

Again this year, as each year for the past decade, we are happy to present to you *Inside the Vatican's* "Top Ten" people for the year just past. Our "Top Ten People of 2011" includes cardinals and laypeople, diplomats and monks, scholars and activists. All are marked by a common characteristic: humility. None wished to be named to this list. And that is precisely one of the key reasons we felt compelled to include each one of them.

Our list, of course, cannot contain the names of hundreds and thousands of other worthy men and women. We have missed many people of courage and faith. But we feel the people we have chosen all fittingly represent that courage, that no-

bility of spirit, that gentleness of heart, which bears witness to the presence of faith, of the Holy Spirit, in our midst.

But for now, we would like to recall the last man named on our list, Archbishop Pietro Sambì, whom we knew. He died on July 27, 2011, unexpectedly, at age 73. He was expected to return to Rome and be named a cardinal.

I once asked Sambì what he thought were the greatest problems facing "our Church." He replied: "You are wrong from the very beginning, from the way you pose your question. It is not 'our Church.' It is *His* Church — Christ's Church. He will care for His Church. Trust in Him."

—The Editor



1. FATHER CASSIAN FOLSOM

Refounder of the Benedictine monastery in Norcia, Italy, birthplace of St. Benedict

2. MOTHER MIRIAM

Convert from Judaism, now foundress of a Benedictine community of nuns

3. CARDINAL JOSEPH ZEN ZE-KIUNG

The courageous defender of the faith and of religious freedom in China

4. BIRGIT WANSING

The consecrated laywoman without whom the Pope might not have written his books

5. SISTER PATRICIA MURRAY

The Irish nun who has helped thousands in war-torn Sudan

6. MARINO RESTREPO

His entire life changed after he was kidnapped for six months...

7. DR. ORNELLA PAROLINI

One of the world's leading authorities in biotechnology and stem cell therapy

8. MERCEDES WILSON

A fighter for the pro-life cause who begins at the root: the innocence of children

9. CARDINAL KURT KOCH

A quiet Swiss theologian who is now the leading ecumenist in the world

10. ARCHBISHOP PIETRO SAMBI

One of the most important diplomats in the Church, he was a simple man of faith...

FATHER CASSIAN FOLSOM, O.S.B.



Dom Cassian Folsom, OSB. Below, Folsom celebrates Mass at the Cathedral of St. John Berchmans in the diocese of Shreveport, Louisiana, which was hosting a liturgical conference at which Folsom was a guest speaker

Sometimes we are able to see a splendid adventure of life and faith just at the moment that it is unfolding. And we are able to watch the struggles and challenges and successes of a man, or of a group of men, and even to participate with them in that adventure. Such is the case with Father Cassian Folsom and the refounding of the Benedictine monastery in Norcia,

Italy—the birthplace of St. Benedict in about A.D. 480—which was closed in 1810, and reopened after 190 years in the year 2000. For what Father Folsom has done for Norcia, for what he has done for monasticism in general and Benedictine monasticism in particular, for what he has done for the Church’s liturgy (for the last three years, the monastery in Norcia has been offering Holy Mass in both uses of the Roman Rite, old and new) and for what he has taught all of us about following Christ by his Christian example, we feel privileged to have the opportunity to select Cassian Folsom, who is also an old friend, as our “Person of the Year” for 2011. Cassian’s initiative is one of the “points of light” in the Church and world today.

Born in 1955 in Lynn, Massachusetts (USA), Folsom grew up in Connecticut until his path took him into religious life. He served as the vice-rector of the Pontifical Athenaeum of Saint Anselm from 1997 to 2000 and is the founding prior of the Benedictine monastery *Maria Sedes Sapientiae* (“Mary Seat of Wisdom”) in Norcia, Italy, where he is also the rector of the Basilica of San Benedetto. A member of the US Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, he is the author of numerous studies on Roman Catholic liturgy.

In his monastery newsletter there is an interview with Folsom which we felt worth sharing here.

Does your decision to celebrate Mass also in the old rite respect the Second Vatican Council?

FATHER CASSIAN FOLSOM: It would be useful to read carefully the Council document on the Liturgy. *Sacrosanctum Concilium 22* says: “Regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See and, as laws may determine, on the bishop.” Pope Benedict’s 2007 *motu proprio* simply reiterates that principle, and legislates for the use of the old rite alongside the new. Pope Benedict also emphasizes that the way to

interpret the Council documents is by the hermeneutic of continuity. That principle is also expressed in the document on the liturgy where it says: “...care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing” (SC 23). What we’re really talking about here is legitimate pluralism, which the Council advocates as well: “Even in the liturgy, the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community” (SC 37). So the celebration of the Mass by all means respects the Second Vatican Council. We are embracing both usages and reaching out to other groups in search of unity. That’s a very conciliar approach.

But doesn’t this mean “turning back the clock”?

FOLSOM: On the contrary, I see a monastery “*utriusque usus*” (using both forms of the Roman rite) as very forward-looking, especially in terms of authentic ecumenism. By that I mean two things. First, the ethos of the extraordinary form is very similar to the ethos of the many oriental rites, and therefore celebrating the Eucharist according to both forms allows us to serve as a bridge between East and West. Second, I think we need a good dose of “internal ecumenism” in the Church, so as to be able to dialogue with Catholics attached to the older liturgical forms without ideological prejudice.



It is “politically correct” for Latin-rite Catholics to be enthusiastic about the Byzantine rite. Why isn’t it “politically correct” to be enthusiastic about the extraordinary form as well?

