exodus, where God takes a people in slavery, and gives them political, and economic, and social freedom. She loves the call of the prophets like Amos, who say, that what's important is not sacrifice, but obedience to God. What's important is the care for the poor. She loves Luke 4: Jesus came to preach the good news to the poor, to reach out to the captives. She loves Matthew 25, where Christ identifies himself with the hungry and the thirsty. Now those are the things that are important in Rachel's mind, and the way she sees things. Now what I want to get out of what Rachel says is right on. This is part of our Catholic heritage. Any sort of individualistic approach to Catholicism misses a large part of what it's about. There is an essential social part of it. Jesus Christ is not only a personal savior, he's the liberator of captives. I'm affirming her. The other thing that seems important to me is that Rachel is the carrier of the Catholic social teaching in a way that is far more important than Pope Benedict is.

Put it this way: I was giving a talk; it was on Pope Benedict's *Caritas in veritate*; so I asked a question, big group, academics a lot. I asked, "How many people have read *Caritas in veritate*?" One guy raised his hand, an English Professor. There was a lot of young people there. And I then asked, "How many of you have done some sort of Christian Service project in the last two years?" Almost every hand went up. In my students, I teach these scholarship students, they're very good, obviously, selected bright people, and so on; I go on about how many Christian services projects; most of them have done two or more. This is common. Where is the carrier of the Catholic social tradition? It's lay people doing the job. It's our young people. There's a whole bunch of those people, like Rachel, around that need to

be cultivated. Now, are these social encyclicals of the Pope helpful? Yes! Why? They reaffirm what's Rachel's about; and they have motivation for it. The Catholic social encyclicals don't lead the way. I mean, Pope Benedict - I call him the green Pope; he wrote wonderful things on the environment - but we had people long ago, Catholic lay people or sisters, leading the way in the environmental movement. You see that's the carrier of the tradition. We don't look to the popes to lead; we look to them to maybe affirm what's going on with Rachel and her friends, already.

### **Joseph**

Last one. This will be Joseph. Joseph loves to come to Mass. He wouldn't miss Mass on Sunday. He drove back one day from being at home so early he could be at our 6:00 Mass. Liturgy is important to Joseph. He loves the rituals of the Church. He loves being there with other people who share his values. He has a great communal sense of what Catholicism is all about. He knows liturgy is public worship. He knows that ritual is a way of stirring up his spirituality. He has no sense of the dichotomy between spirituality and religion. For him the Catholic sacramental system is spirituality; it is what enhances his life; it's what stirs his heart; it's what makes him understand what being a Catholic Christian is all about. So, Joseph represents what I call the **sacramental spirituality**, which I'm enfolding with a communal sense of what religion is all about. And what do I want to learn from Joseph? Latch on to him. Help him to become a leader. Get him involved in a parish. Encourage him. There's the future, the hope. He's got that religious sensibility. He's got that Catholicism in his bones and blood. There's a good chance that I can help him become a loyal Catholic, so that when he moves to a new parish, and he leaves the University, he won't just shop around and find the best Protestant Church, but he's going to go to the Catholic Church; and he's going to try to get involved there, and make it better. That's what I would like to see out of Joseph.

I use typologies. When the social scientists tell me that 34% of young people think this or that, I don't know what I know; but when I do the typology, I know a lot. I know a lot about what we need to do with Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob, and Rachel, and Joseph. We know a lot. They've got a message for us from the Spirit; and I hope when we get to the question period, we can refine some of that. Thank you. (Applause)

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Attachment: Reflections, by Fr. Jim Bacik

## Reflections

James J. Bacik

What are today's Catholic college students really like? The question has broad significance because Catholics constitute over 30% of the collegiate population and they will join other young adults in shaping the future of our society. The Catholic community has a special interest in the spirituality of these students as we contemplate the future of a church in an unprecedented crisis. Students in college at the beginning of the new millennium are on a spiritual journey very similar to their parents. They have the same spiritual longings as previous generations for meaning and purpose in life. These millennials, as they are sometimes called, have to contend with the essential conflict between their infinite longings and their finite capabilities. They know the age-old struggle between grace and sin. Their challenges sound familiar: forming their personal identity; developing good friendships; finding a life partner; choosing a career; appropriating their religious heritage; cultivating habits of good citizenship; and deciding how to relate to the dominant culture. Fads in music, dress, dance and language change rapidly; human nature remains common. Millennials still fall in love, treasure friends and empathize with suffering loved ones. American culture continues to exercise great influence on millennial collegians, often at a preconscious level. Some cultural trends, such as rugged individualism, unbridled hedonism, lavish consumerism and uncritical nationalism are anti-Gospel and harmful to their spiritual growth. Other ideals, including authenticity, self-actualization, freedom and volunteerism, when placed in a Christian framework, can promote healthy spiritual development. Collegians grow up in a country where over 90% of the citizens say they believe in God and pray periodically, and over 60% are affiliated with a religious organization. During the last four years of the twentieth century, polls indicated that interest in spirituality among teenagers increased almost 25%, a trend which anecdotal evidence suggests is continuing. Collegians reflect the ambivalent mix of secular and religious currents in our culture. For the most part, the richly textured Catholic subculture which shaped Catholic spirituality in the past has disappeared. Catholic millennials have grown up with greater religious pluralism than their grandparents.

