MANCIPIA

THE REPORT OF THE CRUSADE OF SAINT BENEDICT CENTER

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2015



Our new statue of Saint Philomena who gazes up at the Sacred Heart.



Br. André Marie, M.I.C.M., Prior

PRIOR'S COLUMN
SO MUCH EVIL, SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES!

The days are evil. We are beset. It reminds me of a quote attributed to that great philosopher, Lewis Burwell "Chesty" Puller, USMC: "All right, they're on our left, they're on our right, they're in front of us, they're behind us…they can't get away this time."

A litany of recent miseries might include: the de-Christianization of the Middle East (largely due to American "Disaster Capitalism"); the ever-advancing aberrosexual agenda, with its fresh Boy Scouts and *Obergefell* victories; Planned Parenthood's barbarous monstrosities, facilitated in part by "Catholic" legislators, who remain unperturbed by their spiritual Fathers; the rapid shrinking of the Church in Germany, while that nation's hierarchy cheers, and while the German Radio Vatikan promotes homosexuality; alarming signals pointing to a potentially disastrous Synod on the Family; the now frequent red-carpet reception of irreligious individuals and dissident Catholics into the hallowed halls of the Vatican (e.g., Sachs, Klein, Schellnhuber, Walsh); Obamacare's triumph over the Little Sisters of the Poor(!); and the weird clash of colors between the Confederate Naval Jack and the Rainbow Flag. We could go on.

The real solution to these problems is the same as it ever was: Catholic living, that is, the life of grace. The salt of the world must regain its savor, for we were meant to serve God, "in holiness and justice before him, all our days" (Luke 1:75). Just as all creation "groaneth and travaileth in pain" (Rom. 8:22) due to man's original fall from grace, when man is particularly sinful, and when the children of the Church, especially, are unfaithful to their God — as so many of our miseries above reveal us to be — the hand of God will strike, giving us occasions of penance. "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7).

Perhaps the greatest test of faith is the realization amid all the messes of our life, that *I am called to holiness.* Holiness is fine for the saints; they were, after all, *saints.* But me?

Read Father Leonard Feeney's, *What a Saint Is* (on our website), to be convinced of this vocation to sanctity we have by baptism.

The sufferings brought on by life's miseries ought to purify us, as they did the saints. That is one way they became saints.

Whatever purifies brings us to what is fundamental, what is essential. We need to be cleansed of our sinful filth so that supernatural truth, goodness, and beauty can inhere in our hearts. This is, I believe the force of Saint Paul's words to the Corinthians:

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (I Cor. 3: 10-15).

Our watchword in such times as these can be another pearl of wisdom from Saint Paul: "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good" (Rom. 12:21).

But how is it that we overcome evil by good? By not letting the evil (whether physical, moral, or metaphysical) corrupt us, and by becoming supernaturally *better* after encountering the evil than we were before. In addition, the truly holy confront evil persons with the full force of their moral goodness, often occasioning conversions.

We have spoken of purgation or purification. We can also call it "cleansing." In this regard, what the desert fathers had to say about the sixth Beatitude, "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God," can help our understanding. For the monks of the desert, being clean of heart was synonymous with loving God. It was the goal of all their asceticism, of all of what later religious terminology would call "spiritual exercises." Hear Abba Moses, as quoted by Cassian:

> "As we have said, the aim of our [monastic] profession is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. But our point of reference, our objective, is a clean heart, without which it is impossible for anyone to reach our target. …
>
> "Everything we do, our every objective, must be undertaken for the sake of this purity of heart. This is why we take on loneliness, fasting, vigils, work, nakedness. For this we must practice the reading of the Scripture, together with all the other virtuous activities, and we do so to trap and to hold our hearts free of the harm of every dangerous passion and in order to rise step by step to the high point of love." [Thanks to the site, *Inner Light Productions,* where you can read more of this.]

Abba Moses was not some oriental eccentric. These are the words of a great saint, long venerated in the Catholic Churches of East and West (known variously as Saint Moses the Black, Abba Moses the Robber, Abba Moses the Ethiopian, ...of Scete, etc.) Cassian's *Conferences* (whence comes the above excerpt) were prescribed reading in the Rule

of Saint Benedict, that great master of occidental sobriety.

One may say that in such times as these in which we live, such high ideals as Abba Moses' are "pie in the sky" and not practical; today, after all, we're doing fine if we simply keep the faith. In reply, let me point out that these were the high ideals of the Church when she was encountering the corrupt, effeminate, debauched world of pagan antiquity — days not entirely unlike our own.

Those days were evil, too.

Two liturgical texts come to mind with which to close these somewhat disjointed considerations on evils and opportunities. The first has to do with cleansing; it is the *"Munda cor meum"* prayer that the priest recites just before the Gospel at Mass: "Cleanse my heart and my lips, O Almighty God, Who cleansed the lips of the Prophet Isaias with a burning coal. In Thy gracious mercy deign so to purify me that I may worthily proclaim Thy holy Gospel. Through Christ our Lord. Amen." While laymen cannot pray this prayer liturgically, we can apply it to ourselves in a loose sense inasmuch as we should all proclaim the Gospel by our very lives. And we must be clean of heart in order to do so worthily.



A Desert Father in the Wilderness

The second shows more directly that evil can purify us. It is the last prayer the priest recites in the traditional rite as part of the Sacrament of Penance: "May the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints, whatever good you shall have done, *and evil you shall have endured, be to you unto remission of sins, increase of grace and reward of eternal life."* ▪

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Sr. Marie Thérèse, M.I.C.M., Prioress

CONVENT CORNER
ACORNS

One fall morning, many years ago, I was prayerfully walking up our driveway, quietly getting ready for a school day to begin, when a young oak tree beckoned to me. It had outstretched its handsome display of green leaves studded with acorns so that it arched directly over my path. Since our property is covered with wild trees, I resolved to cut this one branch (as one might cut a fresh flower) and share it with the students.

I was rather struck by the reaction of the students! As they arrived at the school building and began their trek down the hallway to their classrooms, they stopped and gave delighted sounds and comments of admiration over the handsome branch. After all, I mused, it was just a branch with green leaves and acorns attached!