The history of the liturgy shows clearly a multiplicity of usages within the one Roman rite. It is thanks to many years of studying the liturgy that I came to see the importance of this unity in diversity. In fact, I argued this point in the presence of the then-Cardinal Ratzinger at a liturgical conference held at Fontgombault in France in 1997. As a liturgist, I would also like to say that there is no perfect rite; there are positive and negative aspects in every liturgical tradition. The only perfect liturgy is the heavenly one.

How can the two usages influence each other?

FOLSOM: At the risk of oversimplifying, I would say that the ordinary form stresses rational understanding, speaking in prose, as it were. The extraordinary form provides rich food for the intellect also, but relies heavily on gesture, symbolism, intuition, silence, ritual action without words, speaking in poetry, you might say. Man knows both rationally and intuitively. He needs both prose and poetry. If the two usages, like two different cultures, can patiently live with each other over time, they can become friends. ○

—Robert Moynihan



MOTHER MIRIAM

Mother Miriam of the Lamb of God is one of the most eloquent, passionate, filled-with-the-fire-of-faith women it has been our privilege to come to know. Born Rosalind Moss into a Conservative Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York, after a long spiritual journey, she became just four months ago, on September 8, a Benedictine nun and the foundress of her own order within the Benedictine family, Daughters of Mary, Mother of Israel's Hope, based in Tulsa, Oklahoma (USA). For her example as a seeker of truth, for her honesty as a person willing to suffer for the truth she has found, for her joyfulness in living out her vocation, we are privileged to be able to choose her among our "Top Ten" people of 2011.

In the text of Bishop Edward Slattery's decree establishing the new religious community, Slattery wrote: "In every age and place, the Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life, is at work in the Body of Christ to regenerate and extend the various forms of consecrated life by which the Church is enriched and made present in the world.... Moreover, from Apostolic times, unmarried women and widows have sought to imitate the Daughter of Sion, the Blessed Virgin Mary, in her unconditional surrender to the will of the Father and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. Having said her 'Yes' in response to the message of the Archangel Gabriel, the Virgin of Nazareth became blessed above all women, the Joy of Israel, and the Glory of Jerusalem."

Slattery continued: "Among the women who seek to imitate the Blessed Virgin Mary and aspire to share in her spiritual motherhood today, are the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Israel's Hope. The mystery of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple is the luminous pattern of their ecclesial mission to all peoples: Jew and Gentile, young and old, rich and poor. Contemplating that mystery, they rejoice that the Light of the World has come, and receive the Child Jesus, Israel's Hope and Consolation, from the arms of His Blessed Mother as did Simeon; their mission is to teach others to do likewise, and so find hope in this valley of tears.

"They listen to Simeon's prophetic utterance and recognize in his arms the Promised One, who from the altar of the Cross will offer Himself to the Father as the Atoning Lamb. Thus are they compelled to undertake works of catechesis so that all peoples may find in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass the wellspring of salvation, life, and resurrection....

"New foundations of consecrated life are fragile undertakings; they must welcome the wisdom of past generations with humility and gratitude, learning from the teaching and example of the saints who never grow old. It is by a sure and praiseworthy instinct, then, that the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Israel's Hope, have chosen to graft

their tender shoot onto the age-old tree of the Benedictine tradition...

"For this reason, it pleases me to confirm and approve the Rule of St. Benedict as the fundamental pattern of the life of the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Israel's Hope. Their life will be further governed by the Constitutions here appended, which I hereby approve and promulgate...

"In accord with the aforementioned Constitutions, I appoint Rosalind Moss, in religion, Mother Miriam of the Lamb of God, prioress of the Community, and authorize the opening of their residence in the Diocese of Tulsa as the Priory of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

"Given in Tulsa, in the Year of Our Lord 2011, on this 8th day of September, the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

In an interview with Trent Beattie of the National Catholic Register published on December 8, entitled "Rosalind Moss' Unexpected Journey," Mother Miriam explained her feelings on the day of her entrance into religious life in these words: "If there were a more glorious day in my life, I can't think of when it was. I have always felt that I was made for another world and that I was a pilgrim in this one. Giving my life to God through Christ from my Jewish background changed my life forever. Coming further into the fullness of Christianity 18 years later in the Catholic Church deepened my relationship with God more than I knew was possible. Still, even after these life-changing events, there remained a longing in my heart for something yet beyond this world. On September 8, in the small Monastery of the Cenacle of Our

Lady in Tulsa, heaven seemed to flood my heart as Bishop Slattery received my vows and as, through that beautiful and holy shepherd of Tulsa, I gave myself to the Bridegroom of my soul.

"Bishop Slattery led the ceremony, with the assistance of Father Mark Daniel Kirby, O.S.B. About 15 people were in attendance, including priests, religious brothers and sisters. The Nativity of Our Lord was brought to mind, which, like our setting in the small oratory, was a private event, with even less than 15 people in attendance. Yet the seemingly humble, private and hidden birth of our Lord resulted in the world's salvation. Our prayer is that that same Lord in the manger would be pleased to grow the seed of our humble, private beginning into a means of salvation and hope for many souls."



Mother Miriam (formerly Rosalind Moss). Below, together with the monks of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Cenacle and His Excellency, Bishop Slattery of Tulsa, Oklahoma (USA)



—Robert Moynihan



(Galazka photo)

Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium (the photo was taken when he was a bishop, so he wears the bishop's purple hat). Below, Zen offers a Eucharistic blessing during adoration following a solemn Mass at the Hong Kong Coliseum (CNS photo)

CARDINAL Joseph Zen Ze-kium

For the past decade, Joseph Zen Ze-kium, the sixth Chinese cardinal in the history of the Church, has been a fearless defender of the Church in Hong Kong and mainland China.

