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# America

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## 'We Have a Lot of Work to Do'

LUKE HANSEN INTERVIEWS CARDINAL MARX ON POPE FRANCIS,  
THE SYNOD AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

When I count back through my predecessors as editor in chief, I figure just over three-fourths of them were Irishmen by descent. This would explain why the editors were always great sympathizers with the cause of Irish independence. This year, as part of the build-up to the centenary of the Easter Rising in 2016, we will release a new book, *The Troubles in America: Perspectives on the Irish Question*, which will include commentary and extensive excerpts from **America's** archives. It makes fascinating reading in part because **America's** editors were no mere chroniclers of these events but active participants as well.

In the spring of 1919, Eamon de Valera, the New York-born Irish revolutionary and future president of the Irish Republic, set sail for the United States on a fundraising trip for the Irish cause. The British, who regarded Mr. de Valera as a terrorist, were intent on capturing him as a bandit, or at least blocking him from these shores, and they made several attempts to intercept his ship during the Atlantic crossing. Once they had failed in that merry chase, they made it clear to the U.S. government that they would regard any honor offered Mr. de Valera while he was traveling in the United States as an insult of no minor significance.

Now the editor in chief of **America** in those days was a Jesuit named Richard Tierney. Father Tierney had a cunning genius and was built like a Buick. He seemed destined to be either a Jesuit intellectual or a union boss. Luckily for us, Father Tierney chose the former. At the time of de Valera's visit, Father Tierney was already in some hot water with the U.S. government. During World War I, his anti-British rhetoric had led the U.S. government to put **America** on a list of journals suspected of seditious activity; and after the war had ended, when Woodrow Wilson

refused to endorse the cause of Irish independence, Father Tierney publicly accused him of violating his own stated principles of self-determination for all peoples. The editors never warmed to Mr. Wilson, especially since Wilson had expelled Eugene O'Neill from Princeton for the petty crimes of drunkenness and vandalism.

The point is that Father Tierney was not popular with the political classes; and when the secular press reported that Eamon de Valera was to be fêted by the Jesuits at the headquarters of **America** and a dinner was to be held in his honor there, there was something of a backlash. Was this such a good idea? The British didn't think so—and in fact the British government forbade distribution of **America** on Irish shores and confiscated every extant copy.

But Father Tierney and the other editors were wise men. Some might say they were downright Jesuitical. The British did not want the Jesuits to host de Valera for dinner? So Father Tierney did not offer de Valera dinner. He offered him a modest reception instead. One that took place in the dining room...with some very heavy hors d'oeuvres, served in multiple courses that were paired with wines. And there were Irish musicians playing rebel songs. And there were Irish republican signage and decorations everywhere. At the conclusion of the evening, all agreed that it was the most elegant and entertaining non-dinner an Irishman had ever enjoyed.

There's a lesson in all of this, captured well in some lines by Pádraig Pearse, one of the leaders of the Easter Rising. A determined people with a just and moral cause will almost inevitably triumph. "Beware of the Risen People, ... ye that have harried and held," Pearse wrote after the Rising. "Beware of the thing that is coming; beware of the risen people/ Who shall take what ye would not give."

**MATT MALONE, S.J.**

106 West 56th Street  
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Ph: 212-581-4640; Fax: 212-399-3596  
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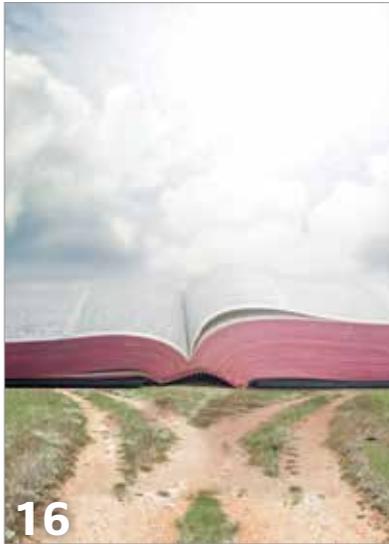
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Cover: Cardinal Reinhard Marx, head of the German Bishops' Conference, March 12, 2014. Reuters/Ina Fassbender

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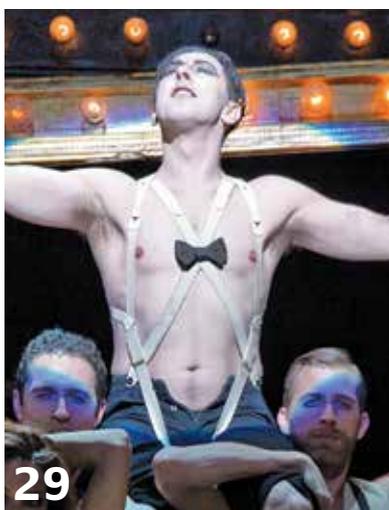
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Msgr. Paul V. Garrity takes questions on the **annulment process** and Brian B. Pinter leads a journey through the **Song of Songs**. Full digital highlights on page 38 and at [americamagazine.org/webfeatures](http://americamagazine.org/webfeatures).



### New Grecian Formula

Beware of Greeks bearing gripes. Since the nation's economic bailout was arranged in 2010, European central bankers, keen to dispense hard medicine to the continent's fiscal prodigals, have been ignoring the resentment of ordinary Greeks, who have now endured years of personal and national belt-tightening. The economy has contracted by a quarter and unemployment is now over 25 percent. The country's debt stands at an insurmountable 175 percent of G.D.P., higher than at the beginning of the crisis. In response, creditors in Europe, worried over Greek contagion, have pushed for even deeper cuts in government spending.

But average Greeks have had enough. They voted on Jan. 25 to put Alexis Tsipras and his Syriza Party in power on the promise that austerity would end, the debt burden would be lightened, and Greece would remain part of the European community. It is not clear how Mr. Tsipras can pull off that remarkable trifecta. Greece's German creditors are holding the line on any further reduction in debt, and Mr. Tsipras is cheerfully encouraging other populist uprisings against debt in Ireland and Spain. Cooler heads might hope to prevent either a disastrous Greek exit from the European Union or a widespread unilateral repudiation of debt that would undermine long-term bond markets.

Those insisting on a "fair" payout from Greece might consider what is fair to people who are watching their futures evaporate while the creators of the crisis book suites at Davos. Prime Minister Tsipras has reminded Europe's German overlords that a debt conference in 1953 set the stage for Germany's remarkable revival after the war. A similar conference to face up fairly to today's European debt emergency might prevent an outcome that all sides publicly declare they wish to avoid.

### The Promise of India

President Obama was in his element as he spoke forcefully to a crowd of mostly young Indians about the ideals that bind the world's oldest and largest democracies. Riding high after a successful round of discussions with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the president placed conditions on what he hopes will be a "defining partnership" of the 21st century. "India will succeed," he said, "so long as it is not splintered along the lines of religious faith" and "women and girls have all the opportunities they deserve."

Archbishop Albert D'Souza of Agra, secretary general of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, was heartened by Mr. Obama's tough-love message and said it "shows

that the world is taking seriously what is happening in the country." Prime Minister Modi is the first Hindu nationalist to lead the country, and while he ran on an economic and governance platform, his victory seems to have emboldened more militant Hindu groups. In December some of these nationalist groups conducted mass "reconversions" of Muslims and Christians. The Indian bishops have urged Mr. Modi to intervene to protect the nation's religious minorities.

Some observers were quick to accuse President Obama of hypocrisy in cutting short his time in India in order to pay his respects to the Saudi royal family on the death of King Abdullah. The U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia—at once our partner in the fight against the Islamic State and the chief financier of Islamic extremists—is built on contradictions, but the elevation of the new King Salman gives the president a chance to recast this difficult alliance on the same terms he spoke of so passionately in New Delhi.