Later that day, I had a catechism class with the Junior High girls. I brought the acorn-laden trophy and laid it before their hungry eyes. They were just as delighted as when they had first seen it that morning and were proud to have it in their own classroom.

And now, Dear Reader, I will attempt to share with you that catechism discussion from so long ago.

Acorns are made by God. If you look closely at them, you begin to realize their perfection. Go ahead, hold one in your fingers and try to appreciate it. Atop a polished and pointy nut of an appealing color, there is a capped crown with a neatly decorated edge. Just perfect! An artist might pride himself on copying an acorn, but he could never improve on it!

So, acorns decorate oak trees and give artists a challenge in a tiny package. Some acorns are edible and I understand that American Indians developed special methods of preparing them. Squirrels certainly enjoy and depend upon them.



Perhaps some architect has done so, but I have never heard of anyone building a house out of acorns. Acorns aren't generally considered to be building materials.

Which brings me to my point. Acorns have a perfection in themselves which reflects the Creator. However, an acorn is not "perfect," i.e., having fulfilled its potential, until it rots and disappears. Yes, after "falling into the ground and dying," as Our Lord said of grains of wheat, an acorn reaches perfection: an oak tree that produces its own beautiful acorns.

Lovely infants in their mothers' arms are full of potential just as acorns are. Naturally, a child will grow in stature into the graceful and admirable creature we call a man or a woman. When these adults bring forth their own children, they, like the acorn, have fulfilled their natural purpose. They have reached perfection.

> Man has a purpose that is beyond his nature.

Dear Reader, consider what was just said and see if you think it is really true. A man comes into the world small like an acorn, grows to his full stature and produces a child, and dying returns to the earth. There is indeed a natural perfection that a human being can attain and it is higher than the natural perfection of an oak because there is also intellect and will in a human being. But that very fact brings us to the realization that human beings are, unlike an oak, rational, therefore spiritual, therefore immortal beings. And so, although the body of a man dies and is buried in an oak casket to become the food of worms along with it, his soul continues immortal, its purpose unaddressed. So you see, the perfection of a man must go beyond this mortal life. His perfection, unlike the perfection of an acorn, cannot be attained merely by nature.

Dear Reader, this is an impossible situation! To restate what was just said: a man cannot, merely by nature, fulfill his purpose and become perfect. Man has a purpose that is beyond his nature. His purpose is supernatural.

A man's ultimate purpose is to be united to God as a child of God. This purpose requires a supernatural life that God has made available to us in the Church through its sacraments beginning with Baptism. Living that supernatural life brings a man to sanctity, otherwise known as perfection, which is only complete in Heaven.

Perfect acorns. When a robin sits on her nest out on the limb of a strong oak tree, she looks down at a huge, gnarled group of roots at its base and doesn't realize that underneath that bulk there was once an acorn. My Dear Reader, get yourself an acorn and live so that it doesn't surpass you in perfection! ▪

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Mr. Brian Kelly

KELLY FORUM
REINCARNATION

I was once asked by a friend if I could disprove reincarnation by way of reason and without using holy scripture. The only way I could do so was to bring in Aristotelian hylomorphism and the principle of identity and non-contradiction. My arguments, I confess, did not convince anyone who believed otherwise. Allow me to share with you my basic points.

Metempsychosism (literally, "beyond consciousness," or "beyond the soul") is a more apropos term for the Buddhist idea of reincarnation, considering that it is a break with reality. "Beyond consciousness"? Intriguing! The things some people will believe rather than the truth!

Everything I've read from their own apologetics swims in an unreal sea of vagueness: "Somehows," "maybes," etc. "Somehow" the pre-existing soul enters into the body of a baby at birth. So writes E.D. Walker in his book, *Reincarnation: A Study of Forgotten Truth.* Another term for this same error is the "transmigration of souls." Mr. Walker makes no mention that the pre-born have a soul. I assume he denies it. But that may be his own personal belief.

First, let us define the soul: The soul is the principle of life in a material being.

The soul, having no consciousness after being disembodied, and no memory of its previous lives, doesn't move itself to its new destination. That is readily admitted by reincarnationists. So who, or what, is the mover? Who makes this choice as to whether a soul is to move upscale or downscale? Buddhism doesn't pretend to know. There is no personal God, so this new journey just "happens." It's karma. In other words, "We don't know. We are just making this up as we go along." No certitudes are possible with a "religion" that is without a creed.

Nor is Buddhism just a philosophy. Wherever it has prospered in the East, it always ends up falling into some type of idolatry, more often of gods or even goddesses, reincarnations of Buddha. If not, it ends up in monistic pantheism, a religion that makes a god out of all that exists. What is the ultimate goal? Annihilation into the One. *Nirvana.* The end of "me." This is the final escapism, the last breath of despair, the fatalistic hope of a dying Buddhist. I am reminded of the nihilistic song of Peggy Lee: "Is that all there is my friend? Then let's keep dancing."

Reincarnation means to "re-enter flesh." That rules out plants. Good thing. Imagine if you came back as a tree and could not run away from the chainsaw.

Buddhist "reincarnation" is not the same as Hindu, or the New Age version, or the Ron Hubbard Scientology version. One Scientology website says that they do not believe in reincarnation, but they do believe in past lives. Did I mention contradictions? It isn't mandatory to believe this for membership, the site says, but if you've got "issues" in your present life then you better get "cleared" of those negative aeons (wow, gotta love the uncredited lifting of the term from Plato and Jewish apocrypha) from your past life if you want to be a better person. "To believe one had a physical or other existence prior to the identity of the current body is not a new concept" but, their website assures us, "it is an exciting one." Truth to tell, I doubt any member of the cult is too "excited" about that. They may find it amusing, and *deja vuesque,* but deep down I would guess such a possibility would be frightening to anyone who hasn't totally lost his reason.

The soul is the principle of life in a material being.

