

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York 14202

TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING by S. Casarotto 3/29/09

MORAL REALIGNMENT

Anyone who owns a car knows that he has to maintain it: wash it, fill up the gas tank, change the oil, and have good breaks, lights and tires. When the mechanic rotates or changes the tires, he must align them for durability and safety.

As Catholics, we must maintain our faith through prayer, penance and worthy reception of the Sacraments. We must realign always our thoughts and actions with the Word of God.

Along with material poverty, moral poverty is spreading around the world and having a considerable effect even where there is no lack of material good. Consumerism and hedonism, together with the lack of moral principles, are making the structure of society and family life vulnerable.

Lent is a special time to refocus on the Word of God which the Church received and proclaims to-day. It is therefore a time of conversion and changing of mind. We must connect with Jesus, "the Truth, the Way and the Life" because, through sin, we are disconnected, or, as the British say, "twisted." Just look at these statistics of people in the country who claim to be Catholic but...

- * **34%** believe it can be morally acceptable for two adults of the same sex to have sexual relations;
- * **35%** believe it may be morally acceptable to have an abortion;
- * **39%** favor allowing same-sex couples to adopt young children;
- * **40%** believe that a legislator who directly votes to keep abortion legal can still be a good Catholic;
- * **70%** in the age group 18-44 believe the Eucharist is merely a "symbolic reminder" of Jesus.
- * **The rate** of divorce among Catholics is about the same as that of non-Catholics.

These statistics are frightening, especially when we consider that the majority of Catholics attended Catholic schools or Religion Education classes. No wonder that, as other statistics show, the number of disenfranchised Catholics is increasing.

During Lent, let's study the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Ignorance is never a blessing, especially in matters of faith and morality. Our Lord gave a stern warning to all his followers: "*You are the salt of the earth! If the salt spoils, it is good for nothing but to be trampled underfoot!*".

GOD BLESS YOU

Official blessings can be given only by priests in the administration of the Sacraments and sacramentals. However, many blessings may be given also by lay people.

In the old days (i.e. when people had more faith), Italian people used to greet a priest by saying "*Sia lodato Gesu' Cristo*" (My the Jesus Christ be praised) to which the priest responded "*Sempre sia lodato!*" (May He always be praised). Altar boys would instead answer: "*Oggi e sempre!*" (Today and always), but I never made it to be an altar boy. It was a simple and beautiful word of blessing between the priest and the people. Sicilians

still have a beautiful greeting: "*Sabbenedica!*" My the Lord bless you. In America, very often only a trivial sneezing is echoed by a "God bless you!"

I remember that when I entered the seminary, my mother placed her hands on my head and said "*May God bless you, my son!*" Even when, soon after Ordination, I gave her my first priestly blessing, my mother turned to me and gave me her blessing. She only attended third grade.