As the People's Republic of China has emerged as one of the world's main economic and political powers, many leaders in the East and the West have chosen the path of appeasement with Beijing

for economic, political or other advantage, and avoided raising the question of fundamental human rights and freedoms, including the freedom of the Church. Cardinal Zen is not one of them.

Ever since becoming bishop of Hong Kong in 2002, he has not hesitated to challenge the Chinese authorities whenever he perceived they were failing to respect democratic and civil freedoms in Hong Kong, or religious freedom in China. Because of this noble courage in the face of power, we honor him as one of our "Top Ten" people of 2011.

Born into a Catholic family in Shanghai on January 13, 1932, Zen is turning 80 in this month of January 2012.

He joined the Salesian Order in 1944, and moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong in 1948 before the Communists came to power. He was sent to study in Italy, and was ordained a priest in Turin in 1961. He went on to do higher studies at the Salesian University in Rome, where he obtained his doctorate in philosophy in 1964.

After returning to Hong Kong, he taught philosophy at the Salesian House of Studies, and both theology and philosophy at Holy Spirit Seminary. Today, as he turns 80, he still teaches philosophy at the seminary.

Ever attentive to the political developments and the situation of the Catholic Church in the land of his birth, from 1978-83 he served as head of the China Province of the Salesian Order.

From 1989 to 1996, Zen spent six months of every year teaching in mainland seminaries and got to know many mainland bishops, priests and seminarians. He gained an important insight into, and understanding of, the religious and political situation in China.

This work came to an end in 1996 when John Paul II named him coadjutor bishop of Hong Kong and, in September 2002, named him head of the diocese following the death of Cardinal John Baptist Wu. For his defense of democratic freedoms and human rights, in 2002,

Apple Daily, Hong Kong's pro-democracy newspaper, named him "Man of the Year."

Indeed, ever since becoming bishop, he has taken a stance for such rights. He fought for the right of abode in the former British colony of children of Hong Kong residents born on the mainland. In 2003, he was one of the leading opponents of a proposed anti-subversion law that would have endangered democratic freedoms. When 500,000 people marched against the proposed legislation, the government withdrew it. In 2004, he again came out in support of democratic freedoms the government was seeking to restrict, and from 2005 to 2011 he led the Church's battle in the courts to ensure that Catholics could continue to manage their own schools. When the Church lost that battle last October, Zen, then 79, went on a 3-day hunger strike to protest the Court of Final Appeal's decision.

Ever concerned about the difficult situation of the Catholic Church on the mainland where, he once remarked, "our bishops are slaves," the fearless Zen became the most vocal and charismatic advocate for religious freedom for the Catholics of mainland China.

Pope Benedict strongly supported him and made Zen a cardinal in February 2006. Zen rejoiced when the Pope later created a special commission to monitor and advise him on the situation of the Church in China, and published his landmark *Letter to Catholics* on the mainland.



Since then, Zen has made a major contribution to the work of that commission. He has also strongly defended the "clandestine" (underground) Catholic community in China, which refuses to be controlled by the government. He has spoken out forcefully against the ordination of bishops on the mainland without the Pope's approval, and has urged China's bishops to give heroic witness to their faith and to their communion with the Pope.

He has called on Beijing to release two elderly bishops and many (over 30) priests it has detained, and demanded that it tell the Chinese people the truth about what happened in Tiananmen Square.

More than any other Catholic Church leader, he has drawn the world's attention to these and other serious violations of religious liberty and human rights in China.

Attacked by Beijing and its controlled media for his insistence on religious liberty and democratic rights, and criticized by some in the Church for his confrontational attitude toward Beijing, this inspiring and courageous cardinal refuses to remain silent and insists that it is only by granting its citizens freedom — both religious and civil — that China can become truly great and be a force for good in the world.

—Gerard O'Connell



BIRGIT WANSING

Though few in the general public have heard of her, those few believe that many of the books by Joseph Ratzinger, both before he became Pope and since, would not have been written without her help. She is one of the Pope's closest and most trusted collaborators and advisors, and for the quiet, cheerful, steady assistance that she has given to him, and through him, to the Church, for more than a quarter century, we honor her as one of our "People of the Year" for 2011.

Birgit Wansing is a consecrated woman (a laywoman who has consecrated her life to God, but not a nun). She belongs to the Schoenstatt Movement, which was started in 1914 in a small Marian sanctuary in the Rhine Valley in Germany, and is today found in 80 countries throughout the world.

Her interests are very wide-ranging. (Some years ago, she wrote an essay for *L'Osservatore Romano* condemning animal cruelty as incompatible with Christianity.) Discreet, thoroughly German, she appears to be just one more among the many people working in the Vatican. She lives very simply (she can often be seen pedaling her bike through the streets in and near the Vatican, and her face lights up with a sunny smile if one greets her). This simplicity means she is rarely "noticed." (More well-known is the bustling Ingrid Stampa, since 1991 Benedict's other close lay confidant and advisor, first at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and then as personal assistant to the Pope. Ingrid, an academic, is, like Birgit, a lay affiliate of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, and has now been integrated into the German section of the secretariat of state, where she takes care of the Italian translations of many of the Pope's writings.)

Birgit is not a theologian but a musician, translator and protector of the Pope's health. For nearly 25 years, she has had one very special job: she has transferred onto a computer the handwritten rough drafts of Joseph Ratzinger's writings.

