

CALL OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES



## Fire & Light

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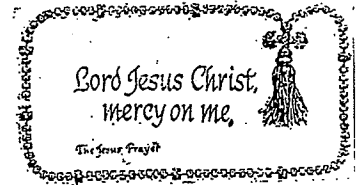
St. Mary Magdalene,

Holy Myrrhbearer & Equal-to-the-Apostles

Virgin-Martyr Markella of Chios (14<sup>th</sup> C)

After the divine Passion and fearful Resurrection of the Savior, You hastened on your way as a glorious disciple of the Word!

You announced everywhere the precious words of the Gospel, drawing into your net many led astray through ignorance!



⇒ *Many thanks to our Pepper Place contributors and workers!*

### Progress?

Think about one thing all the time – the (spiritual) fight, the combat. Please, do not look for signs of progress. They are inevitably and infallibly deceptive. Almost any progress we would make has been given to us by the demon, in order to make us proud of the progress. Please understand that.

~ Fr. Patrick Reardon

### Seeking Distraction

It seems odd that during much of our lives, most of the time, we seek distraction. Any sort of distraction seems to do, anything that takes us away from the present moment. The mind gravely distrusts the present moment and will do almost anything to get us away from it. This is all the more puzzling when we realize that the present moment is the only moment we have.

Fr. Meletius Webber

### If you argue with an atheist...

If you argue with an atheist in his own rabid manner, you strengthen the fury of atheism. If you converse with the unreasonable by derision, the darkness of unreasonableness is increased. If you think you will overcome the embittered man with anger, you will stir up a greater fire of bitterness. A meek and good deed is like water over a fire.

St. Nikolai of Serbia

### They conceal their virtues...

✠ "Those who live virtuously declare their small sins, and also their omissions, in order to avoid the glory that comes from men, and they conceal their virtues in order to safeguard their souls; lest they receive praise from men - when their virtues are discovered - and lose their zeal by becoming conceited. For just 'as wax melteth before fire' (Psalm 67[68]:3), so also the soul is paralyzed by praise; and loses its vigor."

"Let those who would set forth their virtues endeavor also to declare their shortcomings. If they conceal these, so as not to suffer reproaches, they should beware of revealing their virtues, lest the latter be destroyed by being divulged to men."

St. Synkletike of Alexandria

### The Passion of Vainglory

✠ "The passion of vainglory has many forms, and is very subtle; and for this reason, even he who is being tempted by it does not immediately detect it. For the assaults of the other passions occur more openly, and it is easier to fight them; since the soul recognizes the Enemy, and immediately puts him to flight through rebuttal and prayer."

St. John Cassian

✠ "Just as rust corrodes iron, so human honor corrodes the heart --- if the heart gives it credence. Just as a bramble bush, when it becomes entangled in a vine, destroys the vine's fruit, so vainglory destroys the spiritual fruit of [someone], if he is carried away by it."

Abba Isaiah

## Pearls of the Holy Fathers 6:3

It is folly for a man who has a dead person in his house to leave him there and go to weep over his neighbor's dead. To die to one's neighbor is this: To bear your own faults and not to pay attention to anyone else, wondering whether they are good or bad.

Abba Moses

Persevere, O virgins, persevere in what you have begun to be. Persevere in what you will be. A great recompense is reserved for you, a glorious prize for virtue, a most excellent reward for purity.

St. Cyprian of Carthage

When you approach your bed, say to it, 'This very night, perchance, you will be my tomb, O bed; for I know not whether tonight instead of a transient sleep, the eternal sleep of death will be mine.' And so, as long as you have feet run after work, before you are bound with that bond which cannot be loosed again once it is put on.

St. Isaac the Syrian

An elder said, "What condemns us is not that thoughts enter into us, but that we use them badly; indeed, through our thoughts we can be shipwrecked, and through our thoughts we can be crowned."

Apophthegmata Patrum

My Master! Let us not accept so readily disturbance from evil thoughts, so as to rise up and be disturbed against our brother: this comes only from the activity of the devil. What has become of "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for he hath been proved" (James 1:12) and the rest?

