

The Domestic Church

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Catholicism in Scandinavia A Story Seldom Told

The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II has recently been instructing the Church on the principle of *subsidiarity* and its role in the global village, a reality of our time. Subsidiarity means that the "smaller social units - whether nations themselves, communities, ethnic or religious groups, families or individuals - must not be namelessly absorbed into a greater conglomeration, thus losing their identity and having their prerogatives usurped. Rather, the proper autonomy of each social class and organization, each in its own sphere, must be defended and upheld" (Pope's address at the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences, Feb.24, 2000). This helps explain why the Holy Father, in over twenty years of his pontificate has been such a champion of the diversity of human cultures, travelling the globe often to remember and to honor them. The Pope speaks of not depriving these cultures, many of them old "of what is most precious to them, including religious beliefs and practices..." (Ibid.).

The principle of subsidiarity offers a fitting backdrop for this issue of *The Domestic Church*, which will examine Catholicism in Scandinavia, largely as a historical phenomenon, historical because Catholicism is rarely embraced by Scandinavians here or abroad today. Although this is a very particular topic, it is hoped that our audience can appreciate it as one strand within the broad fabric of Christian history. It is a story seldom told.

It can be fascinating to see how the seed of our Catholic Faith, planted in different times and places has taken on the uniqueness of any locale, while raising up saints and leaders there. Christians everywhere can rejoice in hearing how Christ first came to the various peoples of the globe: to love them, to relate to them and to take shape in each culture in a personal way. The "Lord of History" has left His trace; today our work becomes that of discovery and appreciation of what may be our own little-known history or that of another people unfamiliar to us. This is a worthwhile endeavor in the global village, where most people and especially the young are less likely to know our roots, although it is no less important to us and to our cultural identity. It can also show us that non-Christian societies in times past had *much to gain* by the arrival of Christ; Christ offered something unique and liberating. This fact remains true today.

Besides all of this, the Scandinavian story should make for interesting reading: interesting that a Swedish woman of the 14th century, St. Bridget has recently been declared Co-Patroness of Europe, along with St. Catherine of Sienna and Blessed Edith Stein; interesting that the Order St. Bridget founded exists locally in the Brigittine Monastery of Our Lady of Consolation, Amity, Oregon; interesting that the Norwegian nobel-prize winner Sigrud Undset converted to Catholicism in the twentieth century while doing research for a novel on medieval Norway; interesting that Our Lord found his way into the hearts of a fierce group of Vikings, inspiring their conversion in 995 A.D. and changing their culture forever.

In the end, it is my prayer that all people comprising the various strands of Christian culture and history, traceable here and there throughout the last two thousand years will come together to recognize themselves in the unity of the one fabric that is the one Church Christ founded.

Ruth Andreas
Editor



Culture and History

Norway: The Catholic Years (995-1537 A.D.)

John Lundberg

John Lundberg is a retired army officer and a Norwegian American who recently discovered the extensive Catholic background of Norway. A portion of his history is printed here.

Introduction

Norway was a solidly Catholic country from 995 to 1537, a total of 542 years. This period is almost twice as long as America has been a country. The Catholic years began when Olaf Trygvasson came to the Norwegian throne in 995 as Olaf I.

Olaf I, Norway's First Catholic King

Olaf Trygvasson was born in Norway but brought up in Russia. He is the great grandson of Norway's third king. Olaf I's father was killed by treachery in the Oslo Fjord before Olaf was born. His mother had to go into hiding to bear her son. Olaf and his mother were then captured by slavers who killed his mother and sold Olaf, for a good sum into slavery in Russia. In Russia, young Olaf caught the eye of Prince Vladimir, who would later convert Viking-ruled Russia to Catholicism. Vladimir, not then Catholic liked Olaf and sponsored his education and upbringing.

Like other pagan Viking youth, Olaf was taught to be tough, belligerent, unafraid and skillful with weapons. He was told that it was honorable to die in combat because then you went directly to Valhalla to live with Odin, the chief of pagan Norse gods.

The Viking view of violence was very different from our view of violence today. In the Viking culture, innocent activities like swimming, wrestling and board games often resulted in death. Disagreements between two men were often solved by killing.