Since he was a professor, Benedict XVI likes to write by hand, in pencil. He does not even use a typewriter. His texts are often the transcripts of lectures and conferences that he revises before publication. This is where Birgit enters the creative process. She deciphers the tiny handwriting and makes it readable to editors and translators. Her work is a quiet and discreet job that began when Joseph Ratzinger was prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Another area that Birgit takes care of with patience is upgrading the vast bibliography of Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI. Many of the students of the Ratzinger *Schülerkreis* turn to her for specific research, and her name appears in the acknowledgments of many doc-

toral theses alongside that of the Pope's secretary, Monsignor Georg Gänswein.

Every morning the Pope's day begins with a meeting with Birgit before the usual work with the secretariat, especially in these recent months, which Benedict XVI has spent working on the final draft of his third book on Jesus dedicated to the childhood Gospels. Before passing the text to Ingrid Stampa, who now works in the secretariat of state, and to translators for other languages, Birgit prepares the text and the bibliography that the Pope approves. For the first two books, there were 1,000 pages to write and rewrite.

Birgit is therefore part of the Pope's inner circle and seems to have an excellent relationship with the four *Memores Domini* who run the papal household, and with Sister Christine Felder, who accompanies the brother of the Pope when he is in Rome.

For this reason it was quite normal to see her with Carmela, Loredana and Christina last year when Manuela, one of the *Memores*, died tragically in a car accident. Birgit was in the front row when the Pope came to pay his last respects to Manuela in the Church of St. Stephen of the Abyssinians in the Vatican. Now the *Memores* are four again after the arrival of Rossella and the "family" is again complete. (Ingrid instead seems to participate less in the daily life of the "apartment.")

Birgit and Ingrid supervised, with Fr. Georg, the transfer of Ratzinger's library from his apartment in the Piazza della

Città Leonina to the Apostolic Palace. Neither lives in the apartment next door to the Pope, where the *Memores* reside, or upstairs where the Pope's personal secretaries live, but both live in the Vatican and are formally part of the secretariat of state.

In 2005, when the newly-elected Pope went to visit his old colleagues at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Birgit Wansing was still among them. Then-Archbishop Angelo Amato, despite his joy at the election of his boss, with whom he would no longer work, said: "Besides him, we have also lost a valuable employee in Monsignor Gänswein, and, I'm afraid—so to speak—that even our talented colleague Birgit Wansing, who for many years worked in the office of Cardinal Ratzinger, is about to change palaces..."

—Angela Ambrogetti



Birgit Wansing. Below, Birgit with four "Memores Domini" — Carmela, Loredana, Rossella, Cristina and Sister Christine Felder, FSO (she accompanies Georg Ratzinger, the Pope's brother) at a Vatican ceremony



SR. PATRICIA MURRAY



Sister Patricia Murray has helped hundreds of thousands in the Sudan. Below, Sudanese refugee families wait for food distribution outside the Bredjing refugee camp in eastern Chad (CNS photo from Reuters)

Last year, long years of struggle for independence finally led to the creation of a new independent state in Africa — South Sudan. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. Into that situation of mixed hope and suffering has stepped an Irish woman, Sister Patricia Murray of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

sometimes known as the Loreto Sisters. (The order's foundress, Mary Ward [1585-1645], an English Catholic, was declared "Venerable" by Pope Benedict XVI on December 19, 2009.)

Through the "Solidarity With South Sudan" project, established by religious from 170 Catholic religious congregations and led by Sr. Murray, thousands in South Sudan have been able to live with dignity despite their country's poverty. She has helped "the poorest of the poor" with great energy, great courage, great administrative skill, and great love. For these reasons, we are happy to include Sister Patricia Murray, whom we have come to know personally, among our "Top Ten" people of 2011.

In a 2010 lecture entitled "To Seek God in Our Suffering World," Sr. Murray explained the origins of this effort.

"The initiative known as Solidarity With Southern Sudan began to take shape from December 2005 onwards," she said. "While this initiative is obviously a response to the very real and immediate needs of Southern Sudan, perhaps it is also pointing the way towards a new missionary paradigm, a new way of collaborating within religious life.

"In March 2006, a six-person international delegation of the Union of Superiors General (an umbrella group for Catholic religious orders) visited six dioceses in Southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains, invited to 'come and see the situation on the ground in Southern Sudan' by Bishop Joseph Gasi of the Tombura-Yambio diocese.

"The invitation came soon after the conclusion of the International Congress on Consecrated Life held in Rome in November 2004 with the theme: 'Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity.' Here the *Instrumentum Laboris* focused on themes like discernment, refounding and creative action to explore where 'the Spirit is creating newness in religious life — especially those opportunities for creative fidelity.' The working paper suggested that a

new paradigm for consecrated life is being put together, born of compassion for the scarred and downtrodden of the earth.

"The documents of the Congress speak about the need to return to a life of poverty, solidarity and compassion, which have always been key elements in the refounding process of religious life.

"The Congress' call for a new imagination in religious life, is captured in the double Gospel icon of the Samaritan woman and the Samaritan man; one is an icon of willingness to change plans and give freely, and the other icon shows a willingness to reveal our deepest longings to others and to actively seek out the new wells to which we have been summoned. The two Samaritan stories show that it is in our frailty that space is opened up for God to do something new.

"These Samaritan stories remind us 'not to avoid dangerous roads because new things always emerge off the beaten path, away from the safe, protected everyday places.' They urge us to risk sharing our vulnerability, our fragility, our darkness, our weariness and thirst, making a deeper exchange and reciprocity possible and opening us up to the possibility of being evangelized by the very people to whom we announce the Gospel.

For it is in responding to their needs that new ways for religious life will be uncovered.