Most of them have not known an integrated Catholic world which transmits a coherent vision of the faith. They have, rather, gleaned fragments of their spirituality from various sources, including their families, parish liturgies, youth retreats, religious education classes, and for some, Catholic schools. This process has produced collegians with greater tolerance, but less institutional loyalty than previous generations of Catholics.

Recent sociological studies of young adults indicate that most Catholic collegians today maintain certain fundamental beliefs which can help ground a viable spirituality. Around 90 percent affirm the divinity of Christ and believe that at Mass the bread and wine become his body and blood. They consider helping the poor as important to their faith as believing in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Although most Catholic collegians have no explicit working knowledge of the Second Vatican Council, many have appropriated (presumably from diverse ecclesial and cultural sources) important conciliar themes. Foremost is the crucial conviction that we are the church, which means practically that the faithful should have a voice in how parishes are run. These millennials also demonstrate an incipient understanding of the communal nature of the liturgy, the importance of religious liberty, the value of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, the expanded role of laity in the church, the unique mediatorship of Christ and the need to work for social justice. My students often find that formal study of these conciliar teachings affirms general perceptions which they already hold.

Although Catholic millennials share certain common characteristics, their spiritual passions and interests are quite diverse. We can examine this pluralism by distinguishing seven types of spirituality: eclipsed, private, ecumenical, evangelical, sacramental, prophetic and communal.

Eclipsed: A good number of Catholic collegians show no particular interest in religious or spiritual matters. They do not attend Mass on campus and seldom pray. Some feel they are too busy or have higher priorities, while others experience guilt feelings which blunt their spiritual longings. Yet they remain religious beings and identify themselves as Catholics in surveys. Their spirituality is not destroyed, but rather eclipsed by their current concerns. We can hope that the ordinary process of maturation or some major events, such as a

personal crisis, the death of a loved one, getting married or having a baby, will uncover their latent spiritual needs.

Private: Some Catholic collegians seldom attend liturgies or participate in church activities, but pursue spiritual goals in other ways; for example, reading religious books, communing with nature, and praying privately. Their private spiritual journey can be fulfilling but, unconnected to traditional wisdom, it is threatened by fads and superficiality. Our hope is that they will discover and tap the rich spiritual tradition of their Catholic heritage.

Ecumenical: A growing number of millenials simply assume that the divisions among Christians make no sense, and that we all should unite and work together. Some are loyal to their Catholic heritage, but others have little institutional loyalty and would join another Christian denomination if it brought them closer to Christ and better served their spiritual needs. In this competitive situation, we need vibrant Catholic parishes which will utilize the gifts and meet the needs of today's collegians.

Evangelical: A small percentage of Catholic collegians manifests a piety that resembles the evangelical Christian groups on campus. They speak easily about their personal relationship to Jesus and gravitate to prayer groups with high emotional energy. Some are charismatic in orientation, emphasizing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A few are really fundamentalists, who act aggressively in preserving their Catholic heritage from the threats of the contemporary world and the reforms of Vatican II, which appear to them as excessive and dangerous. The church on campus should make room for the evangelical Catholics and learn how to tap their energy and enthusiasm.

Sacramental: Many Catholic millenials still love their church and find their spiritual nourishment through fairly regular participation in the official liturgy and traditional practices. As a result, they are attuned to the presence of God in everyday life and have a general sense of the sacramental character of the whole world. Some of them report mystical experiences, while others simply trust that God is present in their daily lives. These students often need affirmation that their spiritual intuitions are in accord with the core spirituality of the Catholic tradition.

Prophetic: Most campus ministry programs have a small group of students committed to working in various ways for justice and peace in the world. They align themselves with the goals of organizations like Pax Christi and Bread for the World, devote themselves to causes such as racial harmony and environmental health, and try to help those in need. The developing tradition of Catholic Social Thought can be a great source of guidance and inspiration for them.

Communal: Many millennial Catholics feel the need to associate with others who share their values. They like worshipping with kindred spirits at Mass, using their gifts for the benefit of the church, and participating in faith-sharing groups. They often need reminders that an authentic communal spirituality maintains dialogue with the larger world.

The older categories of conservative and liberal, based on responses to Vatican II, are no longer adequate to describe the millennials, who have no experience and little knowledge of the Council. They have a new set of challenges and diverse ways of relating to the Catholic tradition, but they are empowered by the same Spirit, who is the real basis of our hope for this generation of collegians.

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