### Richard McBrien, R.I.P.

The late Rev. Richard P. McBrien's outspoken manner won him a following among those devoted to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and critics among others, who saw his views—on issues ranging from women's ordination to the virgin birth—as erroneous or misleading.

Father McBrien taught at Boston College and served as president of the Catholic Theological Society of America. Beginning in 1966, he wrote a column for the diocesan press, although several dioceses eventually dropped it as too controversial. He described the liturgical practice of eucharistic adoration, for example, as a theological "step backward." In 1980 the president of the University of Notre Dame, Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., brought him to South Bend to strengthen the Catholic identity of the theology department. There, Brian E. Daley, S.J., told **America**, he was a "team player" and an "effective leader." Perhaps his greatest achievement was the 1,290-page, one-volume edition (1981) of *Catholicism*, which sold over 150,000 copies worldwide. The diocesan censor declared the book orthodox, and the local bishop recommended that readers study the book in its entirety so as to learn the difference between official teaching and theological speculation.

Martin E. Marty, a Lutheran scholar, called Father McBrien an "exemplar of the Christian life in action," and the Notre Dame historian R. Scott Appleby said that as a leader of the U.S. church's "moderate left wing," Father McBrien took on those "rolling back the council." Foes tried relentlessly to silence him. His reply was, "I don't hold things back." The church is richer for it.

# Among Schoolchildren

We expect a great deal from the nation's public primary education system. Though teachers are the frequent targets of some politicians—collateral damage in an undeclared war on public sector union membership—they accept each school day the challenge of preparing the next generation of Americans for productive and meaningful lives.

Mounting evidence suggests that their jobs are only getting more difficult. The Southern Education Foundation reported in January that children growing up in poverty now make up the majority in the nation's public schools. This conclusion is based on an analysis of statewide percentages of children eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, which is a somewhat imprecise measure because some schools try to avoid stigmatizing children by providing a free lunch for everyone. But the trend of growing poverty among U.S. schoolchildren has been clear for some time, and it is corroborated by other measures. The Children's Defense Fund reports that the United States has the second highest child poverty rate among 35 industrialized countries, "despite having the largest economy in the world."

Five years into the economy's uneven recovery, under- and unemployment rates remain high and wages stagnant. Too many of the nine million private-sector jobs created since the U.S. economy emerged from recession in 2009 are concentrated in low-skill and low-pay sectors. While some state and local minimum wage campaigns have scored victories, the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 has been unchanged since 2009, and its buying power has diminished to a 40-year low. When parents are not doing well, their children suffer beside them. Higher numbers of children are joining the free-lunch line, especially in Southern and Western states. In Mississippi and New Mexico, nearly three-quarters of public school students now qualify for food assistance.

America has long supported mechanisms that allow more children to tap into the special resource of this nation's Catholic schools, often incubators of opportunity in high-poverty communities, but it recognizes that addressing deficits in public schools, where most Catholic children now receive their primary education, remains an essential obligation of a vibrant and just society. Public schools have long since ceased to be places where children simply receive an education. As a consistent and dependable point of contact with children, they have become essential for assessing needs and distributing social services to children. Public schools deserve

to have the resources that will allow them to successfully perform this double duty.

Unfortunately a report in 2011 from the U.S. Department of Education documented spending disparities between affluent and high-poverty school districts; more than 40 percent of the latter were significantly underfunded. This is because of the property-tax funding structure for public education, and it often means that children who are already advantaged get additional enrichment opportunities, while peers in high-poverty districts strain for the basics. In a rational society that aims for fairness and opportunity, schools in low-income communities would not only achieve parity with wealthier districts; they would be better resourced. Their students have greater obstacles to overcome. A thorough overhaul of district funding systems is an essential component of school reform.

Fighting poverty has become the surprise theme of the approaching 2016 presidential campaign, and during his recent State of the Union address, President Obama positioned himself as a builder of a middle-class economy that will improve the standard of living for all. The focus on reducing poverty and shoring up the middle class is welcome, but unless systemic modifications can make it through Congress, it is all just talk. (Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, a proposal that enjoys bipartisan support, might be a good place to start.)

Growing child poverty should raise alarms among political leaders and public policymakers. It suggests that the nation as a whole did not prepare a previous generation, who are now raising their own children, for a modern workforce that increasingly requires quality education. However either party chooses to respond to middle-class decline in the United States, creating fairness and opportunity for all begins with improving public education.

Defending improvements in public education, advocates note the important role today's schoolchildren will eventually play as tomorrow's working and tax-paying adults. But children are more than just potential cogs in the machinery of the nation's workforce. They have the right to expect the adult world to look out for them and provide them the best start in life possible—not because we all will someday depend on them, but because it is our God-given duty to them, one that should be borne with love and hope, not shouldered with resentment or indifference.



## REPLY ALL

### No Simple Solutions

“The Feminist Case Against Abortion,” by Serrin M. Foster (1/19), is one of the more reasoned and thoughtful approaches to the thorny abortion issue that I have read. And it is a thorny issue. At times it seems that abortion opponents are on the opposite of all those who are concerned about the weak, the poor, those who do not share in our nation’s abundance. On the other side, persons who care about social justice, including women’s rights, are often assumed to support abortion. The red and blue divide, grossly oversimplified, runs deep here.

Having worked for a time with a pro-life group helping pregnant women to choose options other than abortion, I heard stories that broke my heart. I could never conclude that abortion was for them an easy way out. The group provided the types of support for mothers mentioned by Ms. Foster. What we did not do was condemn them for even considering abortion or add layers of guilt to what they already felt. Further, I do not think that simply making new laws prohibiting abortion will solve problems; they are likely to create other problems. We all have to dig much deeper into the context of our culture, which too often respects life only in speech.

LUCY FUCHS  
*Brandon, Fla.*

### An Accommodating Church

Re “Up The Mountain,” by John Anderson (1/19): In “Selma” we see images of priests and sisters in their full regalia, many coming from far-away places at great sacrifice, to support the civil rights struggle. But many today are unaware of the role the local Catholic Church played.

As the march progressed 80 miles from Selma to the city of Montgomery, no space could be found to accommodate all those brave souls. The city of

Montgomery would not allow its public spaces to be used. A delegation from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference approached the only Catholic church, the parish of St. Jude, with the space to provide a place of rest. With some trepidation, given the tensions in the state and the city, the pastor and archbishop gave permission for the parish property to be used as a free and secure place for the marchers. A rousing vigil concert was organized with stars like Harry Belafonte, Mahalia Jackson, Tony Bennett, Alan King, Leonard Bernstein and many others providing entertainment, encouragement and a needed respite before their final rendezvous at the state capital. The Catholic Church in the South was not always at the forefront in the civil rights struggle, unfortunately, but I believe the hospitality of the church can tell a different story.

As a young Irish priest serving his first assignment at St. Jude at that time, it was an eyeopening experience and a wonderful opportunity to witness part of U.S. history being made.

(REV.) EDWARD K. ROONEY  
*Fleming Island, Fla.*

### Overcoming Evil

Re: “Merton (Still) Matters,” by Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M. (1/19): I think one of the chief ways in which Merton can speak to millennials (or anyone else for that matter) involves his perspective on how to make sense of the evil and suffering that we see everywhere around us. In the face of events like Sandy Hook, the continuing devastation in Syria, the rampages of Boko Haram in Nigeria, etc., I believe that many people, the young in particular, throw their hands up in sorrow and conclude that we are alone in a dark and cruel universe. But Merton gives us a different view on suffering in *The Seven Storey Mountain*:

People seem to think that it is in some way a proof that no mer-

ciful God exists, if we have so many wars. On the contrary, consider how in spite of centuries of sin and greed and lust and cruelty and hatred and avarice and oppression and injustice, spawned and bred by the free wills of men, the human race can still recover, each time, and can still produce men and women who overcome evil with good, hatred with love, greed with charity, lust and cruelty with sanctity. How could all this be possible without the merciful love of God, pouring out His grace upon us?