"Therefore the invitation to send a delegation to Sudan was seen as an opportunity to respond to the Congress' invitation 'to find out how to move outside the walls that shelter us and placing ourselves at a crossroads within reach of the marginalized who have been made invisible, unrecognized and voiceless... and recognizing these as privileged places for entering into communion with the Compassionate One.'

"When the people heard of our desire to be in solidarity with them as members of the universal Catholic Church they said repeatedly, 'Thank you for coming to be with us.'"

Sister Murray concluded her address with a prayer composed by the founder of her religious congregation, Mary Ward:

*Make this heart complete as you would have it be.
Our hearts are ready, O God, our hearts are ready!
Put us where you want us to be,
We are in your hand.
Turn us this way or that, as you desire,
We are yours, ready for everything.*

—Anna Artymiak





MARINO RESTREPO

Marino Restrepo's life took a drastic turn at midnight on Christmas Eve in 1997. Driving to the ranch of one of his uncles in Colombia, where he was to spend the night, he was kidnapped by the Colombian rebels of the FARC (Revolutionary Arm Forces of Colombia) and taken to the jungle. He was held hostage for six months.

When he was released, he was a changed man. And over time, the change turned him into a remarkable witness for the faith, so much so that we decided we needed to recognize him among our "Top Ten" people of 2011.

Marino Restrepo was born in the Andes Mountains of Colombia in a small coffee-growers' town. His family was one of strong Catholic faith, following all of the traditional Catholic traditions and teachings. He was the sixth child in a family of 10.

At age 14 he moved to the capital of Colombia, Bogotá, for his high school education. He married shortly before he turned 20, and moved to Hamburg, Germany, where he attended the University of Hamburg and studied arts. His two sons were born there, and after spending six years in Germany, he moved to Los Angeles, California. He has lived in Los Angeles ever since, working in the entertainment industry as an actor and musical composer — not a place normally conducive to great sanctity.

In 1985, he was signed to Sony music of New York as an exclusive artist with his band *Santa Fe*. The band released a number of albums worldwide and toured throughout the world following the release of their records. Marino lived in this world of entertainment for 20 years, and he spent all those years away from his childhood faith.

He had started to drift away from Catholicism already when he moved to Bogotá in the 1960s. He himself says that he became "a pagan," and his life took a sharp turn towards the life of a worldly human being, focused on shallow materialistic matters such as money, fame, and pleasure. He involved himself in Eastern pagan religions and all kinds of esoteric sciences, such as astrology, crystals, candles, aromatherapy, flora therapy, card reading, I-ching, runes, psychics and all kinds of superstitions.

Then came Christmas of 1997.

During the first 15 days of his kidnapping, he was kept in a cave with bats and different kinds of bugs while the captors were waiting for the rebels to pick him up.

In that very cave, and after finding out that he was sentenced to death by his captors, he went through a mystical experience with God that changed his life forever. Five and a half months later, Marino was miraculously released from captivity, and after his release he returned to his Catholic faith.



His life was changed by being kidnapped and held prisoner for six months. The story of a conversion. Below, Marino plays the guitar

He went to confession to a Franciscan priest who shortly afterward became his spiritual father: Fray Jose Maria de las Cinco Llagas, an Italian, and founder in Colombia of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal order. Marino then spent 14 months in California, learning how to be a Catholic again.

One day during the celebration of a Palm Sunday Mass, he had another mystical experience. He was shown by Jesus on the crucifix a vision of the mission that lay ahead of him. He was to accept it or reject it. Jesus was not obliging him to follow his direction.

Soon after that Holy Week, he began a missionary experience where his conversion testimony became the center of a full-time mission. That started in 1999 and has been ongoing throughout the world ever since. Marino became a full-time missionary for the Catholic Church, leaving his entire past, and his worldly possessions, behind.

By observing the needs of many poor priests in the very heart of true poverty in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela and Panama, Marino was inspired to seek in countries with more privileged economies the right help for the right needs.

He says he has seen Holy Mass being celebrated with a plastic chalice and priests wearing liturgical garments that were improvised by good and very poor Samaritans. So he began to ask for donations of altar vessels that were not being used any longer, as well as liturgical garments that were old and out of circulation in the wealthy parishes of North America and Europe. This turned out to be a great ministry that has provided the necessary items for many parishes in poor countries. There are still hundreds of churches in great need.

Marino also founded a lay mission called The Pilgrims of Love. Through this group, he works to provide poor Catholics not only with the word of the Gospel, but also with food, medicine, education and clothing. He has been able to build churches and chapels in many of those communities, as well as schools and first aid centers. He is a very strict follower of the Church's social doctrine and he has the full support of his bishop, Monsignor Roberto Ospina from St. Peter's Parish in Bogotá.

What began as a terrifying kidnapping ended up becoming a doorway to new life. ○

—By *Inside the Vatican Staff*

DR. ORNELLA PAROLINI



Dr. Ornella Parolini. Below, a photo of the freezing of placental cells for eventual use in stem cell therapy

Ornella Parolini is an Italian scientist whose research team in Italy is working on some of the most advanced stem cell therapies in the world. Her specialty is to study the cells from placentas. She believes these placental cells can be used in effective stem cell therapies,

making it unnecessary to consider the use of fetal cells (embryonic cells), something some scientists are proposing even though the use of fetal stem cells involves the destruction of fetuses. We were privileged to meet with Dr. Parolini during a stem cell conference at the Vatican in November. She is a gracious, humble woman with extraordinary commitment to her faith and to the teaching of the Church. For these reasons, we are pleased to include Dr. Parolini among our “Top Ten” people of 2011.

