

WELCOME TO THE USC CATHOLIC CENTER

As you read this Fall 2000 Catholic Trojan, the first semester will be concluding with final exams,

and staff being Catholic. We held a very successful retreat in September, and the students are busy work-

the university community an opportunity to reflect on the Word of God from the perspective of modern scholarship and orthodox Christian belief.

Students are rejuvenating and energizing various ministry opportunities through the Catholic Center. Key among them are service opportunities and a Justice and Peace ministry. The RCIA program is off to its best start in years, with 21 students indicating interest in the Sacraments.

Our new Mission Statement is complete and presented in this issue of our newsletter. It is also available on our website. We invite everyone to join us in reflecting on our Catholic mission at USC and seeking ways to further our ministry. Now, sit back and enjoy the rest of the Catholic Trojan.



but the academic year continues. Like many years before it, this one got off to a great start, with a positive response from students, both old and new. This year already has seen the formation of a Pastoral Council (see the article on page 2), and our Advisory Board is preparing to launch a major capital campaign to both improve our facilities and establish a firm financial foundation for our ministry.

But, of course, it is the ministry that counts. USC still ranks among the largest "Catholic" campuses in the nation, with approximately 35% of the student population and a sizable number of faculty

ing on another one for the spring. Fr. Perry Leiker, who led the Fall retreat, was truly

edified by the depth of spirituality among the students. No surprise to those of us who see them daily.

One of the challenges to proclaiming an authentic gospel on campus continues to be the presence of fundamentalist movements. Over the last couple of years we have been cooperating in some areas of ministry with the Episcopalian and Lutheran communities, attempting to implement the covenant paper signed by our three bishops. A joint Bible study this semester has offered

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WHY PASTORAL COUNCIL?

By Elizabeth Arlotti
Pastoral Council President

Those of you who have attended the Catholic Center for a number of years know that the whole idea of a pastoral council is a new one. In the past there has been a small group of students who organized all the events at the center, from service to social to liturgical and beyond. This has worked well. In fact, it has worked very well; the past couple of years have seen a growth in activities offered by the center, and a growth in the number of students participating in these activities. However, that system did not allow for one very important thing: complete community participation at every level.

No one individual defines the church; nor, by the same token does one group of people. Just as we cannot fully live our faith by doing solely what Fr. Bill prepares for us, nor can we be satisfied to only act as Catholics within one group's conception of what it means to be Catholic. This is not to say that our previous leadership was bad, or wrong. It merely says that it wasn't complete.

The goal of the Pastoral Council is to give us an opportunity to expand our faith, as well as to help us fully understand our role as a Catholic *community*. Though we may not realize it, we can learn from each other, and we all have something to teach. Yet we cannot know this unless we come to-

gether. No one person can do everything; spreading the planning of activities among various specific committees allows people—many of whom have never previously voiced their opinions—to share their particular ideas and interests with the community at large. Whereas previously four or five individuals tried to discern the needs and interests of the entire community, now each committee elects a representative who understands the position of a significant portion of the community toward a specific part of acting the Catholic faith. When all these representatives come together they will *not* decide an activities schedule; that will have already been done in focused parts by each group independently. What the representatives, along with the president and vice-president, *will* do is bring the ideas of the community together, making them attainable to everyone, as well as broadening their scope to include the greater Catholic community in the USC area.

There is great joy—and so much fun—to be had when members of a community come together to share their faith. Catholicism is not just what we do for an hour every Sunday and maybe one Thursday a month when we get free food. One lives one's faith every day, and that faith is meant to be shared. The pastoral council hopes not only to remind people of that fact, but to make them revel in it.



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Financial *Report*



In the November '98 issue of The Catholic Trojan, we included a report on the finances for the fiscal year which ended June 30, 1998. We also decided to publish this report annually. The report that follows is for the fiscal year which ended June 30, 1999

Income

| | |
|---|------------|
| Sunday Collection | 30,565.00 |
| Christmas | 17,995.00 |
| Easter | 10,629.00 |
| Sacraments | 250.00 |
| Promotional (T-shirts, etc) | 1,665.00 |
| Miscellaneous Donations | 11,377.00 |
| Property Rental | 23,705.00 |
| Restricted Donations (includes chapel) | 37,667.00 |
| (also incl \$10,000 withdrawal from endowment) | |
| Interest Income | 3,883.00 |
| Subsidy from Archdiocese | 105,003.00 |