Since the Buddhists do not believe in a personal God, but a mystic law, which in essence is pantheistic and impersonal, when the cycles of reincarnations are over, the *person* (whatever Buddhism means by the word) loses identity and enters into the nirvana of the personless monad, the "One." And whatever the soul is for them, it is not a created thing; therefore, it is an eternal entity having consciousness in its current phase of existence, until finally freed in nirvana. Ah, yes, "beyond consciousness"! Who is to say, however, that the cycles could not be everlasting? Who is to say that a soul could not be trapped forever, going back and forth, from worse to better, on and on and on. After all, there is always room for improvement. What a sad philosophy of life this is! The Son of God came to this earth to free mankind from such darkness and despair and give men hope for everlasting life and the grace to attain it through Him, with Him, and in Him.

Hindus speak of the "soul" more in terms of a personal life force that also must graduate from the recurrent cycles of varied existences. But, for them, as for Buddhists, salvation is to be liberated from the ego, from matter, from individuality, and ultimately lose one's self in the One. It seems, depending on who you read, that they believe in an endless cycle of an infinitude of beings on a journey back to the monad god, from whom every rational spirit emanated. They do not believe in creation but deterministic emanation. Hindus are dualistic so they also believe in a god of evil from whom emanated all material things. As with all belief systems based on falsehoods, contradictions abound.

Only man has a rational *form,* the spiritual soul, actualizing the matter that is his flesh. The soul is the form

that makes a man with this or that matter (think DNA) a man, rather than an ape. Because the soul performs immaterial operations when it abstracts from sense impressions and forms universal concepts it cannot be destroyed by the death of the material body. Only God can destroy, or annihilate, an immaterial being. In arguing, I told my friend, that you are going to have to convince the believer in reincarnation that the soul of animals can only operate materially and not spiritually. That will be a hard sell for someone who has no background in perennial philosophy.

The soul of an animal only performs on the sense level. Even its most sophisticated instincts are behaviors determined by necessity on the sense level — to protect their young offspring, for example. Some animals even have the instinct to protect human life, as dogs would their masters, or, as I've read, a dolphin might do for someone floating at sea after a boat wreck. But there is no immaterial activity going on, for although, like us, they have a material brain, this organ, in an irrational animal, assimilates only sense knowledge even when it proceeds from instinct. The brain is not the same as the mind or intellect. The intellect of a man uses the material brain as it does the other bodily organs but it has the spiritual power to transcend sense knowledge and to reason and form concepts. Every beehive will be like every other beehive in every age. Bees are not going to start making bricks and building walls around their hives to protect them from predators.



The Mass of St. Basil

Once you have established that the rational soul of man is immortal and an animal's soul cannot be, then you've disproved reincarnation of the human soul, at least in lower life forms. In its existence as separated from the body after death, the soul operates solely on the spiritual level. And a spiritual rational form can no more inform a brute animal body than the pure intelligent form of an angel inform a human body. The existence of angels can be argued from reason, without using the Bible. Let me rephrase that: The existence of angels is a possibility that cannot be *proven* from reason but it can be shown to be reasonable.

Or, if you use an inanimate example: The inanimate form that makes a rock a rock cannot make a rock a cow. Futhermore, if a soul that informed a human body could get punished for some evil and sent into a lower life form after death, it would seem that with all the billions of reincarnations going on some soul would have ended up in a parrot. Parrots have vocal cords that mimic the sounds of a man's vocal cords. Well, then, there must have been some such souls so punished if reincarnation is correct; so why has human history never encountered a domesticated parrot that could rue its karma in intelligent words? The reason is that parrots have no rational soul and they cannot rue.

How does metempsychosism explain the justice of the punishment? Or who is doing the punishing? How can a soul that is so punished make up for its previous bad life, if it does not know why it is so penalized, and cannot make up for it? According to hylomorphism the matter that is determined by any form can be made the matter of another form after substantial change. At death men undergo a substantial change. There is a separation of form and matter. The form, being spiritual cannot cease to exist, so it continues to operate spiritually as an incomplete substantial form until the last day and the resurrection of the body which completes its substantial unity. The resurrection, however, is a matter of faith, not reason, so I am prescinding from it. Nevertheless, O you believers in reincarnation, wouldn't you want to believe in the resurrection of your own body?

Which brings us to the main point. Since man is immortal, he cannot be the same individual man if he is determined to be some other individual man (or thing) by activating different matter. One cannot defend reincarnation if one understands the nature of the human soul correctly. One can believe (erroneously, but not against reason) that all human souls were created by God at once (losing the memory of their pre-existence in conception), but one cannot, without violating reason, maintain that a spiritual and immortal form can inform any other matter than that which it informs at its first and only incarnation.

Why not?

Because of the very identity of the human person as a complete and incommunicable substance of a rational nature.

If the rational and immaterial soul could inform different matter with ongoing reincarnations, then that soul cannot be the form of an individual. It could not be a person. This would make void the whole supposed purpose behind the reincarnations because there would be no "person" involved in the ongoing purgations or promotions, and it is the person, the "who" (not the "what") that is the responsible agent in all moral acts. It is the person who loves, hates,

envies, obeys, etc. It is the person who abuses his own body in carnal excesses or acts of impurity, violence, gluttony, etc. In the body, a human person has concupiscence, without the body, there is no concupiscence.

Philosophically speaking, at conception, the human soul (the form) determines the matter to be *this body,* John Smith's body, and no one elses. That is what is meant by identity. Without the singular and incommunicable identity, which in a rational creature is called person, there is no moral responsibility.

If the human soul could inform any other matter than what it informs at conception, then it could not do so as the same person. Non-rational living things are not persons. A person can self-reflect. Animals cannot. There is no "who" that is reincarnated in another lower life form. Animals are individual things, having specific natures or "whatnesses," so are trees, but they are not persons.

The proper object of the intellect is truth and the proper object of the will is the good. To have these powers and be incarnated as the form of an animal that has not the nature for abstract thought is an impossibility, an absurdity. Like begets like, species begets species. Reincarnation rejects the observation of common sense experience. They would have it that a human soul could animate a horse, or even a mosquito if one were really bad in a previous life.