CHRISTIAN McNAMARA  
*Online Comment*

### A Good Bargain

Re “Which Side Are We On?” by Clayton Sinyai (1/19): In Pittsburgh we see the old “do as I say, not as I do” routine that is trotted out every time employees at a Catholic institution want the church to follow church teaching. How can an institution like Duquesne University claim that the “religious identity” of the school would be compromised by collective bargaining and then turn around and not follow the very teachings they claim would be compromised?

I have been a theology teacher in a unionized Catholic high school for 41 years (and a union representative for much of that time) and have never felt a conflict between what I teach in the classroom and the work of the Association of Catholic Teachers, the bargaining agent representing over 600 high school teachers in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Holy Cross High school in the Diocese of Trenton. The archdiocese has not “bargained away core tenets” of the Catholic faith, and we have had a union for 47 years.

ROBERT ZINGLE  
*Online Comment*

### Worthy to Receive

Re “Communion Change?” (Signs of the Times, 1/19): Blessed be the good

**f STATUS UPDATE**

*In the wake of the terrorist attacks on a satirical magazine and Jewish market in Paris that left 17 dead, Pope Francis condemned all violence carried out in the name of religion but suggested there are limits to the freedom of expression, that one “cannot make fun” of other religions. Readers weigh in.*

One could argue that Christ was killed because he spoke insults against the tenets of a religion. While free speech is not a perfect solution, it is better than

what can happen in a society without it. So I will support all free speech—even the vile and hateful. I think the Charlie Hebdo cartoons are mostly disgusting and the authors morally challenged, but I will let God sort that out.

CHRISTOPHER BOETIG

Legally, we must allow free speech (within limits defined by the society—there is no such thing as complete free speech). Morally, and ethically, I believe it is wrong to mock

another’s religion. Spiritually, we need to examine our own beliefs. When outsiders mock our religion, sometimes it is a result of our own hypocrisy. (Sometimes it is just pure ridicule for ridicule’s sake.) Imagine if there were satirists during the time of the Pharisees. They would have had a field day. So we must allow this type of satirization. The pope is wrong on the legal level. On a personal level, I agree with him. Mockery is potent and will probably get you “punched” eventually.  
DAVANNA CIMINO

German bishops for their mercy on divorced Catholics in civil unions!

I recall my ordination and first Mass in 1962, when my dear sister Evelyn remained in the pew with her new husband at Communion time. She was denied an annulment, but despite her ill feelings toward the church, she raised her children Catholic. Years later I visited her in a nursing home, where she was suffering through the dreaded Alzheimer’s disease. When a priest attempted to give her Communion, she refused to receive it. I still wonder today if it was her disease or her sense of “unworthiness” that made her refuse to accept Communion. I shared her story with the priest, and together we blessed her.

(REV.) DAVID M. CAREY  
*Online Comment*

### Where Families Are

I read with great appreciation “Family in Focus” by the Rev. Robert P. Imbelli (12/8/14). Placing on sound ecclesial and theological ground the discussions now underway between the two meetings of the Synod on the Family is essential for the success of this process. I would like to add a further perspective, that of a lay theologian who served as an expert for our bishops at the first synod on the family (1980). It is this: Make the discussion and its eventual outcome concrete, real and com-

prehensible to the people who would most profit from the church’s renewed concern for marriage and family life, namely to the families in the pew and at home.

The discussion of this topic often feels more like it’s about the pastoral practices of the institutional church than about the daily life experienced in the domestic church. In his powerful but, sadly, often overlooked exhortation on the family, St. John Paul II wrote, “In and through the events, problems, difficulties and circumstances of everyday life, God comes to them

[families], revealing and presenting the concrete ‘demands’ of their sharing in the love of Christ for his church in the particular family, social and ecclesial situation in which they find themselves” (“Familiaris Consortio,” No. 51). In other words, be sure that the perspective, the context and the language employed communicate to ordinary lay Catholics, most of whose ecclesial and spiritual life happens at home.

DAVID M. THOMAS  
*Whitefish, Mt.*

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In the Footsteps of Ignatius Loyola & Francis Xavier

Featuring Loyola, Aranzazu, Xavier, Manresa, Montserrat & Barcelona

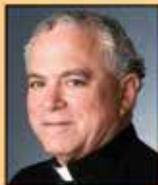
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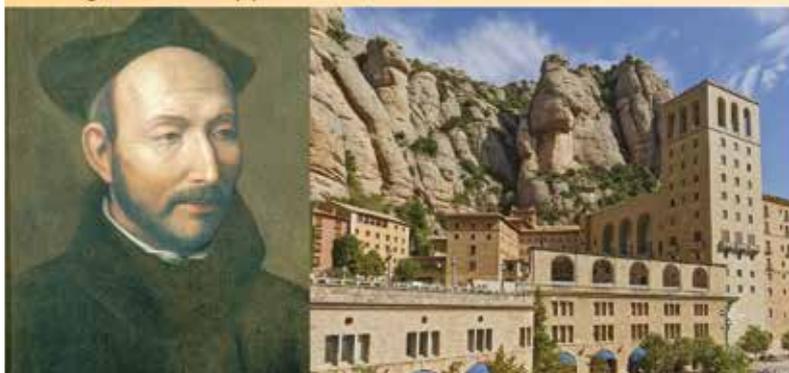


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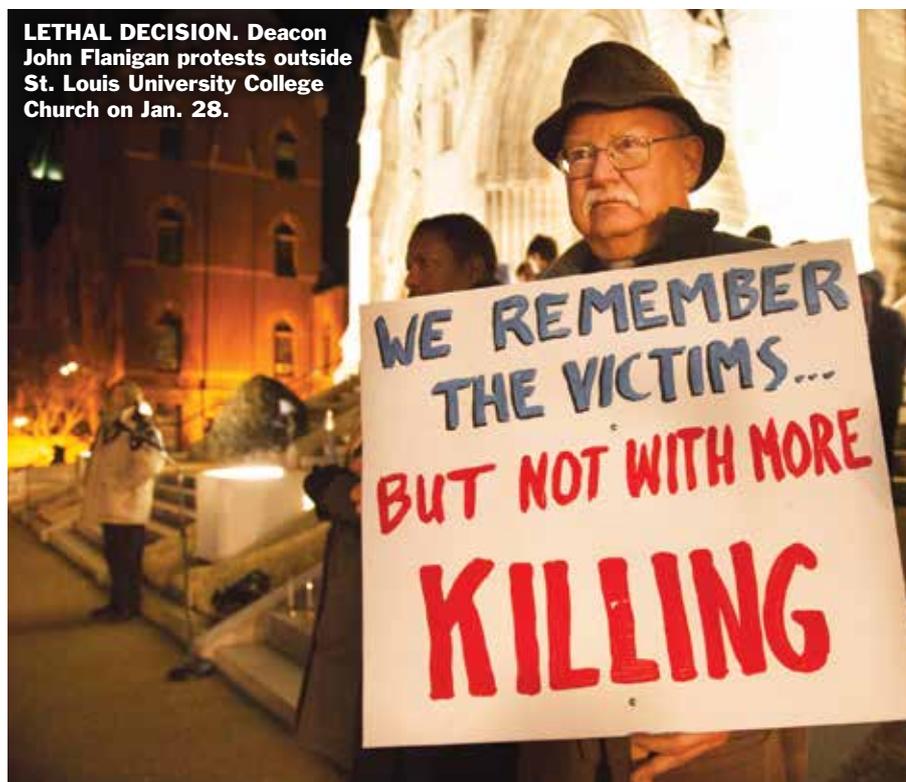


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# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

DEATH PENALTY

## Cruel and Unusual? Court to Decide on Lethal Injections



**LETHAL DECISION.** Deacon John Flanigan protests outside St. Louis University College Church on Jan. 28.

**W**hen the U.S. Supreme Court weighs in on the constitutionality of the executions by lethal injection in Oklahoma, its ruling will probably not be a tipping point toward the elimination of capital punishment in the United States, but some experts say it could be the beginning of the end of this practice.