When he was 18, Olaf was a Viking pirate on the Baltic Sea, where he earned an excellent reputation for fearlessness. When he was in his early 20's, Olaf led a Viking force to

victory over King Ethelred of England. Three years later, he attempted to capture London but failed.

Olaf's Conversion to Catholicism

In 994, Olaf made peace with the English with whom he'd been fighting. He agreed never to attack them again. He also agreed to become a Roman Catholic. He was baptized and confirmed into the Catholic Faith by the English Bishop of Winchester.

Some conversions to Catholicism

Most people think the Vikings came to North America as savage barbarians with swords and horns on their helmets, that they worshipped pagan gods...This is wrong. - Thor Heyerdahl

by Viking chieftains were done for economic or political purposes. But Olaf's conversion was different. He was sincere when he said that he believed in Christ and would act on that belief. Norway would never have a more powerful missionary. Olaf I was energetic, persuasive and a charismatic speaker. Faith in the Christian God dominated Olaf's life after his baptism in England. He believed strongly that heathens were to be won for Jesus.

Olaf returned to Norway in 995, seized the throne from the pagan Earl Hakon and began a successful effort to convert Norway to the Catholic Faith. Accompanying Olaf I to Norway was Bishop Sigurd, a Northumbrian with a Scandinavian background, who aided immeasurably in the successful evangelization effort.

Olaf I led by example. His plan was to convert the Norwegian people, starting with the upper class and

leaders. He worked farm by farm, family by family. He would speak personally to assemblies, explaining why he wanted them to convert to Catholicism. After conversions took place, he then destroyed the temples of the pagan gods. Vik, a region near Oslo, and Trondheim were two key areas that converted early to Catholicism as a result of Olaf I's dedicated evangelization effort.

Olaf I founded the city of Trondheim, then called Nidaros.

Trondheim would become an important city in Norwegian history. It was the first capital of Norway, site of the headquarters controlling Olaf's evangelization efforts and the official seat and personal residence of the Archbishop of Norway. Trondheim was also where Catholic kings were crowned and buried.

Olaf I's rule ended in 1000 when he was killed in a naval battle between the kings of Denmark and Sweden, Danish nobles and the son of the deposed pagan Earl Hakon.

Colonizations of Iceland & Greenland

Norwegians began colonizing Iceland, located 800 miles west of Norway in the year 874. For decades, Iceland residents were considered Norwegian citizens. In 960, the Norwegian Thorvald Asvaldsson immigrated with his family to Iceland from Jaeren, Norway. His family included his 10-year-old son, Eric Asvaldsson, who would become known to history as Eric the Red--colonizer of Greenland and father of Leif Erickson, the first European to set foot on the North American continent.

After hearing of a report made 50 years earlier of small islands 500 miles west of Iceland, Eric the Red sailed west in the year 982 in search of the islands. He not only discovered them, but also the large island of Greenland.

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Norway, Ctd from page 2

Eric the Red spent 3 years exploring Greenland before returning to Iceland. In 986, Eric the Red, his family and about 450 other Norwegians moved permanently to Greenland. They established a home at Brattahild near what is now called Julianehab.

Leif Erickson's Childhood

Leif was raised in the harsh Arctic environment of Greenland with its spartan way of life. Nonetheless, as a young child Leif Erickson demonstrated exceptional leadership skills. One account described him as a "golden Viking...big, strapping, handsome, thoughtful, temperate and respected by everyone." Leif had two brothers and a sister. He became a good seaman as a young teenager, making voyages from Greenland to Scotland and Norway. These voyages required sailing 1800 miles on a straight latitude without any site of land!

Leif's Conversion

Leif sailed to Norway on business at the age of 17. When he arrived at Trondheim, Olaf I and Bishop Grimkell (first bishop) received him personally. They were aware of Leif's reputation and knew his father well. Olaf and Leif were very impressed with each other. Over the winter, Olaf I converted Leif to the Catholic Faith and gave him the task of returning to Greenland to convert the island to Catholicism. In the spring of the year 1000, Leif returned to Greenland taking with him an English priest and other "holy men" to baptize and teach the Faith to the residents there. One of Leif's first converts was his mother, Thjodhild. She in turn build the first Catholic church in Greenland. In 1961, the ruins of that church--called *Thjodhild's Church*--were discovered. The church was 36 x 12 feet with turf walls. It was surrounded by 16 graves.