Expenses

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Salaries | 56,851.00 |
| Insurances | 17,874.00 |
| Retirement & Soc Security | 11,182.00 |
| Church & Office | 34,360.00 |
| Property Taxes | 1,904.00 |
| Utilities | 13,462.00 |
| Building & Auto | 21,029.00 |
| Building & Equipment Maint | 19,655.00 |
| Rectory | 11,256.00 |
| Ministry | 28,266.00 |
| Auto Purchase | 1,000.00 |
| Chapel Renovation | 10,704.00 |
| Equipment Purchase | 15,196.00 |

Totals

242,739.00

242,739.00

Over the last seven years, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has been subsidizing the Our Savior Catholic Center for a little over \$100,000. At the same time, the Archdiocese has been warning that it would not continue to subsidize us. This year, the first reduction has been put into effect. Next year, fully 1/3 of our subsidy will be eliminated, followed the following year by another third, and the year after that, there will be no subsidy at all.

We no longer have an associate campus minister, so Fr. Bill is the only full time staff member, with two part time students assisting in the office. In spite of this, we are continuing our efforts to build a more effective and dynamic ministry at USC, as evidenced by the new pastoral council.

Student participation at Sunday Mass continues to be edifying. It is gratifying to see the commitment of the student community each Sunday. Many of them have responded to the call to give \$5.00 per week. Yet the reality is that the majority of students do not have sufficient discretionary or disposable funds, and so the Sunday collection comes nowhere near meeting the financial needs of the Catholic Center. The advisory board we established last year is preparing to launch a capital campaign to raise an endowment and build a new Catholic Center. Both of these projects are essential to fulfilling our mission.

Since we all share in the work and ministry of Our Savior Catholic Center, we hope this condensed financial report is not only informative, but inspires everyone to deepen their commitment toward building a stronger Catholic presence on campus.

THE NIGHTMARE

Before Easter

By Matthew Leal

It is Palm Sunday and I am the Babe Ruth of altar serving. Over the past year and a half, I had developed a reputation at St. Anne's Church for being the most respectful, the most holy, the most pious of the all the youth. It appeared that I was so reverent that the schedule for the altar servers was changed so I could be on for the Palm Sunday vigil Saturday night. Theresa Herman and I were paired up to serve at the most difficult mass of the year. Tradition calls for a procession around the parking lot before proceeding into the church. We went to a special rehearsal to make sure that everything would be like clockwork. Everyone arrives and now it's show time.

I arrive at 4:30 and go to the sacristy to get my white robe. When I get there, Theresa and her brother, Dominick, are using the *cinctures* (robe-like belts) as jump ropes. We decide to have a quick jump rope contest since we have some time before we are responsible for being anywhere. Dominick steps up and we start to chant to the beat.

"Cinderella dressed in yella went upstairs to kiss her fella..." The cinctures are much shorter than a normal jump rope and Dominick trips and falls over.

"Nice one, Dom!" Theresa shouts as she snatches the belt from him. She begins to jump.

"Cinderella dressed in yell—" Theresa slams the linoleum.

"Alright, Matt, your turn." Dominick hands me the belt.

I am already dressed in my robe and do not understand how the girls in elementary school used to wear skirts and jump rope. I am eternally impressed by their coordination. When I step up, it is sad.

"Cinderell—" I fall flat on the floor. The sound of my tail end hitting the ground makes a loud *Thwap!* that makes Theresa and Dominick roll over with laughter.

Theresa and I are early taking up our positions in the parking lot. After hearing another wonderful pep talk from the presiding priest, we are left alone on the back patio of the church. It is my job to carry in the holy water. So I am holding a beautiful, heavy bucket of water. We stand there in an uncomfortable silence. When I was younger, I was under the impression that a stupid joke would always break the ice. So I spit out the first one that comes to mind.

"Do you know why all of the numbers are afraid of Seven?"

Theresa stares at me like I am Jojo the Dogface Boy from the state fair. "Huh?"

"The numbers all cower when Seven walks by...Do you know why?"

She shakes her head.

"Seven ate Nine." She doesn't even break a smile. Instead, she stares at me a few more seconds. Then, breaks out with her own joke, which is a little more apropos.

I don't quite remember exact details but I remember it began with "A nun once went to confession..." and ended with a nun "peeing in the holy water." Her joke is the most disgusting that I've heard in a long time. I look down at the holy water that I hold in my hand. Theresa notices me looking and laughs.

