

# Catholic Professionals' Group

DECEMBER 2013 NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1: ISSUE 6

## Christmas Gathering

**SATURDAY**

**DECEMBER 14, 2013**

**6:30 PM**

**Mon Ami Gabi**

**260 Oakbrook Center**

**Oakbrook, IL**

*View menu online at*

***www.monamigabi.com***

**Please RSVP**

**by December 10th:**

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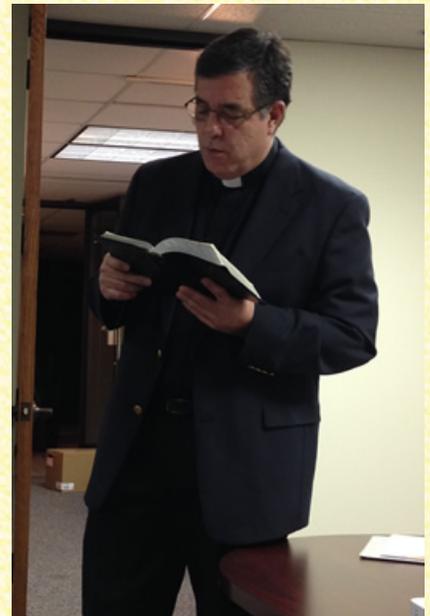
*Catholic Professionals' Group welcomes professionals to participate in monthly meetings where they can socialize with other professionals who share Catholic values, discuss topics relevant to our faith & professions, and enjoy spiritual nourishment under the guidance of Roman Catholic Priests.*

## How to Pray with Fr. John Fahey

November 30th (Elmhurst)

**MENTAL PRAYER: JUST DO IT. DON'T WORRY ABOUT MAKING "PROGRESS," THE "QUALITY," LEST YOU GET DISCOURAGED AND GIVE UP**

"Lord, teach us to pray." This was the backdrop of an engaging talk on mental prayer given by Redemptorist priest Father John Fahey at CPG's November meeting. Beginning with the truth that God desires the salvation of the whole human race, not just a few select individuals, Father John stressed that prayer is a demonstration of our longing to grow closer to God and to express desires consistent with God's will. Noting that mental prayer is essential to adult Catholic life, Father John focused on two aspects of mental prayer that deepen one's encounter with God and develop a richer spiritual life: petition and meditation. To prepare for mental prayer, it is important to be cognizant of our need for redemption, to show some sort of need before God even though God already desires salvation for us.



Accordingly, in recalling the story of the leper who approached Jesus saying "If you wish, you can make me clean," Father John emphasized that Jesus' response was "I do will it," thus highlighting the need for each one of us to actively and earnestly ask for things that are already God's will for us. In so doing, Father John explained that praying for specific favors that God wills allows us to participate more fully in his plan, thereby helping us to grow in compassion and experience deeper ongoing conversion.

First, pointing out that without God we can do nothing, Father John observed that many times we come to prayer with a certain image of ourselves by placing that image before God instead of who we actually are at a particular moment, with our failings and needs. Recalling the leper who had no illusion about who he was but nevertheless went to God completely humble and in need, Father John remarked that God does not save an image of ourselves; he can only save us as we are, warts and all. Thus, a necessary attitude, before engaging in either meditation or prayers of petition, is authentic humility so that we acknowledge our need for God's grace to gain insight into our true selves. After all, we cannot fool God, try as we might, but we do try to fool ourselves. If we are going to pray, really pray, it might as well be as we truly are.

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Part of this attitude of humility, then, is recognizing one's constant need for a savior, which is particularly important for people who have achieved success professionally because of the potential temptation to think of oneself as self-sufficient with the use of one's own abilities and talents to reach a certain status and level of expertise. Father John, in response to a question from the audience about one's tendency to deny our biggest flaws, noted that sin gets more and more subtle as we progress in the spiritual life and thus requires ever deeper insight into the workings of our hearts, with the assistance of grace.

Equally important to petitioning God for deliverance from problems in our own lives is prayer for others, such as those affected by war, natural disasters, illness, or personal grief. The goal here is not so much to "get" God to do something, but to use the image of God's willing the healing and consolation of people in desperate situations – like the leper in need-- to make our own hearts grow bigger, more compassionate toward others generally. In other words, to love more deeply.