Richard C. Dieter, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center based in Washington, said that much public discussion about lethal injections took place last year after the botched execution of Clayton Lockett in Oklahoma, who writhed in pain for 40 minutes before dying apparently of heart failure. The execution was “quite a shock” and “got a lot of attention,” which he said explains why the drugs used to execute Lockett deserve a review.

In April, the court will hear oral arguments in *Glossip v. Gross*, a case brought by four death-row inmates in Oklahoma. One of the plaintiffs, Charles Warner, was executed on Jan. 15 after the court rejected a stay by a 5-to-4 vote. The court announced on Jan. 23 it would take the case and five days later agreed to stay the upcoming executions of the other three inmates until it issues a decision.

The court’s decision to review the case was welcomed by representatives of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. In a statement Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, chair of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human

Development, called lethal injections a “cruel practice.” Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley, Chair of the Committee on Pro-life Activities, added, “We pray that the court’s review of these protocols will lead to the recognition that institutionalized practices of violence against any person erode reverence for the sanctity of every human life. Capital punishment must end.”

Currently the 32 states that have the death penalty use lethal injections. A shortage of drugs previously used in executions has caused states to try a variety of different drug combinations in lethal injections. Some, as shown by Lockett’s botched execution, do not work as intended.

If they are going to continue with that method, the executions cannot take a significant period of time, said Mary Margaret Penrose, professor of constitutional law at Texas A&M’s University School of Law. “The court is saying, let’s at least pause and get more information,” she said, adding that she doesn’t think the court would “overturn the death penalty as a method of punishment,” but the justices might determine that until better medication is available, states should “use another method.”

According to a Gallup poll last fall, a majority of Americans still support capital punishment, but some feel the tide is slowly turning. Karen Clifton, executive director of the Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty, said Catholics are becoming more galvanized in their views against capital punishment. She said the botched death by lethal injection is a “stark reminder” that capital punishment is an affront to the dignity of human life.

Last October, Pope Francis called on Christians and all people of good will “to fight...for the abolition of the

death penalty...in all its forms” out of respect for human dignity. The U.S. bishops have been campaigning against the death penalty for more than 40 years.

Clifton said that in recent years more Catholics have been against

the death penalty because they have recognized it as a pro-life issue. “We are executing the marginalized in our society,” she said, noting that the Scriptures are full of references to how “we will be judged by how we treat the least among us.”

ence of the suffragan bishops of that ecclesiastical province.

The emeritus archbishop of San Francisco, John Quinn, has written insightfully on synodality in his book, *Ever Ancient, Ever New: Structures of Communion in the Church* (Paulist Press, 2013). Commenting on the pope’s gesture, he said, “The decision of Pope Francis that the pallium should be conferred on metropolitan archbishops in their own diocese brings to mind St. Cyprian who, in the third century, said, ‘The bishop is in the Church and the Church is in the bishop.’

“The new papal arrangement serves to emphasize that the giving of the pallium is an ecclesial event, an event of the whole diocese, and not merely a juridical or ceremonial event. ‘The bishop is in the Church.’”

He recalled that the pallium “is the most ancient symbol of the bishop’s office going back as far as the fourth century. It predates the miter and the crosier as episcopal symbols.”

Archbishop Quinn said the pope has introduced this new policy “to underline synodality in the church,” and he recalled that on June 29, 2013, Pope Francis stated clearly that “synodality is the path of the Catholic Church.” In this light, he said, the pontiff’s decision “becomes a reminder to the Archbishop, to his own diocese and to the bishops and dioceses of his Metropolitan Province that they are being called to open new paths to a true synodality of participation and communion in their churches.”

**GERARD O’CONNELL**

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

## VATICAN

### Pope Francis Sends Pallium Home

Pope Francis has decided that the public ceremony of investiture of metropolitan archbishops with the pallium will henceforth take place in the prelates’ home dioceses, not in the Vatican as has been the case under recent pontiffs.

He believes that in this way the ceremony “will greatly favor the participation of the local church in an important moment of its life and history.” Msgr. Guido Marini, the master of ceremonies of papal liturgies, gave the news in a letter on Jan. 12 to nuncios in countries where there are metropolitan archbishops who were expected to receive the pallium from the pope at the Vatican on June 29, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul.

According to Monsignor Marini, Pope Francis believes that this new custom can serve to advance “that journey of synodality in the Catholic Church which, from the beginning of his pontificate, he has constantly emphasized as particularly urgent and precious at this time in the history of the church.”

The pallium is a liturgical vestment that symbolizes “the bonds of hierarchical communion between the See of Peter and the Successor of the Apostle and those who are chosen to carry out the episcopal ministry as Metropolitan

Archbishop of an Ecclesiastical Province,” Monsignor Marini wrote. It is also a symbol of the metropolitan archbishop’s jurisdiction in his own diocese and in the other dioceses of his ecclesiastical province.

In keeping with the new policy,



**THE CHURCH IS IN THE BISHOP. Pope Francis presents a pallium in St. Peter’s Basilica last June to Archbishop Leonard P. Blair of Hartford, Conn.**

the new archbishop of Chicago, Blase Cupich, who is the only metropolitan archbishop appointed by Pope Francis in the United States, will concelebrate Mass with the pope in the Vatican on June 29, together with some 40 other metropolitan archbishops from all continents. At the end of Mass, he will receive the pallium from the hands of the pontiff “in a private manner.” Some time afterward, the papal nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, will invest him with the pallium at a public ceremony in the Archdiocese of Chicago, in the pres-

## Challenges for Women In Church and Society

Violence against women, cultural pressures regarding women's physical appearance, attitudes that subjugate women or that ignore male-female differences and the growing alienation of women from the church in some parts of the world are themes the Pontifical Council for Culture is set to explore during its plenary assembly on Feb. 4 to 7 at the Vatican. The assembly's statement, "Women's Cultures: Equality and Difference," looked at the continuing quest to find balance in promoting women's equality while valuing the differences between women and men; the concrete and symbolic aspects of women's potential for motherhood; cultural attitudes toward women's bodies; and women and religion, including questions about their participation in church decision-making. In the section on women and the church, the document described "multifaceted discomfort" with images of women that are no longer relevant and with a Christian community that seems to value their input even less than the world of business and commerce does. Many women, it said, "have reached places of prestige within society and the workplace but have no corresponding decisional role nor responsibility within ecclesial communities."

