

MY FAVORITE PRIEST

Defending faith and life

By Lisa Contini

■ I owe my first encounters with Monsignor Vincent Foy to the combined efforts of the U.S. and Canadian Postal Services. In those first few letters to me, Monsignor Foy revealed that he was approaching his ninth decade of life and he complained of poor health. A couple of years later I finally met Monsignor Foy at the 2001 Call to Holiness Conference in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, where I was a speaker. I did not find the frail, elderly man I had envisioned; rather, I was delighted to meet a dynamic, astute, energetic and dignified gentleman. By then I had also come to know Monsignor Foy through some of his articles defending the Catholic Church's

prohibition of birth control and of classroom sex education. I already stood among countless other faithful who recognized him as a steadfast, tireless defender of faith, marriage, family, and human life.

Born in 1915 in Toronto, Ontario, Monsignor Foy answered God's first call to holiness by serving Mass and Benediction as a young boy. By age ten he knew for certain that he wanted to become a priest. He entered St. Augustine's Seminary in 1933 and was ordained in 1939. He had hoped to study Canon Law in Rome, but World War II caused him to forego his plans. Instead, he studied at Laval University in Quebec City, living in poverty for three years. Graduating with a doctorate in 1942, Monsignor Foy was assigned to the Toronto Regional Tribunal, where, after ten years, he was named the Director of Catechetics and Vice-Official of the Tribunal. In 1957 he became the head of the Archdiocesan and Provincial Marriage Tribunals where he helped countless married couples mend their crippled unions and continue together on the path for eternal life. He simultaneously filled the office of Director of Catechetics for the Archdiocese. In short, he was an extremely busy man.

You are invited to contribute to this series by sending in an account of a priest whom you admire. Articles should not exceed 800 words. The best of these will be printed. Send to "My Favorite Priest," c/o Homiletic & Pastoral Review, 70 Lake St., P.O. Box 297, Ramsey, N.J. 07446. If you have a good photo of the priest, please send that also. Enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope, if you wish to have your article returned . . . Mrs. Lisa Marie Contini has published articles in HPR and lives in Cadyville, N.Y. —Editor

In 1966 in the wake of Vatican II, Monsignor Foy became the pastor of St. John's Parish in Toronto, the same church where he was baptized! It was in 1968 during his tenure at this parish that Canadian bishops issued their infamous *Winnipeg Statement*, which incorrectly taught that married couples could use artificial contraception if so directed by conscience. Just two months later, with the motivation and alacrity that has earned for Monsignor Foy the admiration and love of the faithful Catholics in and out of Canada, he released his rebuttal of the *Winnipeg Statement* in a document entitled *A Commentary on the Canadian Bishops' Statement on Humanae Vitae*.

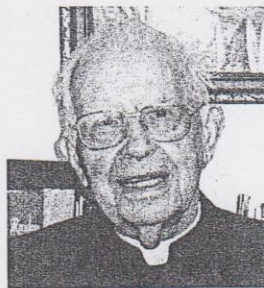
Since then, Monsignor Foy has continued to be an indomitable defender of *Humanae Vitae*, leaving a formidable "paper trail" behind him. As a writer myself, I can attest to the extremely high degree of organization and clarity in Monsignor Foy's manuscripts. With his untainted understanding of truth—or deceit—his writing delivers an unmistakable punch with no room for confusion or ambiguity. Monsignor Foy's writings illustrate that the contraceptive mentality gives birth to the Culture of Death: abortion, euthanasia, pornography, classroom sex education and homosexual "marriages" all of which lead to the death of the family, of society and of the church. I am very certain that Monsignor Foy's determination to teach the truth despite criticism has been a wellspring of courage for other fine priests to preach the truth as well.

I am especially impressed with Monsignor Foy's *Fifty Reasons Why the Winnipeg Statement Should Be Recalled* published in 2003 when he was 87 years old. It is an absolutely brilliant piece of literature. The "fifty reasons"—theological, philosophical, and just plain common sense reasons—are all sound, solid arguments. And only a true, clear-thinking scholar could think up so many. His *Fifty Reasons* strike me as particularly pertinent

here in the United States where many Catholic priests and lay people are also disobedient to *Humanae Vitae*. I know that with minimal editing the piece could be reworked and

retitled: "*Fifty Reasons Why Humanae Vitae Dissenters are Wrong*." A fitting reflection of his tireless service to the Church, the *Fifty Reasons* as well as other related works by Monsignor Foy were published in 2005 in a book entitled *Birth Control—Is Canada out of Step With Rome?* (Available from Life Ethics Information Center; 104 Bond Street, Suite 300; Toronto, Ontario M5B 1X9; Canada; (416) 204-9601; www.lifethics.com).

In June 2004 I joined bishops, priests, and laity, who gathered to celebrate Monsignor Foy's sixty-five years of priesthood. One after another they testified to Monsignor Foy's enormous contributions to Christ's flock and to how he had impacted each of their own lives in a special way. Hearing such a barrage of well-deserved praise and thanks just made me wish all the more that I had known him longer. ■



Monsignor Foy.

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