Abba Barsanuphius the Great

Humility is as learning compared with self-satisfied ignorance; for one who learns in this school of divine wisdom, the more he partakes of divine gifts the better he sees his spiritual misery and, out of real want, he seeks in sighing. Then the lowly path of humility leads man to the Most High.

St. Tikhon of Voronezh

With all your mind and the longing of your soul love the Lord. Thus His grace will protect you. Adore only your God; worship only Him. Ah then! Then Christ will enter within you, where dwells the Word and the Father and the Spirit, and where He promised to make us alone, and you will become a shrine where the (Jesus) Prayer will rule and make the mind obedient.

Elder Joseph the Hesychast of Mt. Athos

Give me ears to hear Thee, eyes to see Thee, taste to partake of Thee, sense of smell to inhale Thee. Give me feet to walk unto Thee; lips to speak of Thee, heart to fear and love Thee. Teach me Thy ways, O Lord, and I shall walk in Thy truth. For Thou art the way, the truth and the life.

St. Tikhon of Voronezh

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). If the treasure after which you strive is high rank, or money, or sinful love, then your heart will not be delighted by intercourse with God, but standing at prayer, you will think only of how to finish it more quickly.

Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky

We must vigilantly guard our heart from unfitting thoughts and impressions, according to the word of the writer of Proverbs: "Keep thy heart with the utmost care; for out of these are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

St. Seraphim of Sarov

In every trial and in all warfare use prayer as your invincible weapon, and by the grace of Christ you will be victorious.

St. Theodore of Edessa

Let us fortify ourselves and work with enthusiasm while we have time.

St. Dorotheus of Gaza

## From "The Jesus Prayer," by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom

**'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.'**

The Jesus Prayer is profoundly rooted in the spirit of the Gospel, and it is not in vain that the great teachers of Orthodoxy have always insisted on the fact that the Jesus Prayer sums up the whole of the Gospel.

[However,] our modern translation 'have mercy' is a limited and insufficient one. The Greek word which we find in the Gospel and in the early liturgies is eleison. Eleison is of the same root as elaion, which means olive tree and the oil from it.

In the New Testament, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, olive oil is poured to soothe and to heal. In the anointing of kings and priests in the Old Testament, it is again oil that is poured on the head as an image of the grace of God that comes down and flows on them (Ps 133:2) giving them new power to fulfill what is beyond human capabilities.

The oil speaks first of all of the end of the wrath of God, of the peace which God offers to the people who have offended against him; further it speaks of God healing us in order that we should be able to live and become what we are called to be; and as he knows that we are not capable with our own strength of fulfilling either his will or the laws of our own created nature, he pours his grace abundantly on us (Rom 5:20). He gives us power to do what we could not otherwise do.

It is a very companionable prayer, a friendly one, always at hand and very individual in spite of its monotonous repetitions. Whether in joy or in sorrow, it is, when it has become habitual, a quickening of the soul, a response to any call of God.

**The words of St Symeon the New Theologian, apply to all its possible effects on us:  
'Do not worry about what will come next, you will discover it when it comes'. ✕ ✕ ✕**

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### **God Alone is the Judge**

Regarding culpability, both as to its presence and degree in a person, God alone is the judge. According to Christ in the Gospels, people who know more and better are judged more severely than people who know poorly or not at all. This is also the apostolic teaching. In this view, Orthodox Christians will be judged more severely than all other people. It must also be noted in this regard that, according to Orthodox teaching, God's judgment is not "comparative." It cannot be said, for example, that A is "more sinful" than B. God judges each person exclusively on what they know and do according to their unique providence. For this reason each person can and indeed must claim before God to be "the first" of sinners. --Fr. Thomas Hopko

**"Do not neglect the one who is ill, for it is written: 'He who stops his ears from hearing the infirm shall himself also cry, and there shall be none to hear him.'" [Proverbs 21:13]**

**"If your brother is suffering, suffer with him; so that you might be counted worthy to hear from the Lord on the Day of Judgment: 'As ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to Me.'" [Matthew 25:40]**

**"He who neglects the infirm angers God, Who punishes him; and he who rejoices at the fall of his brother will himself experience a terrible fall."  
~ St. Ephraim the Syrian**

**Abba Theodore of Pherme said, "In these days many take their rest before God gives it to them."**

## THE HISTORY OF THE PRAYER ROPE

In recent years, there has been increasing interest shown by the laity in the history and use of the prayer rope. Those desiring to learn of its historical development, however, find that very little written information is available because use of the prayer rope has been essentially a monastic custom. Over the centuries, largely oral tradition regarding its development has been passed down among monastics; it has never been thought particularly necessary to codify it in "official" form.