## Jesuit Community College

The world's first Jesuit community college—Arrupe College of Loyola University Chicago—is scheduled to open at the university's Water Tower Campus on Aug. 17. The college, named for the late Pedro Arrupe, S.J., a former Jesuit superior general, aims to provide prospective students with the same liberal arts core curriculum

## NEWS BRIEFS

The cause for the beatification of **Chiara Lubich**, founder of the international Focolare Movement, was opened on Jan. 27 in a celebration in the Cathedral of Frascati, near Rome. ♦ Shower facilities for **homeless people in Rome** will open in St. Peter's Square on Feb. 15, but the service will now also include shaves and haircuts after a group of local barbers and hairdressers volunteered their talents. ♦ The bishops of Niger suspended "until further notice" all activities of the Catholic Church on Jan. 22 after the **looting of church facilities** and the desecration of places of worship following protests against the renewed publication of the French weekly *Charlie Hebdo*. ♦ During his Sunday Angelus address on Feb. 1, Pope Francis announced that he will visit the **Bosnian capital of Sarajevo** on June 6. ♦ A \$1.75 million dollar grant from the **Charles Koch Foundation** is part of a \$3 million pledge to Catholic University of America announced in January that also includes \$500,000 from the Busch Family Foundation and \$250,000 each from three business leaders. ♦ The African Union voted on Jan. 31 to back plans for a West African military task force to **fight Boko Haram militants**, "prevent [their] expansion" and "eliminate their presence" in Nigeria and neighboring countries.



Chiara Lubich

classes offered at the university, but at a more affordable cost. Stephen Katsouros, S.J., the new college's dean and executive director, told *The Loyola Phoenix*, the university newspaper, "The Jesuits and our colleagues do not want our colleges and universities to become elite. [If we do so] we are leaving such great and college-deserving students behind." Arrupe College is part of Loyola's commitment to President Obama's efforts to increase college opportunity by making it more affordable for students. Arrupe College has committed to helping 2,275 students earn associate's degrees by 2025. In order to do so, it must admit around 200 students each year.

## C.H.A. Urges Protection Of Health Care Reform

If the U.S. Supreme Court strikes down federal subsidies that have helped

millions of people obtain health care coverage under the Affordable Care Act, it will be "an incredible cruelty," said Carol Keehan, D.C., the president and chief executive officer of the Catholic Health Association. "This act has put 20 million people in a position to have health insurance," she said on Jan. 28 in a videotaped message released at a news conference on Capitol Hill. "It's not the whole job, but it's an incredible step forward. And in each of those 20 million people for their families it is utterly life-changing." The C.H.A. filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the case of *King v. Burwell*. The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in the case in March, with a decision expected in June. Plaintiffs argue that the A.C.A. allows federal subsidies only in those states that run their own health insurance exchanges, or marketplaces, and that they cannot be used in the 37 states that rely on the federal insurance exchange.

DISPATCH | JOHANNESBURG

## A Farewell to Race?

Isn't it time the countries of our world abolished the scientifically absurd notion of race from our public lexicon? Or am I being hopelessly utopian? I recently read a provocative book, *Declassified: Moving Beyond the Dead End of Race in South Africa*, by the retired Durban sociologist Gerhard Maré (Johannesburg: Jacana Press 2014), which argues precisely that while it is utopian to make such a claim, it is essential that we do just that.

Maré and I are not trying to deny the reality of racism—prejudice against a community on the grounds of skin color—whether on a personal level or in many cases as part of social policy. Even in countries where institutionalized racism has been legally abolished, racism persists. We need to ask why and uncover answers that do not simplify the problem by arguing that since races exist, “racism” is the cause of social inequities. While challenging the idea of race itself as a social construct, not a biological reality, Maré points out that many countries delimit citizens according to race without any sinister motive, what he calls “racialism.” By extension, since such definition is based on race—an unscientific absurdity—even benign racialism is also nonsense.

Did I just say “nonsense”? I did. Let me explain.

Research into DNA and the human genome shows no genetic differences between “races.” Skin color is a long evolutionary accident of geography,

notably humans' exposure to different climates over thousands of years. Similarly the notion of culture—often a nebulous euphemism for race—is another category that on closer examination is a conceptual leaky bucket, unless one rejects a crudely essentialist and fixed notion of “cultural heritage.” Living cultural traditions adapt, drawing on other traditions if they are to

A more equal society  
is a less violent, less  
insecure society.

survive and thrive. Most people today embrace a variety of values coming from many different cultural sources.

Yet despite all this, societies still embrace racialism, whether by innocuous definitions of race or through racially defined affirmative action programs for “racially disadvantaged people.” By using scientifically dubious categories, the former obfuscate what it means to be truly human. The latter, while rightly addressing the just demand for redressing historical disadvantage, miss the underlying cause of disadvantage, argues Maré: social class.

Members of the middle class or the elite have more in common with each other than with working class or poor of their own skin colors. They live in the same suburbs or gated communities, go to the same schools and universities, enjoy the same high quality private health care and drive the same cars. At least this is what I see in South Africa.

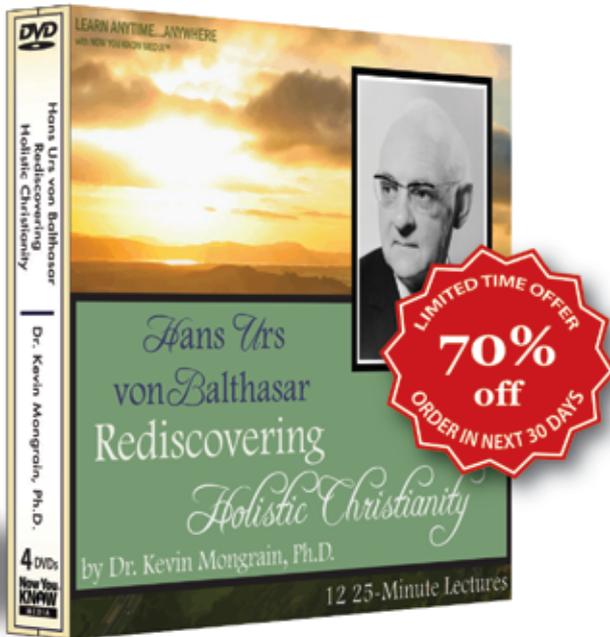
At the other extreme, the beggars one sees at street lights in Johannesburg share the same challenges: poverty, unemployment, desperation. The majority of the middle class are still white-skinned, and most of the street poor are black. That's the persistent legacy of apartheid, the grounds for our affirmative action policies. But unfortunately these policies, if intended to promote greater equality, have failed. What they have done is create an expanded nonracial middle class at the expense of a nonracial underclass of poor people.

A utopian view, beyond racialized discourse, challenges this system radically by promoting a non-racial vision of equality and redress. Drawing on John Rawls and Catholic social thought from Pope Leo XIII to Pope Francis (indeed, even—dare I say it?—Karl Marx), a truly utopian vision would develop policies in health, housing and education that would give to the poor opportunities to improve themselves, to acquire skills to pull themselves out of poverty into the middle class. This is in everyone's interest: a more equal society is a less violent, less insecure society. It is also a society that echoes the utopian dream of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

Dr. King's vision of a nonracial United States inspired many South African activists in the late 1960s and 1970s. Our own home-grown utopians, like Steve Biko and Rick Turner, said similar things. Gerhard Maré, who knew both of them, is saying, in his way, the same thing. Perhaps it's time we gave utopian thinking a chance.

ANTHONY EGAN

ANTHONY EGAN, S.J., a member of the Jesuit Institute South Africa, is one of *America's* Johannesburg, South Africa, correspondents.



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# A Sermon on the Hill

The most predictable Washington ritual is the president's State of the Union address. This civic liturgy includes an entrance procession of the Senate, Cabinet and Supreme Court followed by the president, who declares the union "strong" and offers his policies to make it stronger. Members of the president's party repeatedly stand and applaud and the other party offers disapproving silence from their seats. The ritualistic political theater includes the presence of symbolic citizens chosen for their moving stories, which reinforce poll-tested messages.