Leif Erickson's Discovery of America

In the year 1002, Leif decided to follow up on a report made in 986 by Norwegian Bjarni Herjolfsson that there was land 500 miles to the west of Greenland. Then age 20 and with 34 companions, he set sail across the cold gray waves of the "cruel sea"

without a compass to establish a permanent settlement in the west. He carried with him the overwhelming burden of command. He was more than a thousand miles from Norway, beyond all human help. After a week's sailing, Leif spotted Canada's Baffin Island. Turning south, he sailed past the deceptive, fog-hidden entrance to Hudson Strait and down a 35-mile long beach between Hamilton Inlet and Sandwich Bay, which he called Wonder Strands. Had he gone through the Hudson Strait, he would have sailed to the center of the North American continent.

Two days south of Wonder Strands, Leif reached the tip of the great island of Newfoundland. He landed at a

Many are unaware of the role of the Catholic Church in converting Scandinavia to Christianity and ending the Viking era.

- John Lundberg

broad grassy meadow called L'Anse aux Meadows--the first European to set foot on the North American continent! He called the place *Vinland* after the Norse word *vinber*, which means berry and grape.

Leif's attempt to establish a permanent settlement failed. He returned to Greenland in the spring of 1003, and died in 1020. What role did Leif's new Catholic Faith play in this voyage of discovery? We will never know in this life. We do know that the Catholic Faith was a very important factor motivating Columbus when he crossed the Atlantic in 1492.

Olaf II, Norway's 2nd Catholic King

Olaf II enjoyed 12 years of uninterrupted rule. A former Viking, he converted to Catholicism in Rouen, France. Some of his accomplishments included: strictly enforcing the civil law, not tolerating bribery or threats; stopping the looting of ordinary Norwegians by small kings and petty chieftains; increasing the number of "freeborn farmers" through land

distribution changes; sending Catholic missions to every district in Norway; prohibiting the "public practice" of pagan rites and severely punishing chieftains who violated the prohibition; producing a civil code; producing a written code of church law and organizing the church around the code; placing the Norwegian churches under the Archbishop of Bremen, Germany; replacing local and tribal chieftains with royal appointees.

"Gothic Cathedrals in Wood"

Olaf II built hundreds of new Catholic churches in Norway. Among them were the first of the new *Stave churches*, called "Gothic cathedrals in wood". The Stave churches were architectural wonders. Some built in the 1100's are still in use today as Lutheran churches. Elements of their unique design were corner posts, vertical planks and construction on a sill or foundation of brick or stone, instead of on the ground. More than 1000 Stave churches were eventually built during the Catholic years in Norway. Sadly, only 29 remain today. Others were torn down or remodeled after Catholicism was banned in

Norway. Many Stave churches were consecrated to the Virgin Mary and had elaborate paintings of the Crucifixion, Last Supper and Apostles.

Death of Olaf II

Olaf died in 1030 in a sea battle near Trondheim with the Danish King Knut and disgruntled Norwegian nobles, who'd seen their numbers and influence diminish through Olaf II's evangelization efforts.

A year after his death, Olaf II's body was exhumed for observation. When the casket was opened, a sweet odor filled the air; his body clearly had not decayed. Olaf II's grave in Trondheim became, and continues to be a popular shrine and pilgrimage site. Olaf II was canonized in the year 1164. He is Norway's patron saint; his feast day is July 29th.

The Rest of the Catholic Yrs./Norway

The Catholic years in Norway after the death of Olaf II can be divided into two periods: 1) the period from 1028 to 1319, when Norway formed a loose union with Sweden, and 2) the period

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Spiritual Mother

The Life of St. Bridget of Sweden

by Ruth Andreas

Standing tall as a spire in the history of Scandinavia is a woman called St. Bridget of Sweden (1303 - 1373). Which of her many attributes should I list first? She was a wife and mother of eight, a model of charity to the poor and the founder of a monastic order: "the Bridgettine's". In her middle years, St. Bridget was a companion to the royal Swedish court, sent there to exert a positive influence on King Magnus and his queen. She helped bring about social reforms in Sweden that benefited the common man, reforms for which the Swedes still remember her today. She even prophesied to popes, and spent her latter years (following the death of her husband) in the city of Rome, ministering to the people there. Last but not least, St. Bridget was a mystic. She received revelations from our Lord and his Mother and she wrote prolific accounts of these.