Saint Irenaeus fought this error as far back as the second century. In his well-known treatise *Against Heresies* (Book II), Irenaeus entitled the 33rd chapter "Absurdity of the Doctrine of the Transmigration of Souls." The whole chapter criticizes this doctrine, emphasizing the futility of reincarnation devoid of any memory of past lives:

"They (the souls) must of necessity retain a remembrance of those things which have been previously accomplished, that they might fill up those in which they were still deficient, and not by always hovering, without intermission, round the same pursuits, spend their labour wretchedly in vain."

Lastly, on a lighter note, we end with a little humor from Saint Basil the Great (379): "Avoid the nonsense of those arrogant philosophers who do not blush to liken their soul to that of a dog, who say that they have been formerly themselves women, shrubs, or fish. Have they ever been fish? I do not know, but I do not fear to affirm that in their writings they show less sense than fish." ▪

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Time is Running Out

by By Brother John Marie Vianney, M.I.C.M., Tert., Prefect

By receiving this *Mancipia,* you have shown some interest in Saint Benedict Center and its crusade. Throughout the year I am blessed with the opportunity to speak with many of you whom I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting. And each year I hear that you would like to come to our Annual Conference, see our new chapel, meet the brothers and sisters, visit the bookstore, meet like-minded Catholics, and hear our excellent speakers.

Our 16th Annual Conference is almost upon us. We would be delighted to see the faces of those whom we have spoken to and prayed for. Each year I set out many items on our Third Order table. I won't list them here, but there is always a demand for many of the items. Now I tell you that this year there is a special demand — a demand to see your face at that table. Register right now because time is running out. Call Russell LaPlume at 603-239-6485. You can also visit our website at catholicism.org for detailed information.

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Dr. Maike Hickson

SPECIAL REPORT
THE FAMILY UNDER ATTACK

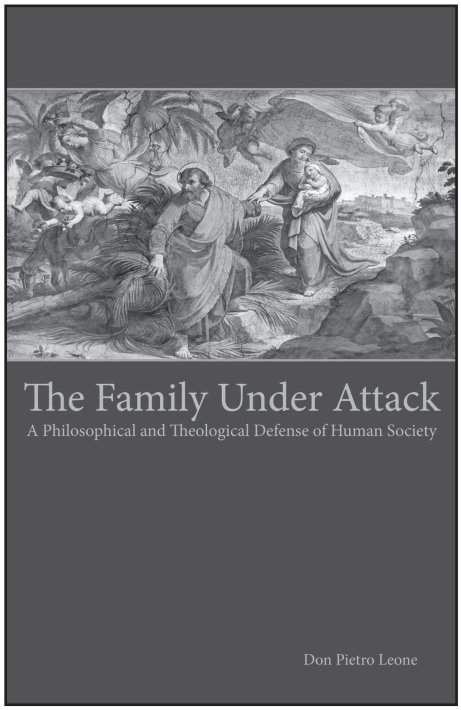
Don Pietro Leone's Book The Family Under Attack – a Much Needed Guide for the Synod of Bishops on Marriage and the Family

Loreto Publications has just published a very timely book, *The Family Under Attack,* written under a pseudonym by a traditional Catholic priest with broad and deep scholarly learning. It comes right in time for the second part of the Synod of Bishops on Marriage and the Family, which will take place in October 2015 in Rome.

Don Pietro Leone — the author's *nom de plume* — deals with all the major issues, problems, factors, teachings, and attacks that concern modern marriages and families. The subtitle of the book sums it up well: *"A Theological and Philosophical Defense of Human Society."* In a very calm and lucidly reasoning way, the author presents both in theological and in philosophical ways the doctrinal justifications for the traditional moral teaching of the Catholic Church. In the following presentation, however, I shall discuss only a few themes of this rich book: the ordered ends and purposiveness of marriage; contraception; the varied killing of preborn children; and the hierarchical order of authority in the family.

Don Pietro Leone deals, for example, with the very foundational question, "why the indissolubility of marriage is so important," namely: for the procreation, protection, rearing and education of children unto eternal life. The author puts it as follows:

"Our analysis of the nature of sexuality in the light of the moral law has shown us that it is a form of love that belongs in that life-long relationship which is marriage: such a relationship alone provides the support that both parties need for undertaking the heavy burdens of parenthood, it alone provides a background for the development of mature and happy children, the basis for the highest and deepest union and friendship that exists between persons, and the support of these persons in their old age." (p. 62)



Don Pietro Leone also deals with the importance of the right order of the finalities of marriage. He shows that, traditionally, the Catholic Church with reference to Holy Scripture has always taught that the procreation of life is the primary end ("finality") of marriage. God created Adam and Eve and told them to go forth and multiply. The very fact of the existence of male and female lies in the procreation of children so as to fill the earth with mankind.

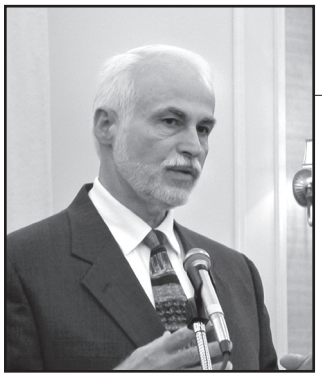
In 1944 the Holy See released a document where it condemned the claim that mutual help and love has the same importance as the procreation of new life within marriage; saying, moreover, that such a proposed equalization goes contrary to the Church's teaching. Don Pietro Leone quotes from this document:

> "Can one admit the doctrine of certain modern writers who deny that the procreation and education of the child are the primary end of marriage?..."

"The Declaration of the Holy See ends with the following question addressed to the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office: 'Can one admit the doctrine of certain modern writers who deny that the procreation and education of the child are the primary end of marriage, or teach that the secondary ends are not essentially subordinate to the primary end, but rather are of equal value and are independent of it?' They replied: 'No, this doctrine cannot be admitted.'"(p. 80)

However, the pastoral Second Vatican Council quietly reversed (or implicitly rescinded) this condemnation advocating that the mutual love and respect of the spouses is now the primary end of marriage, while procreation is subordinate and comes second. Don Pietro Leone addresses this fundamental doctrinal problem, since there are grave consequences that ensue from this novel teaching. While the procreation of life reminds the spouses of their duties before God and gives their conjugal life, from the outset, the right aim, purposiveness, and direction, the finality of "mutual love and help" tends to turn the spouses into more self-centered people who seek first their own fulfillment and happiness, not their children's attainment of eternal life. If this reversal of priorities happens, however, a marriage tends to become

The Family Under Attack continued on page 14



Brother Lawrence Mary, M.I.C.M., Tert.