The next time Vice President Biden and Speaker Boehner preside together, the occasion won't be so predictable. John Boehner and Nancy Pelosi, very different Catholics, have invited Pope Francis to address Congress in September. Only five decades ago, some American leaders declared a Catholic should not become president because he would take orders from the pope. Now Jorge Bergoglio of Argentina has been invited to offer guidance to American legislators because of his leadership as Pope Francis.

The papal visit is generating much excitement, but are our leaders ready for Francis' challenges to political, economic and ecclesial business as usual? A Congressional resolution of invitation reportedly faltered, with some Republicans wary of Pope Francis' indictments of an "economy of exclusion," "trickle-down economics" and anti-immigrant policies. Some Democrats might be worried about Pope Francis' criticism of a "throw-away culture" that

threatens unborn children and others. He has said, "It is not 'progressive' to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life." Francis' defense of families takes on both economic and moral pressures on family life, making ideologues on both left and right uncomfortable.

When this modern "Francis" insists authentic power requires humble service, he is challenging the culture of Washington. When he calls nations to place the poor and vulnerable first, pursue peace and care for God's creation, the pope is offering stark alternatives to the priorities of Congress. Francis has said politics is "a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good.... I ask God to give us more politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue." This call for dialogue focused on the common good challenges the partisan gamesmanship and special interest power that dominate Washington.

But it doesn't need to be this way, especially on poverty and opportunity. President Obama seems liberated, not demoralized, by the loss of a Democratic Senate. His "middle class economics" would help lift up the poor, though he doesn't say the word *poverty*. Surprisingly, Mitt Romney (of "47 percent" fame) is talking about poverty; and Republicans like Paul Ryan of Wisconsin and Marco Rubio of Florida and Democrats like Chris Van Hollen of Maryland and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts are offering interesting policy responses. There are quiet conversations among thinkers and researchers from left and right looking for

common ground. Catholic, evangelical and other leaders are coming together to make overcoming poverty a moral imperative and national priority, taking on the ideological divisions between a narrow focus on family factors and an exclusive emphasis on economic factors. These false choices are bad policy, bad politics and bad for poor people.

There are crucial tests to come. Republican reformers cannot justify or go along with food stamp and Medicaid cuts that undermine the safety net and hurt the poor. Democratic leaders need to address clearly how family structures and strengths affect the lives of poor children. Work is at the center of Pope Francis' dignity agenda, but jobs are often neglected in this developing discussion.

A decent job with a decent wage and benefits is the centerpiece of any real opportunity strategy. Catholic social teaching insists that those who can work should do so, but they need work and wages that can support a family, not offer another form of poverty. Justice requires that those who cannot work should be able to live in dignity and be treated with compassion.

If Pope Francis comes before Congress in September, he is likely to say once again, "The greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty." I hope all our leaders stand, applaud and say that's one thing we can work on together.

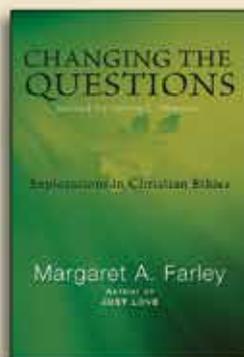
Are our  
leaders  
ready for  
Francis'  
challenges  
to business  
as usual?

JOHN CARR

JOHN CARR is director of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

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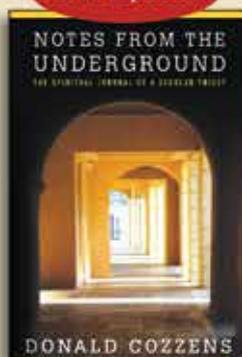
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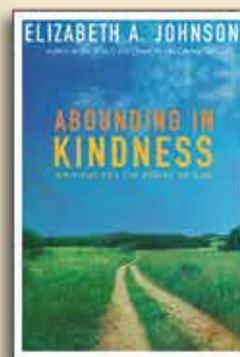
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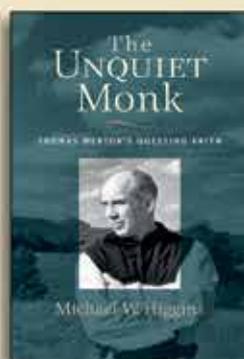
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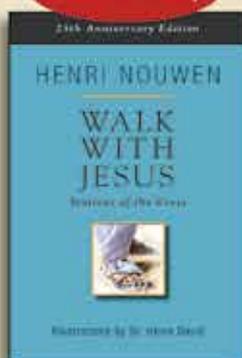
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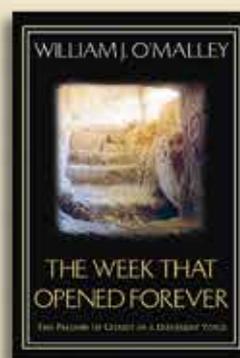
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# The Annulment Dilemma

Revisiting a complicated process

BY PAUL V. GARRITY

**N**o clear guidance emerged from last fall's Synod of Bishops on the Family for divorced and remarried Catholics who wish to receive holy Communion. Cardinal Sean O'Malley, O.F.M.Cap., among others, has suggested that streamlining the annulment process may be the best way to provide relief for couples whose second marriages are considered invalid by the Catholic Church because of a prior valid marriage that has not been annulled. While this may be appropriate in some cases, even a streamlined process will not address the real pastoral questions that the annulment process raises.

Over the course of 40 years as a priest, I have helped many couples pursue an annulment in order to be free to validate their current marriage in the eyes of the church. I usually begin by explaining in simple terms the reason why their current marriage is considered invalid by church standards. This is a very hard nut to swallow for two people who have pledged their love and fidelity to one another and who have been enjoying the fruits of their relationship for more than a few years. Though insulted by this judgment, many couples still decide to forge onward with faith and humility.

In explaining what an annulment is, I often hold up a pen with its point retracted. The assumption is that the pen contains a cartridge and is suitable for writing. If I take the cartridge out of the pen, it still looks the same as before. It is not until I try to write with the pen that I discover there is no ink. While the pen looks like any other writing instrument, it is not until I look inside and discover that something essential is missing that I understand why it will not write.

All marriages look alike from the outside. When a marriage ends in divorce, the annulment process tries to look inside the marriage to see what may have been missing from the very beginning. When an essential element is determined to have been absent, a declaration of nullity is made by the church (i.e., it declares that the marriage was invalid, that it was not, in fact, a marriage.) In so-called "shotgun" weddings, annulments are relatively easy because a pregnancy and a desire to do the "right thing" are seen as factors that limit the freedom of both parties.

While this may seem to be a simple case, the process for achieving a declaration of nullity is not simple at all. Initially

it requires the petitioner, the person seeking the annulment, to write an autobiographical essay, beginning with childhood and continuing through adolescence, assessing his or her relationship with parents, the history of dating, sexual activity, courtship, proposal, marriage and significant events in the marriage. This is the first obstacle, and for many people, it is an insurmountable one. In my experience, only one in five petitioners makes it past this first step. For college-educated individuals who have written major reports or term papers, the idea of a 10- or 15-page essay is not intimidating at all. But for countless others who have never written more than a one page letter, this autobiographical essay is a mountain too high to climb. I have set aside upwards of 50 applications for annulments that never made it past this initial obstacle despite numerous encouraging conversations.