"Whssssh!" She imitates the sound of flowing water. My imagination runs wild with all kinds of sacrilegious images.

More and more people gather at the site of the vigil. Theresa and I are far beyond nuns going to confession by now. Our horrible conversation ends when Father Vincent marches out. The crowd becomes silent as well. A few words were said—it was probably a blessing, although I don't quite recall who or what was being blessed. Theresa elbows me in the side. It is time for us to begin the procession.

We walk out through the parking lot with the congregation following. They told us how to walk at the rehearsal. They told us how to carry the water. They told us how to hold our head. They told us how to not smile. They told us how to breathe. They told us everything. Yet all is forgotten when a large GMC turns the corner as we approach. We stare into its big yellow headlights the way many a paralyzed deer had before us. The truck

NIGHTMARE [continued from page 4]

stops. We stop. Time freezes as a few seconds pass by. Finally, the breeze drifts again and the truck goes into reverse. We begin to walk forward. The truck jumps as it is hurled into forward motion. It emits a loud *Vrerrrrp!* Theresa and I take a quick glance at the other.

“Guess that guy doesn’t like to process.” We smile.

Those smiles aren’t forgotten once we are inside the church. Although not seated together, Theresa and I paraded in side by side. Before we split up and go to our seats, Theresa whispers, “Hey Matt, don’t try and jump rope during the mass.” I giggle at the thought. She shoots me a false admonishing look. Then she says under her breath, “*Thwap!*”

I cannot stop thinking about this all through the beginning of the service. I spend fifteen minutes wrestling with the smirk that will not leave my face. I think about everything that will make me not smile; dead dogs, killer bees, the Reagan administration. But for some reason, all of these things seem hilarious to me at the moment. I look down at my belt because it usually helps me focus. But when I see it this time, I hear a distant *Thwap!* echo through the back of my mind. “This is what hell is like,” I think to myself, “Hell is trying to not smile.”

Later in the mass, Theresa and I are supposed to wash the priest’s hands. I pour water into a bowl and she dries them with a towel. As I begin to pour the water Theresa leans over and whispers into my ear, “*Whssssh!*” Father Vincent looks straight at me with a stern look in his eye and I feel like I am caught in front of the headlights of the GMC again. All this time, I am still trying to keep from smiling; from breaking down and falling over and holding my sides from the pain of the laughter.

Theresa and I walk down the altar to the table. She lets out a “*Vrerrrrp!*” as she bumps into me while I set down the water and the bowl. Tears build up in my eyes. I bite my tongue and jam my fingernails into my hand to keep from showing any sign of pleasure. But I cannot wipe that stupid smirk off. It is just too hard.

During the Roman Catholic mass, there is a time when the presiding priest is required to sing. Now, perhaps that night Father Vincent hadn’t warmed up properly; perhaps he had a cold. Whatever the case, when he opened up his mouth, the sound that came out was more the sound of a cow in labor than any kind of melody.

At that moment, I can feel a rumbling inside me. My whole body begins to tremble as I feel the awesome force that is trying to escape. I helplessly try to stop it from breaking out. Theresa turns and says with a smile, “He was way off!” With that, it all comes out. It wouldn’t be

so bad if I hadn’t tried to stop it.

My body is thrown as the laughter explodes from my mouth. At first a spitting sound as I let out all of the breath I have been holding. Then it transforms into traditional cackling. I try to regain control. I know the whole congregation hears me laughing. Father Vincent even turns around and glares at me again. Finally, I regain control, but the smirk still sits in its place.

Afterwards, several people approached me and made stupid jokes about “Sure, the priest sounded bad, but you didn’t have to laugh at him!”

I am sorry for the mess I created, yet I’m somewhat proud of it too. They never again asked me to do the Palm Sunday Vigil. Father Vincent was most annoyed with my snickering escapade. As I left that night, he gave me a strong pat on the back. It was harsh and it sounded like a tail end hitting linoleum; it was a loud *Thwap! Thwap! Thwap!*

(Matt is a freshman. This article was submitted as part of his USC application process. He does not serve Mass at the Catholic Center!)



OLYMPICS [continued from page 8]

different countries and I have great memories that will be with me for as long as I live—all of which I wouldn’t trade for anything in the world. The Olympics was once just a dream to me, but I have been able to live out that dream. With hard work and dedication, dreams can become reality in life, whether it is in your athletic pursuits or your professional endeavors.