GUEST COLUMN
PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING FOR CATHOLICS

All of us have to solve problems and make prudential decisions. Some are simple and have minimal impact such as planning a shopping trip or choosing which cup to use for the morning coffee. Others have greater consequences — joining a religious third order, buying a new house, moving to a new location, or determining the best means of treating a serious illness. These require more time and effort in order to ensure we are choosing the best option of those available. They also require that we avoid making needless mistakes.

Problem-solving and decision-making are intimately related. Problem-solving is defining and clarifying the problem. Decision-making is actually implementing the steps of solving the problem. Often, a decision will flow naturally from the problem solving process. For the purposes of this article, I will be treating them as one.

This essay will not be a step-by-step guide for solving problems or making decisions. There are hundreds of very fine guides in books and on the internet for this purpose. However, despite all of the good information that is readily available, I have observed that Catholics, especially traditional Catholics, tend to make certain common errors when solving problems and making decisions. I have made all of these mistakes myself more than once and suffered the consequences. Maybe by sharing some of the lessons I have learned, I can help someone to avoid similar problems in the future.

Make Sure There is a Real Problem to be Solved

Trying to solve a non-existent problem is a very common error — one which I have made countless times.

A few years ago, I purchased a new (used) car. In the morning, while the cold engine light was lit, the car would not go more than forty-five miles per hour. Frustrated, I spent hours researching possible causes — transmission failure, faulty switches, etc. As a last resort, I read the owner's manual (finally!). Wouldn't you know it? The manual stated clearly that the car would not shift into "overdrive" until the blue cold engine light had turned off. There was no problem at all. The car was designed to work that way. For the thousandth time, I was reminded: make certain there is actually a problem before you go about trying to "solve it."

A friend of mine is a psychotherapist. He relayed that one day the police brought in a patient for assessment. They explained that the man had been living alone in the woods for years. Though he was self-sufficient and never aggressive towards anyone, people who occasionally encountered him were worried. The man said he heard voices and he had been observed holding conversations with invisible beings when he came to town for supplies.

My friend asked the police if the man had ever been a threat to anyone in any way whatsoever. They replied in the negative. The psychotherapist carefully examined the patient, during which examination he discovered that the man really enjoyed conversing with the "voices" and that they had never directed him to do anything inappropriate. After completing his assessment and finding nothing else unusual, my friend recommended that the police return the man to his home and let him live in peace. He explained that, though this unusual behavior might be problematic in a social setting, the fact that the man lived alone and had little interaction with others indicated that the man's behavior was not interfering with his life or anyone else's. In other words, my friend's analysis led him to conclude there was no problem to be solved.

Research the Options

After determining that a problem exists and that it is consequential enough for me to consider seriously, it is important to perform the most thorough research possible before deciding on a course of action. I try to balance this with the need to reach a decision in a timely manner or too much time is wasted on research while a decision is needlessly delayed. My research often begins with the internet but I have found that, when the problem is one that is not "popular," I need to resort to printed documents. Many internet sites will ultimately have only one source for their information; so I try to determine and locate that source and check it myself for validity.

For example, when I researched the usefulness of, qualities of, and best means of producing colloidal silver, I found countless websites and blogs refer to the "Beck Protocol." An even greater number of sites simply regurgitated the steps of the so-called "Beck Protocol" without providing a reference or calling it by name. In effect, though there were many websites that presented or discussed the same topic, only one core idea was actually being presented. Once I found the original site from which the others got their information, I was able to examine it and decide whether or not the information was useful for me. By getting to the root of what appeared to be many different sources and then comparing that idea to others

> "As Catholics we know we should always pray before we do anything..."

that were truly different, I was able to devise a method that has worked well for me ever since.

I also review sources that are critical of those I favor. Every once-in-a-while I find that they can sway my opinion enough that I look for something different. If a website is selling some sort of product and the "research" supports this product, I am especially cautious about accepting the information at face value. If the source is a weblog, I bear in mind that the information usually consists of the personal opinions and experiences of the bloggers and thus is limited in its value. If the information is anecdotal I treat it the same way — as the personal experience or opinion of an individual. This can be a time consuming process but, if the problem is serious enough, it's worth the effort.



An Icon of Our Lady of Wisdom

Seek Counsel from a Variety of Sources

The value of seeking counsel when trying to solve a problem and come to a decision cannot be overstated. Father Feeney and Brother Francis insisted on it and the advice is not only prudent, it is inspired. The Book of Ecclesiasticus is only one of the many places in the Bible where we are instructed to seek counsel: "My son, do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done." (Ecclus. 32:24)

One of the errors I have made when seeking counsel is forgetting that I am still responsible for the final decision. Even if I find the advice of one person to be far superior to any other and will use it verbatim, I must keep in mind that using the advice is still my decision. This knowledge restrains me from blaming anyone else should the problem not be solved or if it actually becomes worse.

Another error is not seeking counsel from a variety of sources, some of which I am certain will say things quite contrary to what I would prefer. If I am aware of the bigotry or blind spot of the counselor, I still am able to use the advice to obtain a clearer picture of the problem even if I decide not to use it. When I have failed to do this, I have had trouble trying to see the problem clearly and often missed arriving at the best solution. Sometimes, as happens when I conduct research, the best solutions have come from the very people I felt were least likely to provide useful advice.

It is not enough to seek counsel. It is important to test the advice and check further. In traditional Catholic circles, this seems to occur most frequently when we or a loved one have a serious illness and we are casting about for a means of alleviating or curing the condition. Too often we will accept the hearsay or anecdotal evidence freely offered by well-meaning friends over the advice given by and treatments offered by medical professionals. Even though I consider friendly advice very carefully, I have found it most prudent to weigh, without bias, the advice from medical professionals as well.

Am I Being Hampered by My Assumptions?