The annulment process also stalls at this juncture because it is simply very difficult and painful to relive the events and emotions of a marriage that has failed. For some, this process can become very cathartic and healing, but for many others the wounds of a failed marriage are too painful to touch. Try as they may, reliving the past through an autobiography that others are going to read is humiliating for many divorced people.

## Pastoral Challenges

For those who are contemplating a second marriage, the challenges posed by the annulment process are equally daunting. It takes time for a divorced person to regain his or her self-confidence and composure once the divorce is final. When true love finally comes along and marriage is the next step, it is very disheartening to learn that it is impossible even to set a date for a church wedding until an annulment has been granted. Given the fact that weddings are often planned a year in advance and that the annulment process may take 18 months, two and a half years seems like an awfully long time to wait. Throw in the biological clock, and the wait becomes even worse.

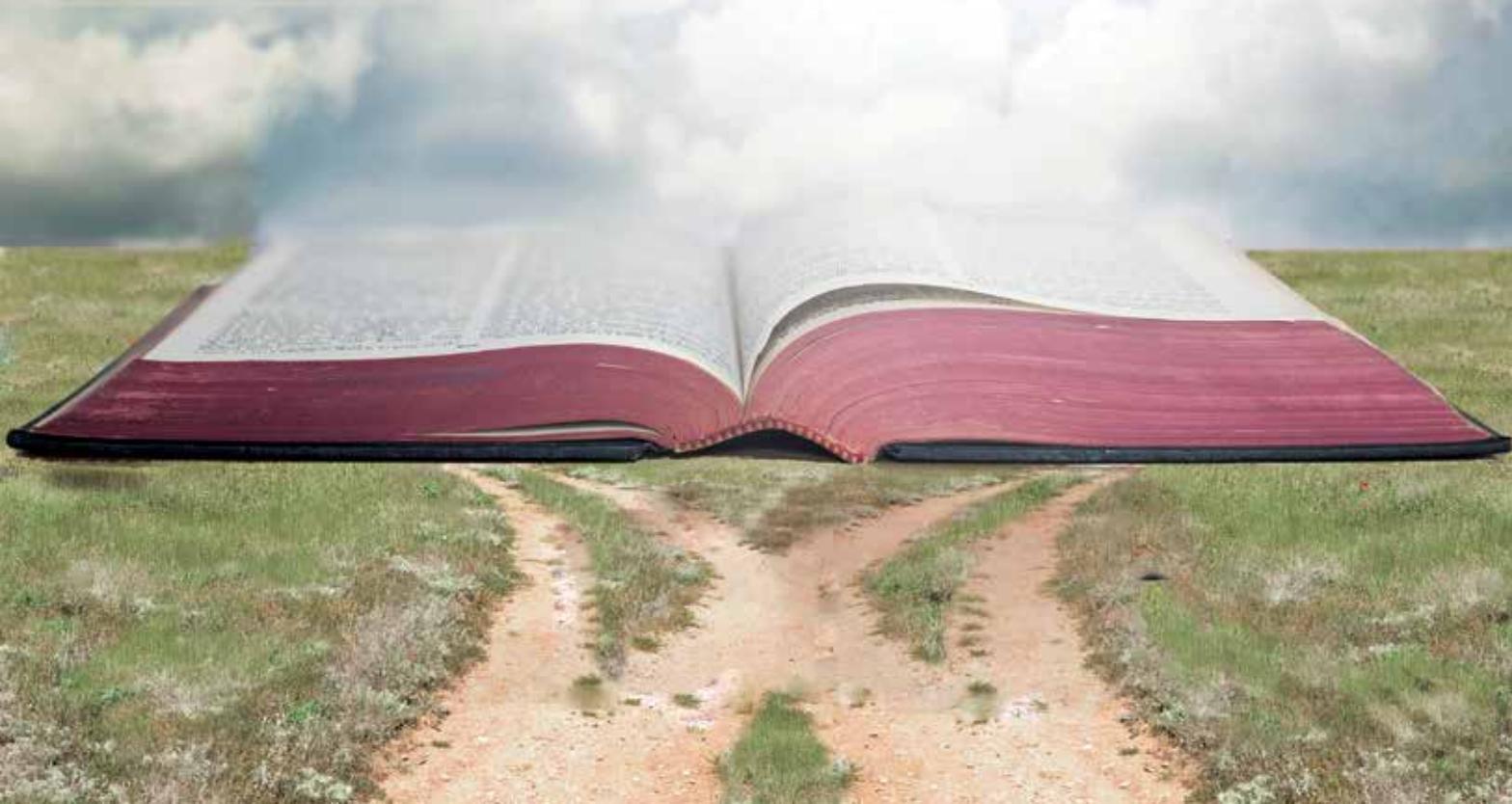
The way the church understands annulments frequently causes special concern for divorced mothers and fathers. They assume that if a marriage is annulled, the children of that marriage must be illegitimate. Explanations that this is not true because they were civilly married at the time of the birth of their children fall on deaf ears because the church's



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**MSGR. PAUL V. GARRITY**, of the Archdiocese of Boston, is pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Norwood, Mass.

# What is on trial in an annulment process is the bond of marriage. Did it or did it not take place at the time of the marriage?



position is that a valid marriage never took place. For many couples in a second marriage, the idea of harming their children in any way is absolutely out of the question. The logic here is unassailable.

In contemplating the possibility of an annulment, one of the first questions raised by a potential petitioner has to do with the respondent, the other party in the failed marriage. The fact that this person will need to be contacted and invited to provide testimony is often a source of great anxiety. Divorces are never easy and never without pain. The thought of having to involve the other party can oftentimes be a bridge too far.

When Catholics have been divorced and are seeking an annulment, there is an implicit understanding that this is a Catholic thing. The explanation as to why an annulment is needed becomes much more complex when the marriage that needs to be annulled is a marriage between two non-Catholics that took place at city hall, on the beach or in a Protestant church. Because the two parties are not Catholic, they are not obliged to follow Catholic form (i.e., to be married in a church by a priest before two witnesses). Their marriage, therefore, is considered to be a valid mar-

riage that will require a full-blown annulment (i.e., canonical trial) in order for the divorced Protestant or whatever to marry his or her new Catholic spouse in a Catholic church. This is very difficult for the non-Catholic partner to understand.

As a corollary, in the case of a second marriage where the non-Catholic partner has been married before, an annulment is needed before that person can be received into the full communion of the church through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Where the non-Catholic believes that his or her first marriage was a valid union now ended by divorce (and therefore not annulable by Catholic standards), it becomes impossible for this person to be welcomed into the Catholic community.

In contrast to these cases, should a Catholic be married by a justice of the peace on the beach or at city hall or even by a Protestant minister in a Protestant church, this marriage, should it end in divorce, can be easily annulled in a matter of weeks by the Catholic Church. This is called a documentary annulment or a defect of form annulment. In this case, all the Catholic divorced party needs to do is present a copy of his or her baptismal record and a copy of the divorce decree.

For a small filing fee, the church will issue a decree of nullity based on the simple fact that the Catholic party was obliged to follow Catholic form when getting married and did not do so. Therefore, the church regards this marriage as being invalid for lack of form. It does not matter if this marriage had lasted a month or 40 years.

The irony of all this is very clear. Catholics who marry outside the church usually are not observant Catholics. They may have been baptized and never catechized. Or they may be individuals who have slipped away from the practice of their faith. For them, the annulment process in preparation for a second marriage in the church is very simple. But the practicing Catholic who gets married in the church because it is the right thing to do has to go through an 18-month ordeal before an annulment is granted and they are free to marry in the church once again. The lapsed Catholic has an easy time procuring an annulment, while the faithful Catholic has to endure the lengthy and arduous process of a canonical trial.

