

Book review on series for young girls by Catholic television and radio personality Teresa Tomeo 'Modern and Modest' and 'Girls Rock!' guide today's girls

Best-selling author and syndicated Catholic talk show host with EWTN/Ave Maria Radio, Teresa Tomeo, teamed up with Molly Müller and Monica Cops, who put their heads and hearts together to come up with a breath of fresh air for today's young girls, in the form of a series of books called "All Things Girl". The following is a review of two of the books in the series by Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle, EWTN TV host and author of several Catholic books. Donna-Marie and Teresa participated in the International Congress for Women held at the Vatican in February 2008.

The series *All Things Girl*, published by Bezael Books, includes many titles, two of which are: *Modern and Modest* and *Girls Rock!*. The series speaks about the dignity at the heart of every girl created in the image and likeness of God and does it in a very fun and appealing way. The books are generous in size and filled with colorful and attractive designs to capture a young girl's attention.

Modern and Modest is a delightful and eye-catching 59 pages and is just the book we'd love to see in every young girl's hands. The authors cover every relevant subject for girls from being a Godly girl and turning away from the media's portrayal of culture's expectations and enticements and turn-

ing toward Jesus and the Church instead, to fashion and fabrics and what modesty really means, how to be modern and modest at the same time, as well as an overview of virtues and how they apply to living as a girl in our world today. Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body and Feminine Genius teachings are woven through in an uncomplicated understandable way. All topics discussed in *Modern and Modest* illustrate to girls that they can be very modern and cool yet pleasing to God in their modesty which is consistently explained in a simple yet contemporary manner.

In addition to suggesting ways to come up with a "family media plan" regarding computer use, TV and movie viewing, this book encourages girls to look up to parents in topics such as "Daddy's Little Girl" and "Look to Mom". Amusing personality quizzes are sprinkled throughout the book. As well, make up and fragrance discussions, goals to achieve, and prayers to be included in a plan for life are all blended together in a delightful mix which is just right for our young growing girls. A story about St Maria Goretti ends the book on a note to enhance it's message of purity and dignity.

Girls Rock! is another very charming page book for young girls by the same trio of women authors. Tastefully writ-

ten, *Girls Rock!* covers many pertinent topics of interest to today's young girls in 52 pretty pages. This book, like the other, weaves Church teachings with practical tips for everyday life, giving girls the tools to navigate life in the twenty first century. Subjects are discussed in a very appealing manner. Feminism is compared to femininity; there are brief biographies of some great women throughout history, as well as a selection of Catholic women today including Mother Angelica, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, and Dorothy Day.

Girls Rock! explains the various vocations available to women. Positive goals are discussed to help girls persevere each day amid the messages contrary to the faith from the media. Fun games and quizzes and crafts are sprinkled throughout the book. One suggested project idea is to make a time capsule. Another is to start a family tree.

Girls can learn how to examine their consciences by turning to page 45. Some questions for girls to ask themselves when examining their conscience are suggested, such as: "Am I lazy? Do I finish what I started? Am I a quitter? Do I give myself generously to others? Do I pray to God for light to see clearly my vocation? Do I use the traits of my personality to make a dif-

ference in my family, school and the parish?". Their virtues are also affirmed and the girls are encouraged to see the good things that they accomplished as pleasing to God.

Having a plan for prayer is impressed to the girls with explanations of the Morning Offering, Daily Prayers, The Rosary, and A Night Examination of Conscience. *Girls Rock!* ends with "A Girl Like Me", which is a biography of St Gianna Beretta Molla.

Modern and Modest and *Girls Rock!* could not have come at a better time for today's girls, who are bombarded by an onslaught of confusing messages from the culture and their peers. It's a good idea to get these books into the hands of all young girls when they are open and interested. The *All Things Girl* series places the building blocks of prayer and virtue all throughout the pages of these lovely books to aid our young girls during their formative and impressionable years. They teach them the importance of protecting their God-given natural beauty – their souls, as well as their bodies-temples of the Holy Spirit, while encouraging them to turn to God in all things. These books are sure to help ensure today's girls a promising and grace-filled tomorrow.

To learn more about the books, visit <http://www.bezaelbooks.com/>.

Fr Cantalamessa's first Advent meditation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

vation. After him, it consists in revealing to the world the hidden presence of Christ.

The Priest's task is no different, even if it is subordinate to what the Holy Father pointed out as the absolute priority of the Successor of Peter and of the whole Church in his Letter to Bishops of last March 10: "in our days, when in vast areas of the world the faith is in danger of dying out like a flame which no longer has fuel, the overriding priority is to make God present in this world and to show men and women the way to God... this is the supreme and fundamental priority of the Church and of the Successor of Peter at the present time".