A number of assumptions seem to be popular among traditional Catholics including: Only books written before Vatican II can be trusted; only the advice of such-and-such group or society can be trusted to the exclusion of all others; "natural" remedies are always superior to "conventional" remedies; traditional priests are always above reproach and need to be defended and protected despite verifiable evidence of significant wrongdoing; statements from traditional priests must be considered dogmatic even if they are personal opinions.

There are other assumptions but you get the idea. Suppositions such as these can lead to a failure to see a problem clearly and bad decisions are often the result. In my experience, the unspoken major premises have often led to disputes and splits between traditional Catholics. When these assumptions are not tested and researched thoroughly, unnecessary and tragic disputes have been the result. (The other cause of needless disputes is the failure to distinguish between what is a secondary matter and thus may be conceded or ignored and one that is truly of the Faith and must be defended at all costs. This will be the topic for a future essay.)

After a Solution is Selected, Remain Open to Better Ones

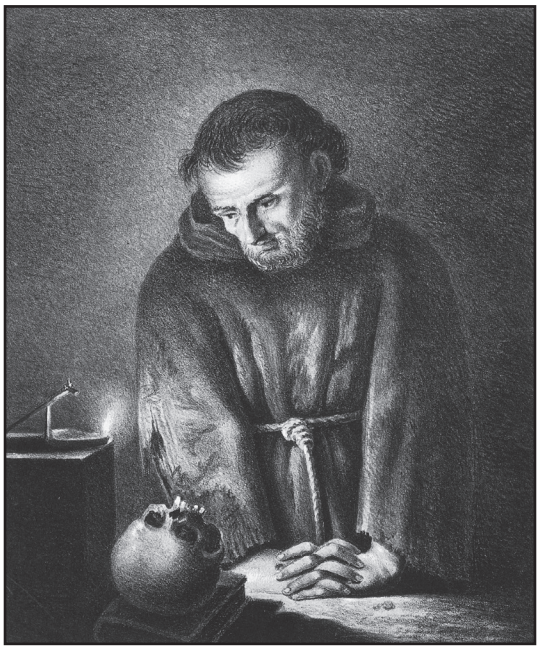
If the problem is of small importance, it may not be necessary to consider other solutions; however, if the

Problem Solving continued on page 15

THE MANY SOUNDS OF SILENCE

BY RUSSELL LAPLUME

"Soon silence will have passed into legend. Man has turned his back on silence. Day after day, he invents machines and devices that increase noise and detract humanity from the essence of life – contemplation and meditation." This quote from the German artist Jean Arp aptly portrays what I consider the bane of current society — unceasing activity. Technology has stifled silence, whether it be telephone, e-mail, tweets or internet browsing, they all facilitate in rendering the mind less potent, less imaginative, less willing to be alone with oneself.



The desert Fathers had a name for it, 'acedia', which they listed as one of the more dangerous of their eight deadly sins. Listen to St. John Cassian describing one of its forms, "He looks about anxiously this way and that, and sighs that none of the brethren come to see him, and often goes in and out of his cell, and frequently gazes up at the sun, as if it was slow in setting."

Now let us picture ourselves anxiously awaiting a reply from that e-mail we sent two seconds before, or the madness that arises when we have to talk to an answering machine, or the frustration that develops while during the Rosary the telephone rings. We have all experienced it, I think; we are kneeling with a sincere attempt to meditate on the mysteries and then it happens — the phone rings, you've been told to ignore it, the answering machine goes on and somewhere in that Hail Mary, knees start shaking, heads turn an ear, and a general fidget envelops all the participants. "Dad, maybe we won the lottery, maybe it's a nuclear emergency, or just maybe the dog learned to dial the phone and we need to get it on YouTube." In my case, only the dog part is remotely real. The point is, technology, whether for good or ill, dominates our lifestyles to the point of utter distraction, and usually replaces what is most good in our spiritual life, silence.

William Burroughs said, "Silence is only frightening to people who are compulsively verbalizing." This need for talk pervades our modern society in a contagious cacophony of constant conversation. I dread summer, not only because I prefer winter for hardly any one is out and about, but because of its endless parade of parties. We have parties for every conceivable event and non-event that has occurred since time began. Birthday parties, wine tasting parties, wedding parties, pre-wedding parties, farewell parties, welcome parties, Christmas parties, (which invariably occur during the non-party season of Advent), New Year's Eve's parties, and parties because last week we didn't have a party. These last two occur in winter so the chances of weather postponing them is always real, so I don't mind them so much. Soon I think, we will have pre-funeral parties where the participants hold a lottery for the unlucky guest who won't receive money in the future. The advantage, of course, is there will always be money to hold another party. There are chick-flick nights, sing-along nights, game nights, and — to be fair — poker nights (but I consider this a part-time job). I sometimes believe that if we were present at the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, someone would have thrown a 'going out' party.

Not all silence is good of course, for we have that most true quote from Edmund Burke, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." In other words, to be silent. We as Catholics are subjected daily to this tragedy in the silence of our bishops who refuse to condemn so-called catholic politicians or schools who support, some enthusiastically, the murdering of the unborn, the acceptance of unnatural lifestyles, and the approval of immoral changes within the Sacrament of Marriage. This same Church fought for centuries these ambassadors of evil, unflinchingly wielding the sword of truth in the battle for God's rights. Not so today. We have a court that re-defines marriage, and nary a word is said in defense of God's rights. We have infamous speakers invited to Catholic schools; speakers that detest all that is Catholic, and no voice is raised in protest by our prelates. It seems the abomination is sitting in the temple. In frustration, or is it hope, we look for support to the Keys, and we get encyclicals on the environment, and worse yet, instead of the thundering roar from Peter, we get inspirational quotes like 'who am I to judge?' This is another form of silence; let us call it the silence of the lambs.

Technology has stifled silence, whether it be telephone, e-mail, tweets or internet browsing...

As Ben Franklin put it, "As we must account for every idle word, so must we account for every idle silence."

I recall one dinner party where for one solid minute no one had anything to say. The guests were staring down at their plates wondering if the zucchini was bewitching the crowd. My wife called it an awkward silence; I called it an enormous success for silence is conversation, precious and rare amongst friends. After all this you may consider me anti-social, which would be true to a point, for I do crave solitude, but let me describe best my attitude with a quote from Karen Armstrong, "I like silence; I'm a gregarious loner and without solitude, I lose my gregariousness."