The prayer rope is ancient in Orthodox spirituality and predates the Latin rosary by a number of centuries. The earliest form in the East was a small ladder made of leather or plaited string, usually having a hundred rungs. This symbolized the ladder seen by Jacob in his dream and reminded the user of the spiritual ladder of ascent to heaven through the struggle with passions and the practice of virtues. This type of prayer cord is still seen in portions of the Middle East, particularly in the desert monasteries. Its later form, called a *lestovka* (ladder) by the Slavs, was long used in Russia, from the conversion of that land until about the 17th century. This "ladder" was made of leather strips folded and sewn into narrow flaps or leaves and generally had 103 or 107 steps. St. Seraphim is usually shown holding one of these in his icons, and this form too is still in use among many Orthodox Christians. The most recent form is the knotted cord commonly seen today, in which the manner of tying the knots produces nine crosses in each separate knot. Among the Slavs, this form became widespread only rather late, following the liturgical reforms of Patriarch Nikon in the 17th century, and it has co-existed with continued use of the older forms.

Adoption of the prayer rope in Orthodoxy is tied to the growth of monastic life from the fourth century onward. In early monastic life, the complex liturgical cycle of communal prayer as practiced in city churches was largely replaced by concentrated efforts to fulfill St. Paul's command to "pray without ceasing" by using the Jesus Prayer interspersed with recitation of the Psalter and meditative reading of Scripture. Initially, many monastics living as hermits in isolated cells used small piles of pebbles, olive pits or other counters — not for the sake of scrupulously keeping track of empty repetitions, but to lessen the hazard of wandering off into idle thoughts. The ladder was a more portable and convenient solution to this practical "problem," and also provided an always— available and graphic reminder of the real aim of one's spiritual efforts — to ascend the ladder of virtues. By the same token, the sword—like form of the knotted cord is intended as a reminder to the monastic that prayer in the name of Jesus is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17), so vital to spiritual warfare.

The variations in length of the cord — 33, 100, 300 knots or more — the arrangement of beads or markers, and other differences in the way prayer cords are made all have various spiritual symbolisms and/or practical reasons attached to them, which reflect the variety of prayer rules among the different ethnic traditions and monastic currents within Orthodoxy. The longest prayer ropes, of 300 knots or more, are really intended for the use of monastics; such great length is needed only by those whose daily life centers around the practice of the Jesus Prayer. Since ancient times, there have been monastics, most often those living alone or in groups of two or three, who follow a rule in which each of the daily services is replaced by the repetition of the Jesus Prayer, alone or with other brief prayers. The prayer rope is useful in aiding concentration and maintaining a regular discipline, and for monastics practicing such a rule a very long prayer rope would be the most convenient. Certainly for the needs of laypeople a shorter prayer rope is more useful.

Whatever the form, for layperson and monastic alike the prayer rope has always served as an aid to prayer, particularly in the discipline of saying the Jesus Prayer:

**"Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner."**

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*~ From Life Transfigured, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1990*

## HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER

By Fr. Seraphim Stephens, based on a talk given during the 1996 Saint Herman Youth Conference in Washington D.C.

**H**onor thy father and thy mother is a familiar commandment from God. It is an integral and unique part of what is called *The Ten Commandments* (Exod 20). To properly understand its importance and special positioning in the list of Ten, it is necessary to briefly review the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments are not the only commandments of God, but are a kind of summary of God's Laws. They might be seen as chapter headings for all of the other laws of God. They are sort of an Old Testament Symbol of Faith, much as our New Testament Creed serves to summarize all of the teachings of Christianity. The Ten Commandments set the limits of our behavior. God knows what brings life and death. The Ten Commandments establish the outer limits of behavior beyond which is death. On the positive side of the Ten Commandments are all the things we are permitted by God to do. These bring life.