In 2009, Dr. Parolini and her team published an article in *Cell Transplantation* which showed that stem cells derived from human placentas may ultimately play a role in the treatment of lung diseases, such as pulmonary fibrosis and fibrotic diseases caused by tuberculosis, chemical exposure, radiation or pathogens. These diseases can ultimately lead to loss of normal lung tissue and organ failure. No known therapy effectively reverses or stops the fibrotic process.

Placenta-derived stem cells are known to be able to engraft in solid organs, including the lungs. Human term placenta stem cells also demonstrate characteristics of high plasticity and low immunogenicity.

“The potential application of fetal membrane-derived cells as a therapeutic tool for disorders characterized by inflammation and fibrosis is supported in previous studies,” Dr. Parolini, the study’s lead author, said. “In line with the hypothesis that cells derived from the amniotic membrane have immunomodulatory properties and have been used as an anti-inflammatory agent, we set out to evaluate the effects of fetal membrane-derived cell transplantation in chemically-treated (bleomycin) mice.” According to Dr. Parolini, the procedure resulted in a significant anti-fibrotic effect on the lab animals. A “consistent” reduction in lung fibrosis, says Dr. Parolini, “provides convincing proof” that placenta-derived cells do confer benefits for bleomycin-induced lung injury.

In mid-November, the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Culture joined with a small American biotechnology company called NeoStem to host a remarkable conference in Rome. Dr. Parolini was present, along with 350 other scientists, religious figures, politi-

cians, educators and industry representatives. The 3-day conference highlighted the need for collaboration in research into adult stem cells. The conference and partnership with New York-based NeoStem is part of the Vatican’s recent \$1 million, five-year initiative to promote adult stem cell therapies and research.

Called “Adult Stem Cells: Science and the Future of Man and Culture,” those present included Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture; Father Tomasz Trafny, head of the Council’s science department; Tommy G. Thompson, former US Secretary of Health and Human Services; and Dr. Robin Smith, president of the Stem for Life Foundation (the official partner for the conference) and chief executive of NeoStem, the company which backs the Foundation.

A chief concern of the conference was that medical researchers not harm human embryos during their research. “We wish to raise some important and sometimes provocative questions, such as whether the Hippocratic oath should be extended to all the life sciences, because today it is not only doctors but also laboratory scientists who have power to intervene in all phases of human life,” Father Trafny said.

Transplants of adult stem cells have become a standard lifesaving therapy for people with leukemia, lymphoma and other blood diseases; and they are being studied in people who suffer from multiple sclerosis, heart attacks and diabetes. Some scientists, however, are lobbying for the use of embryonic cells to grow replacement tissue for diseases like Parkinson’s or diabetes, and many scientists believe the more flexible embryonic cells have great promise.

This is where Dr. Parolini comes in. By her focus on placental cells, she is discovering a source of stem cells that is extremely flexible, so much so that

she believes there will be no need for scientists to seek to use embryonic cells with the immoral consequences that entails (the death of the embryos).

One speaker at the Vatican conference was Sharon Porter, who was diagnosed with systemic scleroderma, a chronic connective tissue disorder that leads to a hardening of the skin and internal organs.

There is no cure, but three years ago she underwent a treatment to reboot her immune system: Adult stem cells were removed from her body, her immune system was destroyed and the stem cells were re-injected to build a new immune system. “It changed my life,” Porter said. “It brought me back to where I was before I was diagnosed.”

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—Robert Moynihan





MERCEDES WILSON



Mercedes Arzu Wilson. Below, the covers of her book in various languages. She teaches young people around the world

Mercedes Arzu Wilson is a “fighter for life,” one of the most prominent in the world. She has been part of Vatican delegations at United Nations conferences, has written books, has given lectures around the world, has prepared packages of materials and carried them to the post office, and has been a mother and grandmother. We have come to know her personally, and for what she has done for so many around the world, we are pleased to name her as one of our “Top Ten” people of 2011.

Mercedes, born in Guatemala, now living not far from Washington, D.C., with her husband, an American, is the founder and president of Family for the Americas. Since 1968, her organization has taught millions in over 100 nations and in 20 different languages about Natural Family Planning (NFP), not only by teaching people how to practice it, but also how to themselves become teachers of NFP. Her book *Love and Fertility* has been translated into 23 languages.

According to Wilson, pro-life approaches that focus strictly on abortion and ignore sex education and contraception will fail because they are missing the root of the problem. According to Wilson, the source is the “corruption of innocence that eventually leads to the devaluation of human life, which is manifested through abortion and other sinful deeds.” By handing out or encouraging the use of condoms and the pill, she said, schools encourage a mentality that expects sex without procreation. She noted further that two out of three women who obtain abortions were using contraception when they got pregnant. “Planned Parenthood knows that it’s not going to work, so they’re ready to offer the next service, which is induced abortion,” she said.

In recent years, she has become increasingly concerned about the push to have “brain death,” not “heart death,” as the new criterion to determine the moment of human death. The concern is that there have been a number of cases in which people who appear “brain dead” actually “wake up” again. Mercedes fears that some of the interest in having “brain death” declared the new “standard” of death has a commercial motivation: it would be lucrative to “harvest” the body organs of a person whose body was still living, but who was declared “brain dead.”

In 2005, in a message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Pope John Paul II said that the Church has consistently supported “the practice of transplanting organs from deceased persons.” However, he cautioned that transplants are acceptable only when they are conducted in a manner “so as to guarantee respect for life and for the human person.” The Pope cited his predecessor, Pope Pius XII, who

said that “it is for the doctor to give a clear and precise definition of death and of the moment of death.” He encouraged the Pontifical Academy to pursue that task.

“Our main work for the last 10 to 15 years has been training new teachers,” Mercedes says.