St. Bridget would be considered by historians of any time and place to be a very remarkable woman! Yet sadly, few Scandinavian Americans today, who are rightly proud of their cultural heritage seem to know anything about her. How do I know? I myself am an American with Scandinavian roots running deep, both in my family geneology and in the part of the United States from which I originate, i.e. rural Minnesota. I never knew of St. Bridget, but I was understandably drawn, shortly after my conversion to this great Catholic saint who was a Scandinavian. It's true that in some very significant ways, St. Bridget's life was different from that of Scandinavians today, both here and abroad. And yet, such a great Christian woman should serve as an inspiration to all. Her story is too seldom told!

The life of St. Bridget, I believe holds an even broader relevance for Christianity, beyond these cultural

bounds. In the year 2000, Pope John Paul II declared St. Bridget of Sweden to be Co-Patroness of Europe. In this act, I believe the Pope is asking the Church to turn our eyes toward her, perhaps to discover anew something of her devotion to the Christian Faith. St. Bridget can also be a unifying figure for both a Europe and an America that have been split between Catholic and Protestant for centuries; this is because she lived in pre-Reformation times when western Christianity was one.

Finally, I believe St. Bridget's life is highly significant for the *domestic church*, because she not only lived the Sacrament of Matrimony and raised a large family; she also encouraged a lifestyle permeated with prayer and with charity, both in her home and later in the other places she was called to serve. For these reasons, my hope is that our non-Scandinavian readers will take interest in some highlights from her life story . . .

Bridget's world was pre-Reformation Scandinavia; she was born in 1303. Her family was of considerable means but, as we shall see St. Bridget was no materialist. Her parents were fervent Christians. One writer, Mr. Valparaiso tells us that the child "heard stories by the fireside of the martyrs who first brought the faith to Sweden." Further, Mass was said daily at a chapel on the family estate. The "three glorious spires" at the Cathedral of Upsala were within sight of her home, and the Franciscans and the Dominicans instructed the Swedish people there. (*St. Bridget of Sweden* by Valentine Paraiso, 1917. Distributed by The

Brigittine Monks of Amity, Oregon).

St. Bridget married a knight named Ulf of Ulfasa at the age of thirteen. It was a happy marriage, producing eight offspring over the years. We are told that Bridget did a good job managing the estate of her husband. They apparently had "immense wealth, broad domains, tenants, dependents and a circle of rich friends."

In the midst of this wealth, Bridget practiced her faith in an exemplary way: she "served twelve poor people at table" every day before sitting down to dine. (Valparaiso) A large share of the couple's possessions were kept "for Christ and his poor". They contributed to the building of churches, schools and hospitals.

Valparaiso writes: "Her tender heart reproached her when she saw her new bedding of wool and silk and fur. She thought of her Lord on the hard deathbed of the Cross, and made up her mind that whenever she could, she would sleep on the floor."

After approximately twenty-five years of marriage, Ulf and Bridget left Sweden for a pilgrimage to St. James of Compostela (Spain). The entire journey took nearly three years. It was a significant trip spiritually for the couple; they began the return trip resolved to live cloistered lives, their children having grown.

Interestingly, St. Bridget's father, a "devout and just man" (*Birgitta of Sweden, Life & Selected Revelations*: Edited by Margaret Tjader Harris. Paulist Press, 1990)

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Gifts from the Magisterium

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Part One, Section Two, Chapter Three, Article 9: "I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church" 820 - Toward Unity

"Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time." Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. This is why Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his Passion, and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us,...so that the world may know that you have sent me." (John 17:21; cf. Hebrews 7:25) The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit.

