

Joint Statement Con't

19. The family is the natural center of human life and society. We are concerned about the crisis in the family in many countries. Orthodox and Catholics share the same conception of the family, and are called to witness that it is a path of holiness, testifying to the faithfulness of the spouses in their mutual interaction, to their openness to the procreation and rearing of their children, to solidarity between the generations and to respect for the weakest.

20. The family is based on marriage, an act of freely given and faithful love between a man and a woman. It is love that seals their union and teaches them to accept one another as a gift. Marriage is a school of love and faithfulness. We regret that other forms of cohabitation have been placed on the same level as this union, while the concept, consecrated in the biblical tradition, of paternity and maternity as the distinct vocation of man and woman in marriage is being banished from the public conscience.

21. We call on all to respect the inalienable right to life. Millions are denied the very right to be born into the world. The *blood* of the unborn *cries out to God* (cf. Gen. 4:10). The emergence of so-called euthanasia leads elderly people and the disabled to begin to feel that they are a burden on their families and on society in general. We are also concerned about the development of biomedical reproduction technology, as the manipulation of human life represents an attack on the foundations of human existence, created in the image of God. We believe that it is our duty to recall the immutability of Christian moral principles, based on respect for the dignity of the individual called into being according to the Creator's plan.

22. Today, in a particular way, we address young Christians. You, young people, have the task of *not hiding your talent in the ground* (cf. Mt. 25:25), but of using all the abilities God has given you to confirm Christ's truth in the world, incarnating in your own lives the evangelical commandments of the love of God and of one's neighbor. Do not be afraid of going against the current, defending God's truth, to which contemporary secular norms are often far from conforming.

23. God loves each of you and expects you to be His disciples and apostles. Be the *light of the world* so that those around you *may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father* (cf. Mt. 5:14, 16). Raise your children in the Christian faith, transmitting to them *the pearl of great price* that is the faith (cf. Mt. 13:46) you have received from your parents and forbears.

Remember that *you have been purchased at a great price* (1 Cor. 6:20), at the cost of the death on the cross of the God-Man Jesus Christ.

24. Orthodox and Catholics are united not only by the shared Tradition of the Church of the first millennium, but also by the mission to preach the Gospel of Christ in the world today. This mission entails mutual respect for members of the Christian communities and excludes any form of proselytism. We are not competitors but brothers, and this concept must guide all our mutual actions as well as those directed to the outside world. We urge Catholics and Orthodox in all countries to learn to live together in peace and love, and to be *in harmony with one another* (Rm. 15:5). Consequently, it cannot be accepted that disloyal means be used to incite believers to pass from one Church to another, denying them their religious freedom and their traditions. We are called upon to put into practice the precept of the apostle Paul: *Thus I aspire to proclaim the gospel not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on another's foundation* (Rm. 15:20).

25. It is our hope that our meeting may also contribute to reconciliation wherever tensions exist between Greek Catholics and Orthodox. It is today clear that the past method of "uniatism", understood as the union of one community to the other, separating it from its Church, is not the way to re-establish unity. Nonetheless, the ecclesial communities which emerged in these historical circumstances have the right to exist and to undertake all that is necessary to meet the spiritual needs of their faithful, while seeking to live in peace with their neighbors. Orthodox and Greek Catholics are in need of reconciliation and of mutually acceptable forms of co-existence.

26. We deplore the hostility in Ukraine that has already caused many victims, inflicted innumerable wounds on peaceful inhabitants and thrown society into a deep economic and humanitarian crisis. We invite all the parts involved in the conflict to prudence, to social solidarity and to action aimed at constructing peace. We invite our Churches in Ukraine to work towards social harmony, to refrain from taking part in the confrontation, and to not support any further development of the conflict.

27. It is our hope that the schism between the Orthodox faithful in Ukraine may be overcome through existing canonical norms, that all the Orthodox Christians of Ukraine may live in peace and harmony, and that the Catholic communities in the country may contribute to this, in such a way that our Christian brotherhood may become increasingly evident.

28. In the contemporary world, which is both multiform yet united by a shared destiny, Catholics and Orthodox are called to work together fraternally in proclaiming the Good News of salvation, to testify together to the moral dignity and authentic freedom of the person, *so that the world may believe* (Jn. 17:21). This world,

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in which the spiritual pillars of human existence are progressively disappearing, awaits from us a compelling Christian witness in all spheres of personal and social life. Much of the future of humanity will depend on our capacity to give shared witness to the Spirit of truth in these difficult times.

29. May our bold witness to God's truth and to the Good News of salvation be sustained by the God-Man Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who strengthens us with the unfailing promise: *Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom* (Lk. 12:32)!

Christ is the well-spring of joy and hope. Faith in Him transfigures human life, fills it with meaning. This is the conviction borne of the experience of all those to whom Peter refers in his words: *Once you were 'no people' but now you are God's people; you 'had not received mercy' but now you have received mercy* (1 Pet. 2:10).