Finally, being an athlete and having been to the Olympics has taught me a great many things. Things I will never forget; things I will use for the rest of my life. Perhaps for me, the most influential of lessons I have learned is that anything is possible. However, you must be willing to take some risk in order to achieve great things. I would like to finish with a quote by Elbert Hubbard, which emphasizes this point; “No one ever gets far unless he accomplishes the impossible at least once a day.”

(Mark graduated from USC this past May, majoring in exercise science)

The Los Angeles Church of Christ— A Cult on Campus

By Janine Marnien

If someone had told me three years ago that during my freshman year of college I would join a cult instead of rushing a sorority, I wouldn't have believed it. After all, I certainly didn't grow up with a burning desire to join a cult someday and I never tried to find a suitable one in which to take up membership. But then again, no one does. You never realize that you're in a cult until it's too late.

One of the things I wanted to do when I first moved to USC was find a church I enjoyed attending. And as God would have it, this girl approached me on campus one day and invited me to go to church with her. I accepted, and upon attending I became immediately enthralled. The worship was packed with energy, the sermon was entertaining, and the members were warm and welcoming. I decided before the service had ended that my hunt for a church was over.

Looking back, the warning signals were there from the beginning. The members all referred to the church as "the Kingdom." Although I had been baptized and raised Catholic and had also attended a Calvary Chapel for many years, I was required to go through a series of conversion studies (and another baptism) before I was considered a member of this church, and a true Christian. I initially ignored and rationalized the warning signs by telling myself that I wasn't going to agree 100% with the doctrine of any church. Plus I just really wanted to be a part of this group. I was baptized into the Los Angeles Church of Christ on March 22, 1998.

Once a member of the group, my perception of it did change slightly. I had been assigned a "discipler" after my baptism and I was expected to confess all of my sins to this girl and to seek her "advice" in all areas of my life. I was also expected to follow *all* of the advice she gave me, so in reality, I had to ask her permission before I literally did anything. I hadn't been informed of this arrangement beforehand. We were expected to attend all church functions and to "share our faith" on a daily basis and were considered to be in sin if we didn't. (My discipler once told me that I couldn't go home to visit my father for his birthday for the entire weekend like I had planned, months in advance, because those plans conflicted with church functions.) We were also expected to tithe 10% of our money or a minimum of \$15 each week, and give 20 times this or a minimum of \$300 once a year for a "Special Contribution." If we didn't or forgot, we had to either make it up or explain why our "heart wasn't right." If we didn't give our donation to the "Special Contribution," we risked being disfellowshipped.

About a month and a half after joining, I began to see this legality as something that was not in accordance with the message of Christ, and I thought about leaving the church. But there was a problem. Within three weeks of being a member, I had come to believe wholeheartedly in all of the church doctrine, most significantly that this was the *only* true Christian church, and that I would go to hell if I left it. The result of this belief was unbearable. It caused me to lie awake at night praying and sobbing hysterically, pleading with God to give me some assurance that if I left, I wouldn't be leaving Him and damning myself to hell. My nerves began breaking down during these prayers—my heart would alternate between skipping beats beating really fast. I would hyperventilate and feel faint, then become sick to my stomach. After that I would break out in a cold sweat and shiver uncontrollably for hours. This began happening frequently.

After a month and a half of this, I was exhausted. I couldn't deal with it by myself anymore, and the people in the church that I had confided in were not helping. I needed time to clear my head, and because I was now living with church members and constantly attending church functions, I wasn't getting that time. I finally told my boss what was going on. She referred me to Dean Laemmle and my parents. After talking it over with them, and thinking about it for another week and a half, I left. I didn't say goodbye to anyone. I packed up all my stuff, and my parents came and helped me move out at a prearranged time when I knew that everyone would be out of the apartment. I left my discipler a note explaining my decision. I hadn't even gotten to my parents' house before she had paged me. The first thing I did when I got there was change my pager number.

The next eight months were the worst in my life. I was incredibly lonely. After I left the church, only

[see CULT, page 7]



MISSION STATEMENT FOR Our Savior Catholic Center

Our Savior Catholic Center exists because there is a University of Southern California. Our unique identity is drawn from two sources, the Roman Catholic Church and USC. These sources inform a distinct mission: to parallel and complement the secular education of the university with an adult knowledge and appreciation of the Catholic faith.

The challenges of modern life, with its explosion of knowledge and technology, require that a population be educated in all that is new, and at the same time be grounded in the basic, universal experience of being human.