Citing Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa and Pope Paul VI, Father John highlighted how prayer not only actuates God's grace but also prompts us to action, saying "without us, God won't," and "if you want peace, work for justice," meaning that our participation in God's plan for salvation for the entire human race is a requisite for sparking the action of grace in the world.

Next, Father John turned to the practice of meditation during mental prayer, distinguishing Christian meditation from the type of meditation practiced in Eastern religions. Meditation in a Christian context is understood as an active reflection on and engagement with scripture rather than an emptying of the mind. The key is sitting quietly, calmly reading a passage of scripture, reflecting on it, and engaging in an active conversation with God: the scene, the people present there, what they say, what they do. Father John reminded us that even though the stories in the Bible occurred over 20 centuries ago, they still resonate because they reflect human nature and concern eternal truths, which can challenge our worldview and attitudes even today.

Both aspects of mental prayer can be completed in 15-20 minutes a day. Importantly, at the conclusion of mental prayer, one should make a resolution based on the scripture, taking into account how one plans to live the truth reflected on during meditation, how one intends to follow God faithfully. Father John stressed that, to make prayer a truly personal encounter with God, the concluding resolution should be a reflection of one's own reading of scripture and unique situation, rather than an analysis prepared by someone else. Although written commentary is useful in illuminating and explaining scripture, because mental prayer is a personal encounter with God -- not Bible study -- one's resolution should be based on the meaning one derives from that intimate encounter.

Finally, Father John emphasized the importance of devoting time to mental prayer on a daily basis without worrying whether we are doing it "correctly" or "making progress." He explained that once we start down the road of judging the quality of our prayer, we run the risk of getting discouraged, giving the Enemy an opening so that we may eventually give up altogether. It is therefore critical that we persevere in the effort to engage in prayer and not get caught up in whether it is "good enough," let alone perfect.

Here are some tips for engaging in mental prayer:

- Go to a place conducive to prayer so you can consciously acknowledge the presence of God ("Go into to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is there in secret." Mt 6:6);
- Start with a simple examination of conscience and approach prayer with an attitude of faith, that is, the desire and ability to act according to the Word of God, who never lies and keeps his promises;
- Prayer is for everyone without exception, not just the "holy";
- At the end of your mental prayer, come up with a resolution about how you plan to live according to the truth you discovered in the scripture;

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- Never panic or worry about not making “progress” in prayer or whether you are “better” today than previously. Sticking to your commitment to try to do mental prayer daily is much more important than whether you are “successful.” It is infinitely better to pray in a distracted fashion, interrupted by hundreds of random thoughts, than to beat yourself up over it, get discouraged, and then quit altogether. That is exactly what Satan wants you to do.
- Because mental prayer requires concentration and focus, avoid mental prayer while driving. Save the drive for recited prayers like the Rosary. But again, do not fret if you do get distracted during prayer.

## Legal News

### United States Supreme Court to Hear Two Cases on HHS “CONTRACEPTIVE MANDATE”

We live in exciting times indeed. The United States Supreme Court recently agreed to hear two cases involving the so-called “contraceptive mandate” in the Affordable Care Act. The two cases, part of a split among the federal circuits, are *Hobby Lobby v. Sebelius* (10th Circuit) and *Conestoga Wood Specialties v. Sebelius* (3rd Circuit). In *Hobby Lobby*, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled among other things that closely-held corporations were “persons” under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which requires courts to apply the high “strict scrutiny” standard in determining whether the government has a compelling interest in substantially burdening a person’s exercise of religion. In so ruling, the Tenth Circuit held that the government’s interest in imposing the mandate on employers could not be compelling because the contraceptive mandate “presently does not apply to tens of millions of people.” Quoting the Supreme Court and noting the number of exemptions granted by the government, the Tenth Circuit explained “a law cannot be regarded as protecting an interest of the highest order when it leaves appreciable damage to that supposedly vital interest unprohibited.” (*Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520, 547 (1993).

In *Conestoga Wood*, the Third Circuit reached the opposite conclusion, ruling that neither the corporation nor its owners could challenge the mandate because the mandate does not require the owners to actually do anything in violation of their religious beliefs and that a for-profit corporation has no rights of religious freedom.

With the acceptance of these two cases, the Supreme Court will settle: (1) whether the businesses have rights as businesses, or only through their owners; (2) whether the mandate serves a “compelling” governmental interest, and, if so; (3) whether the government has used the “least restrictive means” of furthering that interest.