30. With grace-filled gratitude for the gift of mutual understanding manifested during our meeting, let us with hope turn to the Most Holy Mother of God, invoking her with the words of this ancient prayer: "We seek refuge under the protection of your mercy, Holy Mother of God". May the Blessed Virgin Mary, through her intercession, inspire fraternity in all those who venerate her, so that they may be reunited, in God's own time, in the peace and harmony of the one people of God, for the glory of the Most Holy and indivisible Trinity!

Kirill
Patriarch of Moscow
and all Russia

Francis
Bishop of Rome,
Pope of the Catholic Church

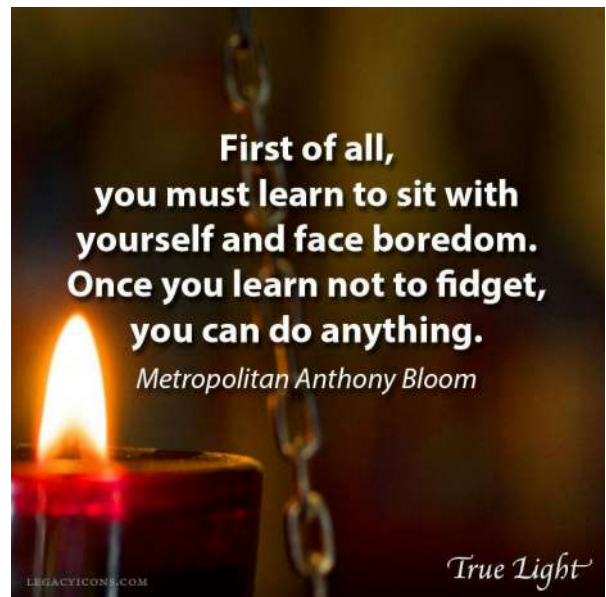
Fr. Steven Con't

a hidden place in our interior landscape; a "place" in which we can distance ourselves from God and right living to a frightening degree, even if slowly and unintentionally. At first, that interior far country can prove to be appealing. It can appease our vanity, protect our pride and/or feed "the passions" that we can nurture, even if hidden from the view and censure of others. This is initially stimulating and seems to promise endless delight—perhaps like the endless freedom that an unsupervised dorm may offer to an innocent college student away from the sheltering, but seemingly restrictive, atmosphere of home.

When the emptiness of such a landscape becomes evident,


we too can desperately desire to "feed on the pods that the swine ate." The self-serving (or "self-help!") philosophies on which we squandered our "inheritance" from God will no longer satisfy us, but in a restless and hungry search for something else to replace these, we can even fall to the level of "swinish delights"—anything to relieve our boredom or frustrations. Without moving anywhere, and without changing the patterns of our lifestyle, we can still withdraw to a "far country" in that interior landscape that can prove to be as treacherous as any unknown environment of the exterior world. It is said of the prodigal son of the parable, that when at "rock bottom," he "came to himself" [Luke 15:17]. This is certainly one of the key expressions found in this endlessly rich parable. The young man found his right mind, his sanity was restored, and basically he "got a grip on reality"—an undramatic, but perfect, way to describe "conversion," or the process of turning back toward God and the warm embrace of our heavenly Father.

A certain clarity of thought is needed to find our way home when we drift off toward a far country. The short-lived rock band of the late 1960s, Blind Faith, had an intriguing song entitled "Can't Find My Way Home." Perhaps that was an honest and clear-sighted assessment of the band's state of mind at that time (money, sex and drugs?) and a poignant recognition of being in a "far country." Two other songs on the album, however—"In the Presence of the Lord" and "Sea of Joy"—may have pointed to more promising discoveries. Every year, through the lectionary of the Church especially in this pre-lenten season of preparation, we are powerfully reminded of just how far away from "home" we may actually be in mind and heart. If we have been equally prodigal with the gifts bestowed upon us by God, then we can equally "come to ourselves" and return home to the embrace of our compassionate Father.



Luke 15:11-32 (Gospel)

Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants. ' And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 'And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 'But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.' It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "




Orthodox Christian Coalition
for Healthy Youth

OCCHY BLURB

In teenage brains, the frontal lobes are not fully connected.

"It's the part of the brain that says: 'Is this a good idea? What is the consequence of this action?'" says Frances Jensen, pediatric neurologist at Children's Hospital in Boston. Teenage brains access the frontal lobe more slowly than adult or fully developed brains.



So, studies have shown that a teenager who smokes pot will still show cognitive deficits days longer. An adult who smokes the same dose will return to cognitive baseline much faster.

"Addiction has been shown to be essentially a form of 'learning,'" Jensen says.

**DON'T 'TEACH' YOUR BRAIN TO BE AN ADDICT!
STAY DRUG AND ALCOHOL FREE!**

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124119468>

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Venerable John Cassian the Roman Commemorated on [February 29](#)

Saint John Cassian the Roman was born around 360, probably in Lesser Scythia (in Dacia Pontica). His pious Christian parents gave him an excellent classical education, and also instructed him in the Holy Scriptures and in the spiritual life.

