

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

MAY 2007

THREE WAYS WITH FAMILIES

BY TIM KELLER

It is big news that in Japan, in Western Europe, and in Russia, the birth rate has fallen precipitously, to below replacement levels. If this does not change, the economic and cultural impact on those nations will be severe. Many have pointed out that childbearing is lowest in the most secular countries and sectors of society, while it is the highest in the most religious countries.

One explanation is that more educated people put off child rearing until later in life, resulting in fewer children. However, educated religious people have more children than educated secular people, and therefore the socio-economic answer isn't the most fundamental answer. I don't think anyone can be completely sure about complex sociological trends, but I think it creates an

interesting backdrop for the consideration of the unique Christian view of the family.

My European friends have two theories for why their secular neighbors have lost interest in the family. First, there is the sacrifice-factor. For the last thirty years, sociologists have documented that secularism fosters individualism and selfishness. A recent *New York Times Magazine* article cited the 2003 Ben Gurion University study that found religious communes in Israel did better than secular communes. The reason? The members of secular communes simply were more selfish, particularly the men. Men who went to synagogue regularly were much more willing to sacrifice for the family and the community than men who did not.

Despite the new financial

incentives to have children that European governments are now offering, many people can't imagine a happy life with the severe loss of independence that comes with parenthood. As studies since Robert Bellah's *Habits of the Heart* have shown, secularism teaches that every individual determines his or her own purpose in life—the autonomous self is sovereign. In this world-view, family life looks like the loss of personal meaning and happiness.

There is also the hope-factor. My European friends tell me that their secular neighbors are much more pessimistic about the future. They (rightly) see oceans of injustice and poverty in the world surrounding islands of democracy and prosperity. They are keenly aware of the ecological and

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FIRST WEST SIDE 5:00 PM WORSHIP SERVICE IS HELD: ENTHUSIASMIC CROWDS

BY ELAINE ROLLOGAS

As the hour approached to begin the service, there was a hopeful anticipation by the volunteers and staff as a thousand questions ran through their minds. Will the new volunteer teams be ready? Will the transition from one service to the next at the same location run smoothly? How many people will actually show up?

Arriving early were 24 new volunteers from the Children's Ministry, Sermon Ministry, and ushers and greeters from Sunday Service Ministries. The prayer ministry volunteers prayed for the entire evening just prior to the service.

The entire worship service ran smoothly. There was excellent jazz music, and Dr. Keller gave a

sermon from Mark 15:16-32, entitled "Mocking Jesus." The official count for the service's attendance was 910 people, almost filling the overflow rooms to capacity. In addition, 28 children ranging from infants to 10 year olds enjoyed children's worship.

The time was ideal for many families. When asked if they

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CAREER COACHING – THE LATEST AT THE REDEEMER DIACONATE

BY SONNY GUPTA

We are socialized early in life to appreciate the importance of work. In fact 2 Thessalonians 3:10-15 describes work from a theological perspective. Work is how God intended us to occupy our time in the perfection of His plan for creation. God intends us to use our work to advance the cause of His kingdom.

Finding and maintaining viable work is one of our biggest challenges today. This is no exception with the clients that our diaconate serves. 31% of our clients are unemployed, and 23% are underemployed. An additional 18% are not maintaining a steady income due to their career choice. All these categories are vulnerable places to be because they are not able to meet their basic living expenses without assistance.

The Redeemer Diaconate realizes the importance of this issue. In order to better serve our clients, the idea of a career-coach-

ing center was born. The goal of the center is to provide basic resources in job search activities, including resume preparation, interviewing, networking, and developing the life skills to sustain long-term employment. Success in a work environment breeds confidence, productivity, and a sense of wholeness. This ministry is gospel-driven and aims to extend the Diaconate's mission of mercy and justice.

In February the diaconate added a full-time Resource Coordinator to assist with this mission. We now provide career-coaching appointments that provide our clients with individualized attention. Our coordinator is working to develop a comprehensive library of resources available to our clients. Clients are already using these resources to find new jobs and meaningful employment. Shortly, we will begin to offer mock interviews for our clients while being videotaped.

This is a valuable tool for learning interviewing skills. Our coordinator is also in the process of designing workshops that will further help our clients overcome the common roadblocks to finding new employment. As we look to expand our career-coaching center, we will be calling for volunteers with backgrounds in human resources to join us in the training process.

Please continue to pray with us as this new center grows. There is still much work to do. In many cases we pray for our clients to experience needed heart change with respect to their attitude towards work. As our clients develop their employment skills, we will see success in other areas of their lives as well. In line with Redeemer's overall mission, our prayer is that our clients will become "changed people" contributing to the strengthening fabric of our city.

FIRST WEST SIDE 5:00 PM SERVICE

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enjoyed the 5:00 PM service, their responses were a resounding "YES!" When asked "Why?" they said because it gave them time to attend church, have their children experience children's worship, and still get home in time to put their children to bed at a normal hour.

When asked the same question, several singles said they also enjoyed the new service time

because they could go out with friends for dinner after the service and still get home in time to be ready for work the next day.

Many people expressed the sting of being shut out at the 7:00 PM service and how grateful they are to now have an additional evening worship time on the west side where they can find a seat.

At the end of the day it was

rewarding to see the planning and execution of all the details come together. On behalf of the Redeemer staff and congregation special thanks goes to: Brad Winslow, West Side Operations Coordinator and Phoebe Kmeck, West Side Volunteers Manager for an excellent job making this first service a tremendous success.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington)
services at 10:30AM • 5:45PM

ETHICAL CULTURE
West 64TH and CPW
service at 9:15AM

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Corner of West 79TH and Broadway
service at 7:00PM

TAKE THE PLUNGE – AT REDEEMER'S FIRST VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Redeemer is excited to hold its first ever VBS. If you are looking for a great summer activity for your children, hang on to your life preserver! Redeemer's VBS team is preparing for a water park adventure (literally!) you won't want to miss. They are getting ready to **Take the Plunge!** As kids move from one whirlwind activity to the next, they will be soaking up lessons that will last for a lifetime! And to top off the

experience we are planning to finish the week with a trip to a real water park - Wild Water Kingdom at Dorney Park.