“We have developed the most comprehensive training manual for training teachers in human sexuality and Natural Family Planning. We do this all over the world. We believe the most useful tools are the simplest materials. We have training manuals and posters, because many times the poor countries don’t have electricity. Our systems of posters teach the whole method for women undergoing every situation of the reproductive life, from fertility to pre-menopause.”

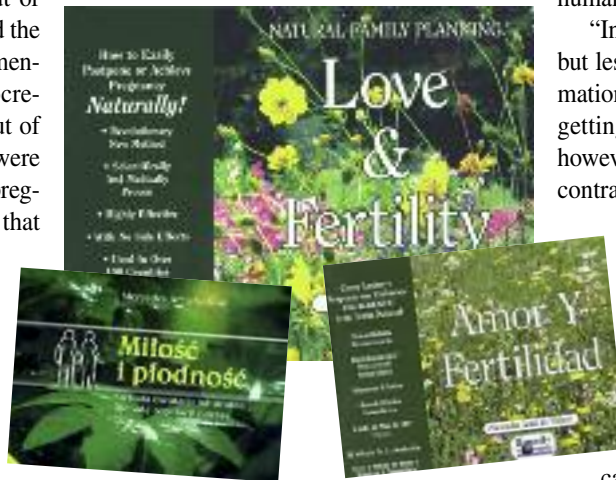
Non-natural or artificial types of birth control are very common in our world, and “Natural Family Planning” is often scorned as “impossible” and “ineffective.” But Mercedes believes the artificial methods not only tend to draw young people away from traditional sexual morality, but also are often physically harmful, dangerous for human health.

“In the US many women are still using the pill, but less, because the media has given some information on the negative side effects and people are getting scared,” Mercedes said. “Young people, however, are still using patches and other forms of contraception, and they are falling into this trap because society continues to lure them into being promiscuous; that is the main problem. In the third world, they are still using the 3-month injections. It does so much harm to the poor. They are given it while mothers are breastfeeding their babies. The steroids are going right through the breast milk to the babies and that is a calamity. It causes cancer, heart disease, you

name it; the list is interminable. And with the lack of health facilities in the third world, it is criminal. The pill, IUDs, injections, and the patch are devastating to the poor because they all carry the same steroids, which are known to be toxic and carcinogenic. The World Health Organization in 2005 confirmed that estrogens in birth control methods are carcinogenic of the number one type, which is the most dangerous type of all.

“And then there is family life. A study of the most important work we have ever done confirms that married couples that practice NFP have a lower divorce rate than couples that use contraception. In couples where NFP was practiced, we found a miniscule .2% divorce rate.” ○

—Robert Moynihan



CARDINAL KURT KOCH



Below, Benedict XVI and Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, during a private audience with Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, and his delegation at the Vatican December 4 (CNS photos)

(*Pastor Bonus*.) His name is Cardinal Kurt Koch, and for his steady, much-needed work on behalf of deeper understanding between Christians, and between Christians and Jews, we honor him as one of our “Top Ten” people of 2011.

When Koch was appointed on July 1, 2010, as head of the Vatican’s ecumenical office, succeeding Cardinal Walter Kasper, who retired for reasons of age, he was already well known for his openness and deep ecumenical commitment. Now, his first six months of work in his new post have shown the wisdom of the Pope’s choice.

Benedict XVI has made a habit of choosing as Vatican officials men with experience of the Church outside of Rome, especially as diocesan bishops. Koch was bishop of Basel, Switzerland, when Benedict called him to Rome in mid-summer.

Immediately upon his arrival, Pope Benedict asked then-Archbishop Koch to give the main talks at the annual gathering of scholars who had done their doctoral research with him when he was a professor in Germany (the Ratzinger *Schuelerkreis*, or student circle). Koch gave two thoughtful lectures at the meeting at the end of August: “The Second Vatican Council: Between Tradition and Innovation,” and a second on the Council’s document on the liturgy and the liturgical reforms it launched.

Named a cardinal in the consistory of November 20, Koch’s chief task now is to try to improve relations with the Eastern Orthodox and with the various Protestant denominations, in view of eventual closer unity with Rome.

Koch was born in Emmenbrücke, Switzerland. He studied theology at the Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich and at the University of Lucerne, graduating in 1975 with a doctorate in theology. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1982 and ordained bishop of Basel by Pope John Paul II in 1995. He was named president of the Swiss Episcopal Conference in 2007 and held the post until 2010.

Pope Benedict has chosen a quiet, thoughtful, relatively young Swiss theologian to head the Holy See’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. (Born as the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity under Pope John XXIII in 1960, the dicastery was given its present name under Pope John Paul II in 1988 with the Apostolic Constitu-

Koch received international “notice” in 2004 when he replied firmly to a widely-publicized petition letter asking that John Paul II retire from the papacy. Swiss intellectuals and theologians, priests and lay people alike, joined in the call, praising John Paul’s papacy for “moving the world” but saying the pontiff should respect the retirement age of 75 set for bishops. The letter was intentionally released on May 14 that year to coincide with John Paul’s 84th birthday on May 18, and with his then-looming visit to Switzerland. Koch made headlines when he said the decision to publish the letter as the Pope celebrated his birthday was “disgusting and disloyal.”

Two years later, replying to Swiss opposition to the building of minarets in Switzerland, Koch came out in favor of minarets and appealed for tolerance toward the Muslim community. In an interview with the *NZZ am Sonntag* newspaper, Koch said he had nothing against Muslims building minarets in Switzerland, but at the same time he expected respect for the religious freedom of Christians throughout the Muslim world. “The bishop of Arabia, for example, is not allowed in certain countries to celebrate the Eucharist,” Koch said. On that occasion, the bishop of Basel said people are often afraid of things that they don’t know and underlined, “Islam is something quite different from the terrorist aberrations that exist.”

