



## Taking to Heart God's Law

by Father David Nuss

Director of Vocations

“The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31).

As a “Covenant Maker,” God establishes laws and rules and disciplines for humanity to learn and take to heart. Why? God’s desire is to shape His people, to form His people, to give to us all that we need to become who it is we have been created by God to be. What God seeks is to make every single one of us holy.

In some ways learning and taking to heart God’s law likens the process of a child learning to play a musical instrument. For example, the child receives the guitar and along with the instrument is given a whole set of laws, rules and disciplines to learn in order to play well.

No sooner does the child take up the guitar than she hears, “No, not like that! Here’s how you hold it” and “here’s how you move your fingers to play notes and form chords” and “here’s how you read the music.”

By practicing and persevering the child who adheres to the set of laws, rules and disciplines comes not only to play the guitar, but to play it well, with beauty and meaning and purpose.

At first, the laws are extrinsic to the child; that is, the rules and disciplines come from the outside, they are foreign and feel awkward and the child exclaims, “it’s hard!” In no time the sense of adventure wanes and she seeks to skip practice and ignore the rules. Indeed, there is nothing easy about appropriating laws, rules and disciplines into the core of our being, to internalize them.

continued on back>

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But for the persistent child (or perhaps more accurately stated, the persistent parent) the laws, rules and disciplines work themselves into the body, mind and soul, imagination and instincts; playing the instrument becomes effortless, reflexive and delightful. What first was unnatural and awkward becomes natural and easy.

And when this happens - when the law is internalized - the child plays well. Employing biblical imagery, the law has been written upon her heart - it is no longer outside; it is now part and parcel of her life.

So, too, is this seen in the boy who jogs out to play shortshop and knows how to position himself - no longer needing the coach to shout where he should stand and how he must set, catch and throw; the game becomes effortless, reflexive and delightful.

### I will place my law within them...

Jeremiah 31:31

The People of God were given a cadre of laws, rules and disciplines by their Covenant Maker. Was it tough going for them? You bet! Time and again the Bible chronicles their resistance to God's designs, describing them as "stiff-necked people" and "hard-hearted people" and "stubborn, obstinate people."

Just as children resist practicing and taking laws, rules and disciplines to heart, so too do we resist internalizing God's Plan for our lives.

Enter Jeremiah 31:31: "The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

God's desire is for His law to become so internalized within us that we will live it effortlessly, reflexively and delightfully.

For some, God's law calls for a major realignment of living. For others God's law is unclear, foreign and yet to be learned. For still others, God's law feels painful just thinking about it.

Jesus is the real and concrete embodiment of God's law. In Jesus, we see, know and encounter the law of God. Every week at the Holy Mass we eat and drink the law of God made flesh, so that Christ Jesus becomes bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; so that the law of God truly becomes internalized; so that we will love effortlessly, reflexively and delightfully.

## Calendar of Events

### April 7-9, 2006

**Discernment Retreat** at the Little Sisters of the Poor in Pittsburgh, PA for women (18-35 years of age) discerning a religious vocation. The weekend will include times of prayer and encounter with the Little Sisters and the elderly residents. For more information or to register contact Sr. Martha 412-307-1100 or [vocpittsburgh@lspusa.org](mailto:vocpittsburgh@lspusa.org)

### April 14, 2006

**The Walk for Life** takes place annually on Good Friday. We walk as a sign of our respect for life and to celebrate the life God has given each of us.

Please join us for the 7 mile walk which will be at 10:00 a.m. at All Saints, Frenchtown (The St. Nicholas Chapel) and end with prayer at the Basilica, Our Lady of Consolation in Carey.

### April 30, 2006

**Discernment Group for Women** college age and older interested in discussing the vocation of consecrated life. The gathering begins with the 10:00 a.m. Mass at Saint Aloysius, Bowling Green. After Mass, the group gathers in the University Student Union for lunch and discussion. For more information, contact Sister Marilyn Marie Ellerbrock, SND, at 419-244-6711 or [mellerbrock@toledodiocese.org](mailto:mellerbrock@toledodiocese.org)

## CATHOLIC CATECHISM CORNER

### LAW

The law of the Gospel fulfills and surpasses the Old Law and brings it to perfection: its promises, through the Beatitudes of the Kingdom of heaven; its commandments, by reforming the heart, the root of human acts. (1984)

## SIGHTINGS ON THE WEB

Visit [www.toledovocations.com/questions.html](http://www.toledovocations.com/questions.html) for answer to commonly asked questions.

## Did You Know?

- Easter is celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox.
- Canon Law is the body of laws and regulations made by or adopted by ecclesiastical authority.

## For more info:

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