St Bridget, *Ctd from page 4*

had made the same pilgrimage, and many of his lineage had been Jerusalem pilgrims. "It is unheard of that men so magnificent and of such great wealth and glory from the ends of the world - namely the kingdom of Sweden-should undertake such a laborious journey--namely to see the places of St. James and of Jerusalem, where Jesus Christ became incarnate and suffered." (Tjader Harris, p.71)

Bridget's husband Ulf became seriously ill before the completion of their pilgrimage; he died some three years later at the abbey of Alvastra in Sweden. Thus began a new chapter

in St. Bridget's life, in which she received inspirations from heaven in much greater detail regarding the founding of a new monastic order, even down to a description of the clothing that the monks and nuns would wear. With her children grown and her estate dispersed, St. Bridget turned to what God wanted of her next.

Although the design of the Bridgettine Order was given to St. Bridget in revelation, she would not live to see its opening. Paradoxically, in the year 1349 as the Black Death was spreading through Europe, the Lord called first St. Bridget and then her daughter Catherine to Rome. St.

Bridget made a pilgrimage for the Jubilee year (1350) which turned into a 24-year-stay. In Rome, one can still visit her "Casa" where she served rich and poor alike.

Both St. Bridget and St. Catherine of Sienna had a role in God's plan of restoring the papacy to Rome from Avignon, France. St. Bridget prophesied in Rome directly to the Pope of God's desire that he stay.

Eventually St. Bridget made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (1372), as her grandfathers before her, and then she returned to Rome to die. Many cures were reported in Rome at the time of her death. She was later buried in Sweden. ■

Norway, *Ctd from page 3*

from 1319 until Norway was annexed to Denmark in 1537.

The first period saw years of independence and prosperity. During this period, Norway was recognized as an independent, sovereign country by its neighbors, particularly Denmark and Sweden. Norway's government structure was solidified, and trade with the Baltic countries flourished.

After the death of Olaf II, the Catholic church also flourished. Monks and nuns carried out very successful missions in Norway and its

island possessions. Tithing allowed the church to expand generously. By the year 1130, the Diocese of Oslo had 300 parishes and the Dioceses of Trondheim had 280 parishes. In 1153, a new Scandinavian archbishopric was created in Trondheim...

A variety of orders of women were active in Norway, to include the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians and Brigittines.

Few written details survive today of the pastoral efforts of the Norwegian church of this period, but the number of hospices, inns for pilgrims and

lazarettos (military hospitals) bear witness to Catholic charity and sacrifice.

Education was also emphasized.

End of the Catholic Yrs. in Norway

The Catholic years ended in Norway when Denmark's King Christian III 1) declared that Norway was no longer a sovereign country but a province of Denmark 2) forced the Lutheran religion on Norway by banning the practice of Catholicism and 3) confiscated goods and properties belonging to the Norwegian Catholic Church. ■

Philosophy for Beginners

Unrealistic Times

by Janne Haaland-Matlary

An extended excerpt from an article first published in *Crisis Magazine* in October of 2000; describes the appeal of Nobel Prize winner Sigrid Undset. Reprinted with permission.

Dr. Janne Haaland-Matlary, state secretary of foreign affairs for the Norwegian government representing the Christian-Democratic Party from 1997-2000, is professor of international affairs at Oslo University. Watch for her book on the "new feminism", co-authored with Helen Alvare in 2001.

In Norway, everyone is familiar with **Kristin Lavransdatter**, the trilogy that won Sigrid Undset a Nobel prize for literature in 1928. Kristin lives in medieval Norway but is nonetheless one of us. She is headstrong, passionate and impatient, and matures slowly through suffering and hardship. She fights with God until the end of her life -- her will against His will. She lives close to nature and life in full...

Kristin is womanhood. Her life as a woman and mother is depicted in the most realistic way. When I was pregnant with my first child, I suddenly recalled how Kristin understood that she was pregnant: One day in the wood, she felt a sudden movement like that of a fish in water, a faint stirring inside her. It is exactly like that. I remember sitting in the living room, about 20 weeks pregnant, but only knowing it theoretically. Then, all of a sudden, such a movement in my womb! The first sign of my child--I'll never forget that moment.

Undset's descriptions of Kristin's labor and childbirth are also true to life. The first birth almost kills her--the pain for hours, the fear of dying, the utter horror of the situation. After a day and a night, when she thinks she is dying, the child is finally born...Women recognize themselves in this description of a normal childbirth...It is painful unto death and it requires your utmost physical and psychological strength. A woman risks her life for another life; she partakes in creation. It is a most

profound experience in a woman's life.