The positioning of each of the Ten Commandments is important in understanding the order God has established in His laws. The first four commandments deal specifically with our relationship with God. Our acknowledgement, worship and honor of God and His Creativity are covered in these four commandments. The Fifth Commandment, *Honor thy father and thy mother*, is specially positioned in place five. I will return to that commandment momentarily. The next five commandments treat our relationship with each other, our fellow human beings, setting the limits of acceptable behavior.

Returning to the Fifth Commandment, *Honor thy father and thy mother*, it can be seen that it is a linking commandment between our relationships with God and our relationships with all other people. *Honor thy father and thy mother* is the closest commandment to God that does not directly relate to Him. The highest human relationship, that next to God alone, is our relationship of honor toward our parents.

We can now see that there are three divisions in the Ten Commandments: God and our relationships to Him; father and mother and our relationships to them; the rest of the community of God's people and our relationships toward them.

The Fifth Commandment, being closest to God, is the testing ground for our relationship to Him and a proving ground for our relationship to everyone else in the Kingdom of God. How we relate to our parents greatly impacts on how we honor God and our fellow human beings.

In the case of this Fifth Commandment honor is defined as love and respect. Further, it implies not rebelling against, nor challenging the authority of our parents. Surely, if we rebel against and challenge the authority of our parents, we will also rebel against God and His Authority. In like manner, if our relationship with our parents is poor, then we surely will have difficulty in our relationships to other people: students to teachers, husbands to wives, employees to employers, friends to friends, the young to the elderly. It seems crucial, then, to our spiritual and social survival, that we properly order our relationships with our parents.

I work at an alternative school with young people—many of whom are criminalized. A preponderance of these young people have extremely poor relationships with their parents. These relationship problems spill over into poor relationships in school and with the general civic community. Many of these youths view their parents as “buffoons,” the police as “pigs,” teachers as “powerless,” elders as “worthless,” and anyone in authority as “stinkers.” Virtually none of the most challenged of these young people has any relationship whatsoever with God.

I also serve as a criminologist at a college. In this field of study we have seen an incredible rise in violent crime among teenagers. There has been an increase in illicit drug use and promiscuity among our teenage population. I see these behaviors as directly related to a negative view of authority and all people in authority.

There is an interesting passage in the Old Testament, in II Kings 2:23-24: *And he [Elisha] went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.* If Elisha were responsible for the juvenile justice system here in the United States, I think we would see very few young people getting into trouble with authority figures.

There is also a disturbing Scripture in the New Testament that requires close scrutiny: II Timothy 3:1-5: *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

I particularly draw attention to *disobedient to parents ... unloving ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.* All around us we see treachery today that is directly related to disobedience to parents. Young people are “kicking” off the

protective cover of the parents in order to satisfy insatiable, fleshly desires. We see an entertainment industry that has exploited dishonor and blasphemy and every filthy and brutal behavior known to humanity. Should not this flag a warning to us of the seriousness of this day and time?

Considering the great dishonor referred to above, it is appropriate to conclude that honor brings good things. It might also be generalized that honor and respect of parents is the root of good order in the entire universe. It clearly lays the foundation of our relationship to God and to all other people.

A question for each of us is in order. To what extent have I contributed to the disorder in contemporary society by my dishonor of my parents? This should lead us to make a good confession acknowledging our dishonor of our parents and of God. When we honor our parents that same honor passes on to God. Let us turn to the Mystery of Confession and begin a new life of true honor.



### WISDOM FROM THE DESERT

*From an Orthodox pamphlet.*

One of the fathers related: There was a devout scholar from Antioch who pestered a hermit, urging him to receive him and make him a monk. The old man said to him, "If you want me to receive you, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor according to the Lord's commandment, and then I shall receive you." Therefore, he went away and acted accordingly.

After this the hermit said to him, "You have another precept to keep, that you not speak." He took heed and for five years did not speak. Some people began to praise him, and his abba said to him, "It is not good for you to be here, so I will send you to a coenobium in Egypt," and he sent him off.

When he sent him, the hermit failed to say whether he was to speak or not to speak, so he continued to obey the command and did not speak.