Kids will **Take the Plunge** at **Raise the Reef Praises**, the **Snack Shack**, **Craft-Away Cove**, **Oceans of Motion**, and **Bibleland Bay** each day as they dive into the Word and learn how Jesus used the common element of water to teach some uncommon lessons. It will be a week of

fun and excitement sure to make a splash with your kids. The twisting and turning will begin each day at 9:45AM and end at 12:15PM, July 16–20, at The King's College facility in the Empire State Building.

This program is open to children from kindergarten through 5th grade. Registration begins May 13th! To dive into the excitement, register on-line at www.redeemer.com.

HFNY EASTER DINNER

In celebration of his resurrection, and with a desire to serve the people whom Jesus is acutely concerned about, Hope for New York held its first annual Easter Dinner on the Tuesday following Easter Sunday. Roughly 60 volunteers began showing up early in the afternoon to prepare for the meal and entertainment later in the evening.

With white plastic tablecloths covering picnic tables, paper sunflower centerpieces, and purple streamers stretching across the ceiling, the Holy Cross Church basement had been transformed into a grand banquet room. The honored guests were 250 homeless and hungry people who live in or on the streets around Times Square. Though I've been to engagements where linen replaced the plastic, expensive floral arrangement graced each table, crystal chandeliers hung

overhead, and the guest list included celebrities and dignitaries, for some reason I think between the two parties Jesus would have chosen to attend this one.

When the doors opened, the sweet southern smell of BBQ chicken and corn on the cob was heavy in the room; with eager anticipation guests quickly filled the seats. It was wonderful to watch as old friends from every conceivable background waved across the room to one another, laughing and telling stories as the volunteers served dinner. A few hours later—with the help of a guest choir and a gospel group—music, dancing and worship filled the hall as the meal concluded. The sermon that evening was provided by one of HFNY's most dedicated volunteers, Steve Smith. The evening was a great success and everyone appeared to

leave full and refreshed. The loving service provided that night was a strikingly beautiful picture, in stark contrast to the indifference and ignominy with which these neighbors are so commonly met on the streets.

It is easy to drop money in a cup, and we can often assuage our consciences that way. When we look at Jesus though, he actually sat down with, moved in with and lived alongside the supremely unlovely in this world—even gave his life. I'm thankful that he did not grant mercy at arm's length. I'm glad that he decided to get involved, to get dirty. I'm forever grateful that he humbled himself to associate with people like me. I hope that my life will be full of the kinds of parties that Jesus would want to attend.

Contact volunteer@hfny.org, or visit www.hfny.org for more information on how to volunteer.

BY KRISTIAN ROSE

“Heaven have mercy on us all—Presbyterians and Pagans alike—for we are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head, and sadly need mending.” – Herman Melville, Moby Dick



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THREE WAYS WITH FAMILIES (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

technological disasters that are possible, perhaps inevitable. Why bring children into such a bleak world? Religious persons, however, have a profound assurance that in the future is final justice, or paradise, or union with God in some form. They have an overarching hope that makes them more optimistic about bearing and raising children.

At this point you might think I would simply say 'Hooray for religion, it is the friend of the family.' But it's not that simple. While secularism in the west tends to make an idol out of the individual and his or her needs, traditional religion, especially in non-western cultures, tends to make an idol out of the family. But according to theologian Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University, Christianity was the very first religion or world-view that held up single adulthood as a viable way of life. Jesus and St. Paul were single. "One...clear difference between Christianity and Judaism [and all other traditional religions] is the former's entertainment of the idea of singleness as the paradigm way of life for its followers." (Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community*

of Character p.174)

Nearly all religions and cultures made an absolute value of the family and of the bearing of children. There was no honor without family honor, and there was no real lasting significance or 'legacy' without leaving heirs. By contrast, the early church not only did not pressure women to marry but it institutionally supported poor widows so they were not forced to remarry as they were in the culture at large. Why? The Christian gospel and hope of the kingdom-future de-idolized marriage. "[Now, in the overlap of the ages], both singleness and marriage are symbolic institutions for the constitution of the church's witness of the kingdom. Neither can be valid without the other. If singleness is a symbol of the church's confidence in God's power to convert lives for the growth of the church, marriage and procreation is the symbol of the church's hope for the world. For Christians do not place their hope in their children, but rather their children are a sign of their hope...that God has not abandoned this world..." (Hauerwas, p.191)

The gospel-based community practices a view of family that is contrary to both the cultural idols

of secular and traditional societies. The gospel frees singles from the shame they bear in traditional societies of being unmarried. Their truest identity is in Christ and their assured future hope is the kingdom of God. Bearing children, in the Christian view, is merely nurturing more lives for the family of God. That can be done in other ways than the biological. On the other hand, the gospel gives us the hope and strength for the sacrifices of marriage and parenthood that is lacking in liberal cultures. Christians grasp that they were only brought to life because of Jesus' radical sacrifice of his independence and power. We know that children are only brought to life and self-sufficiency if their parents sacrifice much of *their* independence and power. In light of the cross, it is the least we can do.

The gospel is neither religion or irreligion, it is something else altogether. Vital gospel Christianity's influence on a society will produce neither a liberal and secular nor a traditional and conservative culture, but something we seldom see.