Undset was a realist in every sense of the word. What she writes about human love, about childbirth, about our struggle with God, about the human condition, is *real*...In light of modern society's lack of realism, her refusal to accept anything but realism is precisely why her writings are so relevant today.

Undset and the Church

Like Undset, I converted to Catholicism from an agnostic background as an adult. Like her, I had a long intellectual journey to Christianity and the Church. She was an intellectual but never theoretical. She was learned but had only a limited formal education. Her father, Ingvald Undset was a professor of Norse history and taught her a lot as a child. She read the sagas avidly and possessed a clear talent for writing...

Today we seem to have lost knowledge of both God and human nature.

In one of her earliest novels, *Jenny*, Undset describes a journey to Rome. Jenny lives with friends from Norway, all painters. She falls in love, gets married and has children. But her husband disappoints her. He is not the man of her dreams. This theme recurs in Undset's writings, and is autobiographical. Undset longed for a real man in the sense of a courageous and virtuous man. Such men she found in the sagas, in European literature but not in her own life. She married, like Jenny a painter, Hans Svarstad but the marriage was a failure....

This search for true and noble love

is also the leitmotif for **Kristin Lavransdatter**. It is not surprising that her search finally led to Christianity. The search for true love has to be, finally, a supernatural search, although one may find human beings that are capable of such love. They are the men who have acquired the human virtues and perhaps also the supernatural ones. Kristin's father, Lavrans is such a man: strong and just--an attractive man because he has the depth and seriousness of a full life of faith....

Gradually, we may come to discover two things: that human suffering can be borne and can be a means to sanctity and that there is a path, well hidden to perfect love. This path is Christ and the mystery of divine love. Kristin ends her quest on a pilgrimage to Nidaros to atone for her sins. Her rebelliousness and strong will finally accept God's primacy, and she abandons herself to him. But it is the end of a long journey of resistance, so much like our own.

Catholicism in Norway

Undset was demanding. She did not compromise. She was tough on her surroundings--sarcastic, sharp-tongued and feared...She was feminine in the traditional sense, being an intellectual, but not an urbanite. She was steeped in the sagas and Norse literature and grounded her beliefs in the long historical period of Norwegian Catholicism. During her time, even in a country where women have always been strong and independent, it was not easy to be an intellectual woman...

At that time, converting to Catholicism was a brave act. She had come to realize, she said, that there was something objective outside of herself. That could only be God. And there was only one Church--the one that Christ Himself founded. In

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The Family Bulletin Board

Elsa Beskow, Ingri & Edgar D'Aulaire: Beloved authors bring culture & history to life for children.

Elsa Beskow's books were originally published in Swedish in 1927; now available in English from Floris Books. Delightfully illustrated, these picture books speak to the younger child's heart. A favorite title is *Around the Year*.

Leif the Lucky is just one of many books by the D'Aulaire's on the lives of famous persons that masterfully convey a sense of adventure to school age children. This one follows the life of Leif Erickson, son of Eric the Red who discovered North America.

Known for their Fudge...

The Brigittine Monks of Amity, Oregon comprise the first successful attempt to restore St. Bridget's rule for monks in recent times. Their founder, Duane Kirby began his work in 1976. In his words: "The Order emphasizes prayer and contemplation in the ancient tradition of withdrawing from the mainstream of society. We seek to place its ancient traditions into this era, conveying its attraction and needfulness to the culture of our times...We decided to reestablish the Brigittine Monks mainly because of what we had read about them - monastic life with a deep spirit of prayer, love of learning and a tradition of simplicity." (Taken from a short history by Ulla Sander Olsen)

Unrealistic Times, Ctd from page 6
newspaper articles, she attacked the state church and its theologians eloquently and ironically...

Catholics had long experienced tough times in Norway. During the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuits started a seminary in Braunsberg, near Gdansk to educate Nordic Jesuits, some of whom entered Sweden and Norway secretly. The law on dissenters in Norway and Sweden, which were in union at the time allowed for Catholicism, but prejudices existed. Jesuits were seen as especially dangerous, and in the Norwegian constitution, it said, "Jesuits must not be tolerated and cannot enter the realm." This paragraph was repealed only in 1956 and caused a major debate in Parliament. I am the first Catholic politician in the Christian-Democratic party of Norway, and the second Catholic in political office since the Reformation...