As of November 26, 2013, 85 cases have been filed challenging the HHS mandate. Of the 44 cases filed by for-profit businesses, 32 have received preliminary injunctions staying the effect of the mandate while the cases are pending.

The *Hobby Lobby* Tenth Circuit opinion is available at: <http://www.ca10.uscourts.gov/opinions/12/12-6294.pdf>; the *Conestoga Wood* Third Circuit opinion is available at: <http://www2.ca3.uscourts.gov/opinarch/131144p.pdf>. Oral arguments are expected to be held in March 2014 with a possible ruling in late June. Stay tuned.

## Bible Study Timeline

### Jeff Cavins’ Bible Timeline: Session 2 – The Early World Part I GENESIS: 1-3

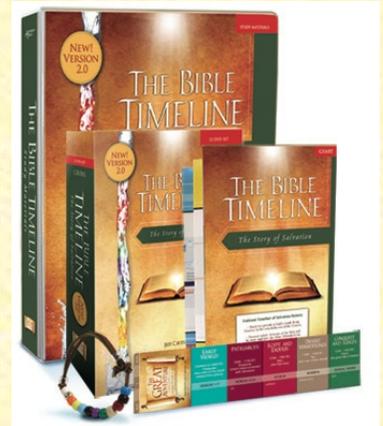
We should approach our reading of Genesis with the understanding that its genre is poetry. Hebrew poetry uses figurative language but this does not mean that the story is fictional; it is a true account of events. Many people think Genesis stories are simply myths, but they’re actually ANTI-myths. In fact, they debunk earlier myths about creation, running against the grain of the many pagan narratives, for it names ONE KING and AUTHORITY versus the many kings and gods of the pagan world. Instead of royalty only being granted

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to kings and nobility, God bestows royalty on the first man and woman...upon all humanity. God wishes to relate to His people not as a master to his slaves, but as a father to his sons and daughters. THAT is what makes our story from here on out radically different.

**Genesis 1 & 2:** God is communicating to us in the creation story that He is responsible for creation. He's building a dwelling place where He can dwell with us. Although man is created on the same day as the beasts, the 6th day, he is distinctly different. Man was created in the image of God, which means: with an intellect/can reason, a free will, and the capacity to love. The 7th day of creation is the Sabbath and stands apart from the other days. This day, unlike the first 6 days, has no end; it is of a different order, representing divine rest...a place where man can receive the divine life God intends for him to receive. God is calling the human race to enter into a relationship with Him...as sons and daughters...ultimately to be divinized.



**Genesis 3:** God gave Adam orders not to eat of the tree of good and evil, for the day he shall eat of it, he shall die. The serpent enters...more subtle than any wild creature. Revelation describes the devil as the deceiver of the whole world. Lucifer was one of the most brilliant and beautiful of all the created beings in heaven, but due to pride, he abused his free will and ultimately took 1/3 of the angels with him to hell. The serpent tells Eve that if she eats of the tree of good and evil she will not die, but have the power of God. The tactic of the enemy was: to twist God's words (commonly done with sin), tempt Eve with created things and power, to prefer themselves over God, and most significantly, convince Eve that "God was holding out" on them, because God didn't want them to be like him...causing them to lose trust. THE KEYS TO THE FALL WERE: PRIDE AND LOSING TRUST IN GOD. They lost trust in God's goodness. THE REST OF THE BIBLICAL STORY WILL WORK TO OVERCOME THIS PROBLEM. The union of man and woman were subject to tensions with death making its entrance into human history. Original justice was gone and the makeup of the human being was different. The intellect was darkened and the will was weakened. The result was concupiscence: the inclination to sin or choose the lesser good over the greater good.

The problem with Eve was that she chose a lesser good (fruit) rather than the greater good, God. The problem with sin is that we want something that isn't good enough. (natural goods) Natural goods must be kept in check with our creator. What if we don't repent and continually choose the lesser good? A habit forms and we face *God's punishment, which is the attraction that sin places upon us.* "Getting caught" is actually God's MERCY... like a flare being shot up into our darkness to give us another chance to show us who we really are. God's kindness leads us to repentance. **There is good news in Genesis 3:15. God gives his first promise of a Savior. He has crafted a plan of sheer goodness. "The seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent." There will be victory in another garden....**

*Please visit our website at: [www.catholicprofessionalsgroup.org](http://www.catholicprofessionalsgroup.org)*