The abbot who received him, seeking a test to determine whether or not he was mute, sent him on an errand while the river was in flood, so that he would be forced to say, "I cannot cross it." The abbot sent a brother after him see what he did. As he approached the river, he knelt down, being unable to cross, and behold, a crocodile came and took him up and bore him across to the other side. When he had performed the errand and returned to the river, the crocodile again bore him across. The brother who had been sent after him, having come along and seen this, told the abbot and the brothers and they were astonished.

It happened that some time later he died, and the abbot sent a message to the old man who had sent him, saying,

"That man you sent to me may not have been able to speak, but he was like an angel of God."

The hermit then replied, saying, "It is not that he was unable to speak, but obeying the command which I gave him at the outset, he remained silent." And they all marveled and gave glory to God.

Once, there was a monk from the Monastery of St. Paul who had gone to the Church of St. Gerasimos on the island of Kephallonia. During the Divine Liturgy, he stood in the Altar area and was praying with his komboskini (prayer rope) the Prayer of the Heart – "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner" – while the others were chanting. They had also brought a possessed person into the church to be cured by St. Gerasimos. While the monk was saying the prayer in the Altar, the demon was being seated outside and was shouting, "Stop working that string, will you, monk; it is burning me!"

The priest heard it too, and said to the monk, "Pray with your komboskini as much as you can, my brother, so that God's creature can be freed of the demon."

The demon then shouted in great anger, "You, rotten priest, you. What are you telling him to pull that string for? It is burning me!"

The monk then prayed with his komboskini with even greater effort and the possessed man was delivered from the demon.

One of the Fathers telling about Kellia, said there was once a hard-working old man there who wore a mat. He went to find Abba Ammonas, who, when he saw him wearing the mat, said to him, "This is no use to you."

But the old man questioned him in the following way: "Three thoughts occupy me; should I wander in the deserts, or, should I go to a foreign land where no-one knows me, or, should I shut myself up in a cell without opening the door to anyone, eating only every second day?"

Abba Ammonas replied, "It is not right for you to do any of these three things. Rather, sit in your cell and eat a little every day, keeping the word of the Publican always in your heart (*God be merciful to me a sinner*, Lk 18:13) and you may be saved."

Just as the light of the sun attracts a healthy eye, so through obedience and love, knowledge of God naturally draws to itself a pure intellect.



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## The Sexual Revolution – *The Party's Over*

An interview (excerpt) with Mary Eberstadt by Catholic World Report

“No single event since Eve took the apple has been as consequential for relations between the sexes as the arrival of modern contraception,” writes Mary Eberstadt in the introduction to her new book ***Adam and Eve After the Pill: Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution*** (Ignatius Press). She is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and consulting editor to *Policy Review*.

**CWR:** Why do so many people—especially (but not only) those secular elites who dress themselves in the cloaks of science and reason—either ignore or deny outright both the statistical and anecdotal evidence demonstrating the serious personal and social damage wrought by the sexual revolution?

**Mary Eberstadt:** The first thing we need in order to get some clarity on this issue is compassion—including for the fact that many people of good intentions initially thought that the sexual revolution would be a good thing. They couldn't have foreseen all the consequences that would flow from it. The revolution is like a big party that a lot of people initially looked forward to, but that's now gotten way out of control. So the people who had high hopes for the party, who have defended it against those who said it would go wrong sooner or later, are now in a difficult spot. Nobody wants to be the first to leave, and nobody wants to tattle on anyone else—but everybody knows that what's happening isn't good. The word we commonly use for that kind of resistance is *denial*. It's a good word, and everyone's susceptible to it—intellectuals as well as everybody else.

**CWR:** How can the Catholic Church point the way through the current spiritual desert and social wasteland that so many people inhabit today?

**Mary Eberstadt:** It's so hard to see the Church constantly take the rap for being “bad on women,” when the moral and empirical truth is completely the reverse. It's also hard because the Church has so much wisdom, developed over many centuries, about relations between the sexes.