Undset never underestimated human nature, its rebelliousness and

its strength. A life lived to the fullest is a life where none of this is unknown but where one makes a choice and dares to fight a battle. But coupled with this realism based on natural human experience--people of flesh and blood--is Undset's intellectual approach to Catholicism. She was second to none in argument. The turning point for her, as it was for me, was the realization that God exists outside of us, independently of us and of what we think about Him.

Undset's Relevance Today

...Today we cannot even speak about human nature as a given. We live in a time that is extremely nihilistic, where atomistic individuals relate to no one but themselves. Undset discovered that God exists outside of herself, a discovery that moved her to submit to Him. Until this discovery she certainly had explored human nature profoundly. One can hardly discover God without knowing human nature. We find God through self-knowledge. He is not an abstract idea, but our Father.

MOVIE NIGHT

Two foreign films suitable for family viewing give a sense of Scandinavian culture in two different settings and time periods.

1) *The Littlest Viking*

This film is set in pre-Christian times and seems to offer a realistic look at Viking life. The story revolves around a boy, his family, and his decision to become a peacemaker in an age wrought with vengeance. For mature children. (Norway, 1989)

2) *The Children of Noisy Village*

This film is set in the agrarian society of Sweden about 100 years ago. It is gentle and light-hearted and focusses on village life from the children's point of view; based on a story by Astrid Lindgren, the author of *Pippi Longstocking*. (Sweden, 1996)

Today we seem to have lost knowledge of both God and human nature. The human being [today perceives himself to be] self-sufficient and even completely autonomous from others. We have no need of God, and the only aspect of life we do not control is death...Undset is relevant because she describes life as it really is. Her characters are men and women who live naturally. They are born, they work, they love, they struggle, they die. They seek meaning in life. They may find God. They are thoroughly normal people. The spiritual quest is part of a normal human life...

It is as if Undset wanted to imprint on us: Life is not what you think it is. You are but one link in a long chain of generations, and your most real experience is to give birth, to father children, to love another person, and most of all, to love God. Reality is to be tempted, to fight, to fail, to get up again. Natural life leads to supernatural life--and human life lived fully leads to the search for God. ■

St. Joseph's Center gets E-mail

We can now communicate by e-mail. For subscriptions or matters concerning issues of *The Domestic Church*, contact us at domesticchurch@msn.com. For any correspondence concerning retreats or fundraising contact us at saintjosephs@msn.com.

We plan to have a home page up and running by 2002, so stay tuned..

In grateful appreciation,

we would like to thank Pacific Seafood, Airport Drayage, Mark & Amy Mathews, Don Galarneau, and many others who help make our journal a reality.

Saint Joseph's Board Members:

President: Mark Andreas
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St. Joseph's Center Hosts Its 2nd Annual Retreat for Married Couples

Please join St. Joseph's Center at Our Lady of Peace Retreat House in Beaverton, Oregon for our 2nd annual retreat for married couples; November 9, 10 and 11, 2001!

Father Brian Mullady O.P. will be the retreat master and the theme will be "Growing in Prayer". The cost per couple for the weekend is \$199.00. The Archdiocese of Portland and Pacific Seafood have graciously provided us with grants to assist any couple needing financial assistance. *Your spiritual well being is most important to us, so please take advantage of this opportunity.*

Father Brian is an outstanding advocate of the family, and has taught extensively throughout the United States on marriage and family issues. He has appeared on EWTN and St. Joseph Radio, and has recorded a number of taped lectures on topics central to the Catholic Faith.

A Special Thanks to our sponsors for this year's retreat: The Archdiocese of Portland, Pacific Seafood, the Knights of Columbus, Sheridan Council and the Sisters at Our Lady of Peace Retreat House for their kindness, support and use of their facilities.

Mission Statement
Founded in January 1995, St. Joseph's Center for the Domestic Church is a Catholic apostolate dedicated to serving the family. Our mission is to help families recognize their role as the "domestic church," the Church at home, and to re-establish the home as a sacred refuge.

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