"Servants of Jesus Christ!" must always be accompanied by another title, at least in the depths of one's heart: that of "friends!".

The common root of all ordained ministries is the choice Jesus made of the Twelve; it is part of the institution of the priesthood that dates back to the historical Jesus. It is true that the liturgy places the institution of the priesthood on Holy Thursday, because of the words Jesus spoke after the institution of the Eucharist: "Do this in memory of me". But these words also imply the choosing of the Twelve.

Then what did Jesus say in this circumstance? Why did he choose the Twelve, after spending the whole night in prayer? "And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach" (Mk 3:14-15). To be with Jesus and to go and preach: to be and to go, to receive and to give: this, in a few words, is the essence of the task of Christ's collaborators.

In his farewell addresses, Jesus takes a further step, completing the title of companions with that of friends: "No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends..." (Jn 15:15). There is something moving in Jesus' declaration of love.

A personal relationship, full of trust and friendship with the person of Jesus is the soul of every priesthood. With the Year for Priests in mind I reread Jean-Baptiste Chautard's book: *L'âme de tout apostolat [The Soul of the Apostolate]* that did so much good and jolted so many consciences in the years prior to the Council. At a time when there was great enthusiasm for "parish activities", the author brought the topic back sharply to the heart of the problem, criticizing the danger of an empty activism. "God, he wrote, wants Jesus to be the life of activities". He said that without a life of union with Christ pastoral activities were no more than "crutches". Jesus said to Peter: "Simon, do you love me? Feed my sheep" (cf. Jn 21:15 f.).

It is love for Jesus that makes the difference between the priest executive and manager and the priest servant of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God.

Dom Chautard's book was reacting to the danger of the so-called "Americanism". The Abbot often refers, in fact, to the letter of Leo XIII: *Testem Benevolentiae* which condemned this "heresy". Today this "heresy", if it can be so called, is no longer "American" but rather a threat that affects the clergy of the whole Church and is partly due to the shortage of priests: it is called "frenetic activism".

The first step in making Jesus the life and soul of one's priesthood, is to

go from Jesus as a "personage" – about whom one may speak but to whom no one would dream of speaking – to Jesus as a "person" – to whom one can speak. As long as Jesus remains an ensemble of opinions, dogmas or heresies, someone instinctively relegated to the past, a memory rather than a presence, he is a personage. It is vital to convince oneself that he is alive and present and that it is more important to talk to him than about him.

Just as in God the whole external work of creation flows from his intimate life, "from the ceaseless flow of his love", and all Christ's activity flows from his uninterrupted dialogue with the Father, so all a priest's actions must be an extension of his union with Christ.

When this contact is interrupted it is as though the electric current in a house has failed: everything stops and is in darkness. One sometimes hears the remark: how can one be calm and pray when so many needs are clamouring for our presence? How is it possible not to run when the house is on fire? But imagine what would happen to a fire brigade that rushed to put out a fire and on arrival realized that there was not a drop of water in their tanks. This is how we are when we hurry to preach, empty of prayer and of the Spirit.

I read somewhere a story that I consider applies perfectly to priests. One day an old professor was invited to speak to senior executives on the more efficient planning of time.

He decided to attempt an experiment. He took a large empty glass vase and a dozen stones the size of tennis balls that he carefully put into it, one by one until it was full. He then asked

his students: "Do you think the vase is full?" and they all answered "Yes!".

He then poured gravel over the large stones, moving the glass so that the gravel could sink to the bottom. "Is the vase full now?", he asked. More cautious, the students began to understand and answered: "Perhaps not yet". The old professor this time poured into the glass vase a small bag of sand, which filled all the spaces. Then he asked again: "Is the vase full now?". And they replied "No!". The old man then took a decanter from the table and filled the vase with water to the brim.

He then asked: "What great truth does this experiment show us?". The most daring replied: "it demonstrates that even when our agenda is completely full, with a bit of good will, we can always add some new engagement". "No", said the professor. "The experiment demonstrates is that if one does not put the large stones in the vase first, one will manage to put them in afterwards". "What are the large stones, the priorities, in our life? The important thing is to put them first on your agenda".

St Peter pointed out the large stones, once and for all: the absolute priority, of the Apostles and of their successors, Bishops and priests: "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

We priests are more exposed than anyone else to the danger of sacrificing what is important for what is urgent. Thus one ends by indefinitely postponing the important things.

For a priest, putting in the large stones first can mean beginning the day with time for prayer and dialogue with God so that his activities and different commitments do not end by taking up all the room.