**Which way of looking at the world holds men and women in higher esteem: one that assigns them the sort of human dignity that the Church does, or one that says—as the secular world seems to say—that we're all just animals with iPads and opposable thumbs, nothing more? Which way of explaining human beings do you think resonates better with young people—or would, assuming they were exposed to it? Well, which would anybody rather be—elevated and cared-for and cherished, someone whose choices actually matter in the world, or the opposite?**

People, especially young people, often don't understand what Judeo-Christian teaching actually is—because many years of attacks have successfully misrepresented that teaching in the public square. I know I didn't, until I made it my business to read up. But that doesn't mean the misunderstanding is inevitable. Compassion and clarity are the keys.

**CWR:** The final chapter of your book is on *Humanae Vitae*. What is most striking to you when you consider Pope Paul VI's arguments and explanations?

**Mary Eberstadt:** I didn't read *Humanae Vitae* itself until a few years ago, and when I did, I was amazed for the reasons described below. I wish every party to the debate over HHS would read that document too. There would be a lot more clarity in this discussion if people were even just a *little* more informed about what they think they know.

The single most striking thing about that document is this: its predictions about what the future would bring have been thoroughly vindicated—and I'm not talking about theology here, but about secular social science.

***Humanae Vitae* said that men would lose respect for women in a world where contraception was ubiquitous.** At a time when illegitimacy rates approach the 50 percent mark around the

Western world, and have passed it in some places (most recently, Great Britain), it's hard to argue that *Humanae Vitae* got it wrong. After all, what's a better measure of respect than sticking with the mother of your child—even if not for the child's sake, but simply for hers?

But you don't always need social science to get the point. If you read, say, contemporary women's literature, fiction and non-fiction, you get a long litany of complaints about men—how hard it is to find a good one, how women need to strike out on their own, how they even need to have children on their own because men can't be counted on, etc., etc., etc. I go through a lot of that kind of literature in the book, because it represents evidence of a different sort that something has really run amok between the sexes.

**So if the Pill (metaphorically) has liberated everybody once and for all from the chains of human nature, as liberationists have always said it did, then why aren't people happier?**

Why, to the contrary, does it seem as if modern Western women are less content than they used to be—as is also strongly suggested by a fascinating recent sociological study on "The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness," also discussed in the book?

Whether you look at popular culture or social science, the predictions of *Humanae Vitae* hold up better than almost anyone gives it credit for. And the fact that *Humanae Vitae* is nevertheless and simultaneously the most globally reviled document of our time means that we are looking at an enormous paradox here. That's the central paradox of the book, and from it many others radiate outward.

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## Carried Off...

Since *Roe v. Wade*, abortions have carried off 53 million of the generations that were to replace the (77 million) baby boomers. While those 53 million lost have been partially replaced by 40 million immigrants, legal and illegal, our recent immigrants have not exhibited the same income - or tax-producing capacity as boomers.

In 1965, LBJ announced his plan to convert our ordinary society into a Great Society. Since then, trillions have been spent. The fruits of that immense investment? The illegitimacy rate, dropout rate, crime rate and incarceration rate have set new records, as the test scores of high school students have plummeted to new lows. Our labor force is shrinking, the number of dependent U.S. adults is growing, our social programs are failing, and our best educated and most productive generation is retiring.

— Patrick Buchanan

## Same-Sex Marriage

The *New York Times*, declaring that homosexuals' right to marry is "too precious and too fragile to be left up to the whim of states and the tearing winds of modern partisan politics," is looking to the court as the last, best hope to impose same-sex marriage on the nation.

Can't trust voters, can't trust elected legislators, can't trust Congress. Homosexual marriage, says the *Times*, is too important to be left to democratic decision. The republic must be commanded to accept it by unelected judges who serve for life and against whom the people have no political recourse.

That process of judicial tyranny has begun. A California judge has overturned the decision of California's voters to ban gay marriage, and his ruling is headed for the high court. The Supreme Court thus will tell us whether this issue is to be decided democratically by voters and their elected state and federal legislators, or dictatorially by themselves.

Four liberal activists on the Supreme Court -- Elena Kagan, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer and Sonia Sotomayor -- are probably ready to declare that homosexual marriage is a constitutional right, as their predecessors declared abortion to be a constitutional right.

But Obama needs one more justice. If elected, he will get it, and same-sex marriage will be forced on all of America. If Romney wins, the Supreme Court will likely leave the issue of same-sex marriage to be decided by the people and their elected representatives. ~ Patrick Buchanan