St John entered a monastery in the diocese of Tomis, where his friend and relative St Germanus labored as an ascetic. In 380, desiring to venerate the Holy Places, St John went to Jerusalem with his sister and his friend St Germanus. The two monks stayed at a Bethlehem monastery, not far from where the Savior was born.

After five years at the monastery, Sts John and Germanus traveled through the Thebaid and the desert monasteries of Sketis for seven years, drawing upon the spiritual experience of countless ascetics. The Egyptian monks taught them many useful things about spiritual struggles, prayer, and humility. Like honeybees they journeyed from place to place, gathering the sweet nectar of spiritual wisdom. The notes St John made formed the basis of his book called *CONFERENCES WITH THE FATHERS* in twenty-four

Cassian-Cont from p 11
chapters.

Returning to Bethlehem for a brief time, the spiritual brothers lived for three years in complete solitude. Then they went back to Egypt and lived there until 399. Because of the disturbances caused by Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria to the monasteries along the Nile, they decided to go to Constantinople, after hearing of the virtue and holiness of St John Chrysostom. The great hierarch ordained St John Cassian as a deacon and accepted him as a disciple. John and Germanus remained with St John Chrysostom for five years, learning many profitable things from him.

When Chrysostom was exiled from Constantinople in 404, Sts John Cassian and Germanus went to Rome to plead his case before Innocent I. Cassian was ordained to the holy priesthood in Rome, or perhaps later in Gaul. After Chrysostom's death in 407, St John Cassian went to Massilia [Marseilles] in Gaul (now France). There he established two cenobitic monasteries in 415, one for men and another for women, based on the model of Eastern monasticism.

At the request of Bishop Castor of Aptia Julia (in southern Gaul), Cassian wrote THE INSTITUTES OF CENOBITIC LIFE (De Institutis Coenobiorum) in twelve books, describing the life of the Palestinian and Egyptian monks. Written between 417-419, the volume included four books describing the clothing of the monks of Palestine and Egypt, their schedule of prayer and services, and how new monks were received into the monasteries. The last eight books were devoted to the eight deadly sins and how to overcome them. Through his writings, St John Cassian provided Christians of the West with examples of cenobitic monasteries, and acquainted them with the asceticism of the Orthodox East.

Cassian speaks as a spiritual guide about the purpose of life, about attaining discernment, about renunciation of the world, about the passions of the flesh and spirit, about the hardships faced by the righteous, and about prayer.

St John Cassian also wrote CONFERENCES WITH THE FATHERS (Collationes Patrum) in twenty-four books in the form of conversations about the perfection of love, about purity, about God's help, about understanding Scripture, about the gifts of God, about friendship, about the use of language, about the four levels of monasticism, about the solitary life and cenobitic life, about repentance, about fasting, about nightly meditations, and about spiritual mortification. This last has the explanatory title "I do what I do not want to do."

Books 1-10 of the CONFERENCES describe St John's conversations with the Fathers of Sketis between 393-399. Books 11-17 relate conversations with the Fathers of Panephysis, and the last seven books are devoted to conversations with monks from the region of Diolkos.

In 431 St John Cassian wrote his final work, ON THE INCARNATION OF THE LORD, AGAINST NESTORIUS (De Incarnationem Domini Contra Nestorium). In seven books he opposed the heresy, citing many Eastern and Western teachers to support his arguments.

In his works, St John Cassian was grounded in the spiritual experience of the ascetics, and criticized the abstract reasoning of St Augustine (June 15). St John said that "grace is defended less adequately by pompous words and loquacious contention, dialectic syllogisms and the eloquence of Cicero (i.e. Augustine), than by the example of the Egyptian ascetics." In the words of St John of the Ladder (March 30), "great Cassian reasons loftily and excellently." His writings are also praised in the Rule of St Benedict.

St John Cassian lived in the West for many years, but his spiritual homeland was the Orthodox East. He fell asleep in the Lord in the year 435. His holy relics rest in an underground chapel in the Monastery of St Victor in Marseilles. His head and right hand are in the main church.

OCCHY BLURB

Underage drinking comes with many risk factors. A few are...

Underage drinking:

- is responsible for more than 4,300 annual deaths among underage youth
- is linked to 189,000 emergency rooms visits by people under age 21 for injuries and other conditions
- contributes to the likelihood of risky sexual behavior, including unwanted, unintended, and unprotected sexual activity, and sex with multiple partners.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reports that alcohol continues to be the most widely used substance of misuse among America's youth — more than tobacco or any other drugs. Ongoing conversations between parents and youth can have a real impact on young peoples' decisions about alcohol.

UNDERAGEDRINKING not a minor problem

For resources on how to talk to your teens about the dangers and risks of underage drinking, see the SAMHSA "Talk. They Hear You" campaign website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking>.

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