Now parties are not an evil; indeed, they are very necessary for us traditional Catholics who are oppressed within and without, but unceasing activity can be an evil, only remedied by silence in solitude with our Creator. And of course, most families will hold only several soirees a year, if that, but that usually generates a party given in return for the favor, and so on and on. Never trust anything that is self-breeding.

Then there is the silence of the men, the very humans God assigned to watch the gate in Paradise lest any evil enter. Generally speaking, we as men have failed miserably in protecting our families from the rot of the world. Yes, we provide for their physical needs, but do we really provide for their spiritual protection and advancement? We have succumbed to co-ed sports, un-chaperoned dating, phone devices that now have easy access to the internet, and a general slothfulness in instructing them in the truths of their Catholic Faith. We work out in the world, most times in co-ed circumstances, then fail to appreciate the very women who have shouldered the burden in our absence. We claim fatigue usually not noticing, and in many cases ignoring, that their work-day with the children, our mutual responsibility, is only that, their work-day. How many of us would want to exchange places? They complain to us, we weather the storm hoping it will go away, knowing that the tempest will arise again. It is this inaction on the men's part that has led to the worst part in this sorry scenario; namely, the substitution of a correct patriarchal society for a matriarchal one.

As Ben Franklin put it, "As we must account for every idle word, so must we account for every idle silence."

And lastly, there is the lack of silence in the women. There are many reasons for this, such as the feminist movement or the call for women's rights, but I wish to focus on the Catholic perspective. I believe that the women now lead their families, and the men have gladly relinquished that duty. They plan everything from socials to Rosaries. They instigate the uncomfortable conversations, remind all of first Friday and Saturdays, ember and rogation days, and warn constantly of the hidden dangers of the world. But I think they do this begrudgingly because they would rather not be the one always sounding the reveille. When they get together, we men frequently are the main topic of conversation, because they vent all their pent-up emotions, and find usually that the problem is pandemic in all families. The only way to repair this anomaly is for the men to take charge, not with a tyrannical knee-jerk reaction, but with a humility in recognizing that the problem was theirs in the making. Having had conversations with other men about properly leading again, I have stated that it will be less difficult for men to lead than it will be for women to relinquish this inherited power. With that I am entering into dangerous territory for 'hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.'

This reversal of hierarchies has resulted in another phenomenon in traditional Catholic circles, that of vociferous women raising their voices in the assemblies. It used to be that men would do all the vocalizing when issues arose, especially in public venues, and the women would sit in their tight knit groups whispering to each other, sometimes exclaiming "that's my man up there." Now it is the men who have taken the corner seats, and while the women are vocalizing, a groan can be heard, accompanied by "there she goes again." We men have to fix this if all be right with the world again, for it does start at home, then outward into all facets of society, then upward into the realm of our Creator. I will leave the women with a quote from Marianne Williamson (and I thank God it's a woman I'm quoting), "There is nothing more powerful than a woman who knows how to contain her power and not let it leak, standing firmly within it in mystery and silence. A woman who talks too much sheds her allure."

Silence being golden, I will keep quiet now. ▪

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The Family Under Attack continued from page 9

more fragile, its primary purpose having become obscure, the marriage itself could fail.

Don Pietro Leone shows in other fields, such as contraception and the hierarchy in the family, how certain novel teachings of the Church have also had weakening effects upon the modern family. For example, he shows how, traditionally, and again with reference to Holy Scripture (especially Eph. 5), the Catholic Church has taught that the man is the head of the family, that he has to rule and to suffer, with perseverance and loyalty, for the greater good of his wife and children, as Christ did for His Church to the end. On this basis of that hierarchy the authority of the husband is strengthened, while, at the same time, it fortifies his vocation to sacrifice for his wife and children. However, in the novel teaching as we now have it, the husband and wife should mutually defer to one another, in a sort of diarchy of dialogue. The husband is not any more designated or at all described as the head of the family. The grave effect of this new teaching can be seen today: men are not any more as present in their families and they too often go to find their sought-for pleasures outside the home, or at the computer. Since they often do not feel any more respected and needed, they seek their putative fulfillment elsewhere.

According to Don Pietro Leone, the Catholic Church has also effectively weakened her earlier teaching on contraception. The author says the following:

"The historian, Professor Roberto de Mattei, in his book on [the Second Vatican] council relates that many of the Council Fathers had accepted the Malthusian prophecies about a population explosion and the consequent dire need for birth control. He quotes the speeches of the Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh and Bishop Méndez Arceo in this connection, with their accent on love, responsibility, and freedom; and the speech of Cardinal Suenens with its emphasis on the second finality of marriage, which he names 'the growth of conjugal unity,' over against the first, which is procreation. The Professor relates how various cardinals faithful to Catholic doctrine responded to these innovatory ideas: Cardinal Ruffini accused the innovators of declaring as moral that which had always been held to be immoral; Cardinal Ottaviani defended established Catholic doctrine on the generosity of parents; and Cardinal Browne briefly set forth the principles of Catholic marital doctrine. The historian explains how the chapter of *Gaudium et Spes* dedicated to the dignity of marriage and of the family expresses the innovative rather than the traditional teaching, and that it represents an unhappy synthesis of the two opposing tendencies." (pp. 73-74)

After presenting the major arguments of the papal magisterial texts *Humanae Vitae* and *Familiaris Consortio* in a detailed manner, Don Pietro Leone summarizes his appreciation, as well as his criticism of these recent magisterial texts, as follows:

"It is incumbent on the commentator first to acknowledge with gratitude that contraception has been condemned in modern Church teaching as vigorously as in the past; but second that this teaching is at divergence from Tradition in a number of points, of which we shall proceed to consider three: 1) It no longer accords priority to the procreative finality of marriage, but rather accords priority (at least implicitly) to 'love'; 2) It condemns contraception not for its frustration of the procreative finality of marriage, but rather for its rupture of the bond between 'the unitive and procreative meanings of the conjugal act'; 3) It advocates natural birth control." (p. 78)

Don Pietro Leone points out that the generosity and openness to life has always been part of the Church's teaching about marriage. However, if one alters the teaching about the finalities of marriage, the teaching (and, at least, the laxer practices) concerning birth control will change, too — overtly or subtly. Don Pietro Leone shows, for example, how the commandment of God to "increase and multiply" has led the Church traditionally to encourage large families:

> "...any violation of God's Laws will lead not only to much unhappiness, but also, finally, to dangers for the soul."