Our Savior Catholic Center is part of the larger Christian faith as articulated in the Catholic Church. Our heritage embraces a tradition of education that forms the foundation for social action and change, in the model of the Servant Lord. We seek to educate Catholic students in the history of the Catholic faith and deepen their knowledge and understanding of God, thus preparing them to take their place as adult Catholics in our world. In this we fulfill the challenge of our Bishops to “be a partner with the university in helping Catholic students to achieve their highest potential”¹.

Our Savior Catholic Center also shares with the university in “the development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit”². Although Christians anticipate the kingdom to be fulfilled ultimately in the resurrection, the Christian emphasis on building the kingdom today, with its focus on justice, equality and peace, is a seamless extension of the university’s goals.

Empowered by the Spirit we seek to develop the whole person, to bring to life the great insight of St. Irenaeus that the glory of God is a human being fully alive.

1. *Empowered by the Spirit, Campus Ministry Faces the Future, a Pastoral Letter on Campus Ministry, November 15, 1985. National Conference of Catholic Bishops.*
2. *“Role and Mission of the University of Southern California”*

CULT [continued from page 6]

two of the 50+ members of the ministry I had known still talked to me. Even that didn’t last. To make matters worse, some of the others had spread rumors about why I had left, that included an alleged pregnancy. I was still terrified that I had abandoned God, and was still going through the emotional experience that had started when I first began thinking about leaving. I decided to start researching Christianity, with an emphasis on its earliest stages. I hoped that through this God would give me a clear picture of Truth, and lead me to a church that was acceptable in His eyes.

I can’t believe that this was two years ago. It seems like a lifetime. I have been a practicing Catholic since June of this year, when I completed my sacraments. God has answered all of my tearful prayers, and led me to the Catholic Church, through which I have a meaningful and fulfilling walk with Him. It was a long road, but God saw me through it. I no

longer fear that in leaving the Los Angeles Church of Christ that I’ve also left God, and I am once again happy.

USC was quick to tell me during the application process of its wonderful academic program, its wonderful football team, its wonderful history, and its wonderful location. But they didn’t tell me that, like so many other junior colleges, state colleges, and universities nationwide, they have a problem with cults on campus. I had to learn that the hard way. It is my prayer that this article will prevent others from having to experience what I experienced as a result.

(Unfortunately, the Los Angeles Church of Christ has been granted recognition this year through the Office of Religious Life.. It is hoped that Janine’s experience will be a much needed warning to students and their parents)



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Olympic Dreams

By Mark Kwok

When most people hear that you competed in the "Olympic Games," the first question that comes to mind is "Did you win any medals?" And what those people outside the Olympic Family or the sporting world altogether don't realize is how many great athletes participate in the Olympic Games and walk away with the performances of their lives without, however, winning a single medal. They walk away with the peace of mind that they are the best in their respective countries and did the best they could on that day.

I have been fortunate enough to compete in both the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta and the 2000 Games in Sydney. I have come to realize that winning is important, but doing the best you can on the day or days of your events is what the Olympics are really all about. Even the best athletes in the world have "bad" days and there is nothing anyone can do about that. As long as you do the best you can, nobody can ask anymore of you.

In 1996 I was only 18 years old. I was very young and so overwhelmed just being at the Olympics that I failed to realize there is so much more to it than just the competition. I think one of the most significant accomplishments of the Olympic movement is the fact that for 2 full weeks, countries set aside all political issues and philosophical differences in the spirit of sport. Athletes from all over the world and different lifestyles live together as one community and compete in harmony for the love of sport.

I have made so many friends from so many
 [see OLYMPICS, page 5]

It's Here!

The one, the only, the --
CATHOLIC CENTER T-SHIRT!

The new Catholic Center T-Shirts are now available for purchase. This year's addition sports a nifty "And God said: Fight On!" logo. It is available in M, L, and XL.

Also, you can still order XL "Top Ten" t-shirts, which may be a year older, but just as necessary for the good Catholic Trojan's wardrobe.

All t-shirts are \$15, plus \$3 per shirt for shipping and handling. So fill out the form below and send it along with the prepaid amount to: Our Savior Catholic Center, 3207 University Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90007.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

New Shirts: ___M ___L ___XL

1999 Shirts: ___XL

Total \$ for all shirts: \$ _____

Total shipping @ \$3/shirt: \$ _____

Total enclosed: \$ _____