In his first official visit in 2010, Koch traveled to Istanbul to talk with the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and to celebrate the patronal feast of St. Andrew on November 30, an annual tradition since 1979.

Asked recently about a possible meeting between Pope Benedict XVI and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, Koch was diplomatic: “Such a meeting is not on the agenda,” he said. “Both the Holy Father and His Holiness wish this meeting to take place, but it should be thoroughly prepared.” So the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue continues.

In November, in Belarus, Koch participated in an international conference on the theme: “Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue: The Ethical Values of Christianity as a Contribution to Social Life in Europe.” The conference “served to underline the desire to continue dialogue, and to develop concrete collaboration in promoting and defending Christian values in Europe.”

In October in Assisi, during the 25th anniversary of the 1986 interreligious meeting that took place in the same place, Koch said: “Let us remember that there is no peace without justice; that there is no justice without forgiveness.” Koch is a man with the strength of spirit and gentleness of heart to help bring about better relations between Christians despite centuries of separation, and we wish him well in his difficult but essential task.

—Micaela Biferali





ARCHBISHOP PIETRO SAMBI

Pietro Sambì was a diplomat, a man of dialogue, a man of peace, and we would like to honor him among the “Top Ten” of 2011, and mourn his passing. He died on July 27 at the age of 73. All who knew him loved him.

When the archbishop died in July, he left behind a large gap in the Church’s diplomatic service, which he had served loyally for more than 40 years. But even more impressive was the impact he left upon people, regardless of their status in life.

Rare is the man who can treat each person like his friend, and who can talk to a shy layperson as easily as he can a powerful world leader. Pietro Sambì was such a man. In many ways, he was the kind of priest and diplomat the Church strives to produce: charitable to all, whatever their viewpoints, while deeply devoted to the Catholic faith himself.

Born in central Italy in 1938, ordained in 1964, he studied theology and canon law in Rome before joining the Holy See’s diplomatic service in 1969. After serving in Cameroon, Cuba and Algeria, he became the Pope’s representative in Nicaragua in 1979 — soon after the overthrow of the repressive government of Anastasio Somoza and the installation of the Marxist-tinged Sandinista regime. In that capacity, wrote the *New York Times*, “Ambassador Sambì was often cast as a mediator between the many Catholic priests who held prominent offices in the Sandinista government and the Catholic bishops of Nicaragua, who opposed the priests’ participation in the apparatus of a socialist state.”

After becoming an archbishop in 1985, he spent 12 years in Burundi and Indonesia. His final two assignments, in Israel and in the United States, would make him internationally famous.

Pope John Paul II appointed Sambì the Holy See’s chief representative in Israel and apostolic delegate to Jerusalem in 1998, just in time to arrange for John Paul’s historic 2000 visit to the Holy Land.

Though “diplomatic,” Sambì was also a man of great moral and spiritual force; he never failed to speak out against the evils of our age, particularly in the Middle East, where they run rampant.

At the same time, Sambì was a man of peace and made tireless efforts to resolve differences among communities in conflict. It was not just Christians who loved him; Jews and Muslims did as well. People of all faiths and political views trusted him and knew he would be fair whenever they sought him out.

Recognizing his considerable gifts, Pope Benedict XVI made him apostolic nuncio to the United States in 2005, one of Benedict’s very first appointments as Pope. Three years later, when Benedict made his April 2008 visit to the US, Sambì helped make that visit as

successful and inspiring as John Paul II’s journey to the Holy Land.

Upon hearing of the nuncio’s passing, Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York, the president of the US bishops’ conference, paid him this tribute: “Archbishop Sambì understood

and loved our nation. He traveled throughout the country, often to attend the ordination of bishops, always eager to meet the faithful and to share with them the affection that the Holy Father has for them and their country. He was open to the media as a conveyor of truth and welcomed journalists as representatives of the American people. He enjoyed everything from a stroll in the park near his residence in Washington to the diplomatic functions he attended as part of his service as the representative of the Holy See to the United States.

“Archbishop Sambì possessed both a keen sense of diplomacy cultivated through many years of service in the Vatican diplomatic corps, especially in Israel, and a pastoral sensitivity cultivated through his many years as a faithful and devoted priest. Those who met or listened to Archbishop Sambì understood that at the heart of all he did was this love of the priesthood and of Christ the Good Shepherd.”

If there was one issue that drove the good archbishop, it was his devotion to Catholic education. The son and brother of teachers, he understood how important education could be in shaping an individual’s life. His 2007 address to the National Catholic Education Association summed up his vision:

“A young man, 22 years old, once took a piece of marble and sculpted in it two of the deepest human sentiments: suffering accepted from the hand of God does not diminish the beauty of the human person but increases it, and — second sentiment — even in death, a son continues to have full confidence in his mother. This is the *Pietà* of Michelangelo, that you can see everytime you enter the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. Michelangelo, the author of the *Pietà*, is considered one of the greatest artists in the world.

“I don’t believe it! The greatest artists are the educators — are *you* — because you try to sculpt the best of yourselves, of who you are and what you know, not in a piece of marble, but in living, breathing human beings, who are the glory of God.”

For all he gave to the Church, let us remember and honor him.



Below, the sheik of Jerusalem, right, holds hands with Msgr. Pietro Sambì, papal nuncio to Israel, during a march for peace into Bethlehem (CNS photos)



—William Doyno