"We observe that multiplication, in the common acceptation of the term, means multiplication by a factor of more than one, so that it excludes the maintenance of the status quo, which would be achieved by the procreation of only two children (in which case each generation up to the present day would only contain two members), and therefore indicates families of more than two children. The attitude of the Church towards procreation is in short one of generosity." (p. 87)

After presenting Pope Pius XII's strict words about the resort to, and more frequent use of natural forms of birth control, which are sinful if not practiced for grave reasons, Don Pietro Leone shows how Pope Paul VI, in his own encyclical *(Humanae Vitae),* has omitted any encouragement of large families, while more than once emphasizing "responsible parenthood," which was, and still is, understood in the ambiguous context of the quasi-Malthusian empirical arguments about an alleged overpopulation. Don Pietro Leone says:

"Turning now to *Humanae Vitae,* we remark that it makes no appeal to generosity or fruitfulness (apart from one comment that 'marital love is fecund'), but rather to

'responsible parenthood.' Mr. Galvin points out that this phrase is used seven times in the encyclical, and occurs in the title of the Majority Report produced by the Papal Commission prior to the encyclical, which in fact favors artificial contraception. This appeal to responsible parenthood is made in the context of 'the difficult conditions which today afflict families and peoples' with particular reference to population growth. ... We remark that *Humanae Vitae* advocates a wide use of natural birth control. We have seen in the summary above how it also praises the practice in glowing terms." (pp. 89-90)

These few quotations and supportive (and representative) examples should give the reader a little insight into how Don Pietro Leone argues in his book. He writes lucidly and convincingly, presenting sufficient evidence to defend the validity of his theses. Very important also is the chapter where he deals with the killing of the unborn children in utero: the spiritual and psychological effects upon the mother who commits this act of murder — "the deliberate killing of the innocent" — as well as the pains which are inflicted upon the dying child. Don Pietro Leone also amply shows how, in this entire field, any violation of God's Laws will lead not only to much unhappiness, but also, finally, to dangers for the soul.

It is to be hoped that each Synod Father — while preparing for the upcoming Synod of Bishops on Marriage and the Family — will find the time to read and deeply consider this book. This book, if fully appreciated and incorporated into the Church's thinking, could lead to a recovery of truths and insights which have been neglected and practically denied or bypassed for many decades now. A true evangelization of today's world has to start with the truth: The truth about nature; about God's Laws; and about the effects of immoral actions upon the individual soul as well as upon society. If this book is taken earnestly and gratefully by the Synod Fathers, we do not need to worry about the upcoming final report of the October Synod and its final message to the Catholics, as well as to the whole non-Catholic world. ▪

The Family Under Attack: A Theological and Philosophical Defense of Human Society, by Don Pietro Leone.

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Problem Solving continued from page 11

problem is significant, then it is wise to remain open to the potential for a better idea.

I have made this mistake hundreds, no thousands, of times — choosing a solution and then failing to remain open to others that may be better. For example, for decades when I received a small cut on an area of skin that is used constantly, such as a finger or thumb, I used old-fashioned band aids and struggled to keep them in place throughout the day. On several occasions, my wife had mentioned a spray-on product that would seal the cut and remain flexible and in place throughout the day. I ignored the suggestion and continued to struggle with my band aids until, one day, I actually listened to her and tried the product. It worked beautifully. I was amazed!

Pray for Help with the Solution and that It Conforms to God's Will

As Catholics we know we should always pray before we do anything, including trying to solve a problem. Not only should we pray for help solving it, but we should pray that the solution conforms to God's Will.

For a few years I worked for the small business service division of a large telephone company. My job was phone sales and service. Agents were rated by their sales and mine were absolutely miserable. In fact, after several months, I was at the very bottom of the six hundred agents at the small business center. I knew they would not keep someone who could not meet minimal expectations. I needed to find a solution to this problem, and I needed one fast. I requested assistance from my supervisor and decided to pray frequently to Saint Joseph during the day for help. A few days later the new manager of the entire phone center sat down with me as I spoke to a customer. After listening to me for a few moments, he had me place the customer on hold and gave me a few suggestions. With the changes he recommended and the intervention of Saint Joseph, in one month, I became the top performer in the entire center.

As mentioned above, this essay is not intended to be a complete guide to problem-solving and decision-making but rather a brief summary of several things I have picked up since I returned to the Faith many years ago. I have noticed other traditional Catholics are hampered by mistakes similar to those I have made over the years and perhaps these suggestions will help someone, somewhere. ▪

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EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS

Ex Cathedra: "There is but one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all is saved" (Pope Innocent III, Fourth Lateran Council, 1215).

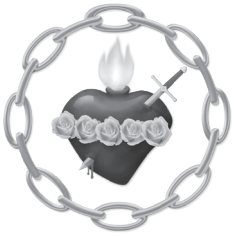
Ex Cathedra: "We declare, say, define, and pronounce that it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff" (Pope Boniface VIII, the Bull *Unam Sanctam,* 1302).

Ex Cathedra: "The most Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes, and preaches that none of those existing outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, can have a share in life eternal; but that they will go into the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless before death they are joined with Her; and that so important is the unity of this ecclesiastical body that only those remaining within this unity can profit by the sacraments of the Church unto salvation, and they alone can receive an eternal recompense for their fasts, their almsgivings, their other works of Christian piety and the duties of a Christian soldier. No one, let his almsgiving be as great as it may, no one, even if he pour out his blood for the Name of Christ, can be saved, unless he remain within the bosom and the unity of the Catholic Church" (Pope Eugene IV, the Bull *Cantate Domino,* 1441).

Notes:

- Now in our bookstore: **Family Under Attack** by Don Pietro Leone
- **SBC Conference:** details on page 8.

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