

## Going Back to SCHL

Horizons

By Fr. Thomas J. Loya

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With the Church's teaching on contraception and artificial birth control being (at long last) in high profile in the news today I often hear Byzantine Catholics, both clergy and laity alike, saying things like this: "Oh, that's just a Roman Catholic teaching and we are Byzantine Catholics. We don't have to follow that teaching because we are a "sui juris" Church (Latin for a Church "in its own right" or "self governing.") Or they might say, "The theology of the body is just a western teaching from a Roman Catholic Pope and since we are Byzantine Catholics we don't have to follow that teaching." Such statements reflect all the more reason why Byzantine Catholics in particular have to go back to SCHL to recover the Sacramental- Catholic- Human-Liturgical (SCHL) worldview which is all the while in their very own Byzantine liturgical life.

The teachings of the Church both east and west,(Roman Catholic, Eastern Catholic and Orthodox) on moral issues such as contraception are not a function of a particular Church or the opinion of a Pope or even of a specific Rite of the Church. In fact the phrase, "the Church's teaching" is itself misleading. The Church, east or west, does not really have "teachings." The Church does not "make up stuff" and then impose it on everyone's life to ruin their fun and enjoyment. It is Almighty God who has the "teachings" or, a better word is, "order."

There is an order to creation that God designed and the Church simply points to those "teachings" or to that order and tells the world that if we are honest to that order in the way that we live we will enjoy happiness. If we do not know or recognize that order or if we choose to live in a way that is dishonest to that order we bring hurt into our lives and into society. By observing God's order of creation the teachings of the Church, both east and west, become based upon what I will refer to as a "glorified version of common sense." Another term that can be used is "Natural Law;"which simply means, what is true about all of life and the entire created order. And all of this is supported by Scripture and even honest science (emphasis here on "honest") as well as by the mystics, spiritual masters, theologians and Fathers of the Church and yes, even by those "Roman Catholic" Popes of Rome.

Of all people who ought to understand and live most clearly and faithfully the Church's "teachings" on issues such as artificial birth control it ought to be Byzantine Catholics. The reason is found in our very own liturgical life and nowhere does this become more evident than during Holy Week and Pascha, which is more properly called in the Byzantine Church, "The Week of the Bridegroom." It is the singular genius of the Byzantine Church that the quintessential week of the entire liturgical calendar is referred to in terms of nuptials, the Spousal relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church. It is upon this reality, and not the opinion of a "Roman Catholic Pope" that the entire "teaching" of the Church on artificial birth control is based. When a "Roman Catholic Pope" clarifies one of God's "teachings" all he really is doing is inviting the world to do what the Byzantine Catholic Church does naturally—go "back to SCHL."

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