## Witness Testimony

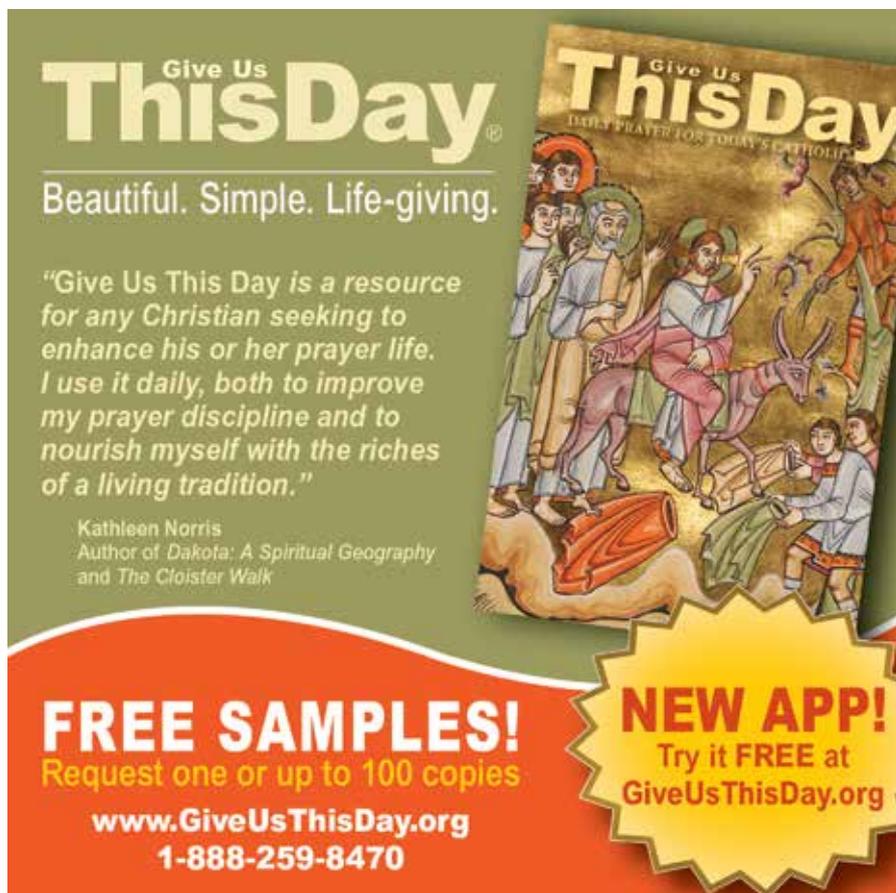
Another tricky part of the annulment process has to do with establishing the testimony of three or more witnesses. In the annulment process, a witness is a person who does not weigh in on the merits of the petitioner's case but rather explains what they saw in the relationship and the mar-

riage prior to the divorce. What is on trial in an annulment process, a canonical trial, is the bond of marriage. Did it or did it not take place at the time of the marriage? Witness testimony is needed to provide information that suggests something was lacking in the relationship before the marriage took place. Witnesses are not finding fault or placing blame for the marriage's breakup. They are merely attesting to what they observed in the relationship that is being examined. Immaturity, a lack of good judgment or diminished freedom can emerge from this kind of testimony. The challenge, therefore, is to find people who have this kind of intimate knowledge about the marriage being studied and who understand the nature of what is being sought in their testimony.

There are also some very serious ecumenical questions about our understanding of marriage. Jesus' statements in the Gospels of Matthew (9:3-8), Mark (10:2-9) and Luke (16:18) are the foundation of the Roman Catholic teaching on the indissolubility of marriage. And while the sacramentality of marriage is seen to be rooted here, it was not until the 12th century, at the Council of Verona, that our current understanding of the sacrament of matrimony began to develop. At the same time, over the centuries, most other Christian denominations have read the same Scripture passages and come to a very different place. Many Protestant groups do not regard marriage as a sacrament.

Certain steps can be taken to help improve the annulment process. In the Diocese of Springfield, Mass., for example, statements are taken orally rather than requiring a lengthy written report. Annulments could also be sped up if pastors were given a greater role in deciding cases at the parish level. Unfortunately, streamlining the process will do nothing for the Protestant, now married to a Catholic, who cannot in conscience apply for an annulment because he or she believes that his or her prior marriage was valid.

The fact of a divorce should be proof enough that something essential was missing in a marriage or that the marriage has died. To insist that a person who is happily married for 25 years to a second spouse is still, in fact, married to the first spouse flies in the face of both reason and experience. When we think of the complexities of the current annulment process, we really should be asking: Is this what Jesus intended? For many of us who pastor parishes and try to shepherd God's people, the answer is a resounding no. 



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# ‘We Have a Lot of Work to Do’

Cardinal Marx on Pope Francis, the synod and women in the church

BY LUKE HANSEN

**C**ardinal Reinhard Marx, archbishop of the Diocese of Munich and Freising, is head of the German bishops’ conference, a member of the Council of Cardinals that advises Pope Francis on church governance, coordinator of the Vatican’s Council for the Economy and author of *Das Kapital: A Plea for Man* (2008). Cardinal Marx delivered the annual Roger W. Heyns Lecture on Jan. 15 at Stanford University in California. This interview, which has been edited for clarity and approved by the cardinal, took place on Jan. 18 in Memorial Church at Stanford University.

*Has your experience on the Council of Cardinals offered you a different perspective on the church?*

I have a new responsibility. When I am interviewed—like today—and I am asked, “What are you doing on the council?” and “What does it mean to be with the pope?” I feel a higher responsibility. I don’t see the church in a new way, though. I have been a bishop for 18 years, a cardinal for five years and have been part of synods. I do see my new responsibility and the new opportunities, and also the historical moment to step forward in the church and be part of the history of the church.

*What are the new opportunities?*

This whole pontificate has opened new paths. You can feel it. Here in the United States everybody is speaking about Francis, even people not belonging to the Catholic Church. I have to say: The pope is not the church. The church is more than the pope. But there is a new atmosphere. A rabbi said to me, “Say to the pope that he helps us, because he strengthens all religions, not just the Catholic Church.” So it’s a new movement.

In the Council of Cardinals we have a special task to cre-



Cardinal Reinhard Marx in Münster, March 12, 2014.

ate a new constitution for the Roman Curia, to reform the Vatican Bank and to discuss many other things with the pope. But we cannot be present every day in Rome. You must see this pontificate, this way, as a wider and new step. It is my impression that we are on a new way. We are not creating a new church—it remains Catholic—but there is fresh air, a new step forward.

*What challenge accompanies this new time in the church?*

It is best to read “The Joy of the Gospel.” Some people say, “We don’t know what the pope really wants.” I say, “Read the text.” It does not give magical answers to complex questions, but rather it conveys the path of the Spirit, the way of evangelization, being close to the people, close to the poor, close to those who have failed, close to the sinners, not a narcissistic church, not a church of fear. There is a new, free impulse to go out. Some worry about what will happen. Francis uses a strong



LUKE HANSEN, S.J., a former associate editor of *America*, is a student at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, in Berkeley, Calif.

PHOTO: REUTERS/INA FASSBENDER

image: "I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets," rather than a church that is very clean and has the truth and everything necessary. The latter church does not help the people. The Gospel is not new, but Francis is expressing it in a new way and is inspiring many people all over the world, who are saying, "Yes, that is the church." It is a great gift for us. It's very important. We will see what he will do. He has been pope for only two years, which is not much time.

*What can you tell us about Pope Francis, the person, from working closely with him?*

He is very authentic. He is relaxed, calm. At his age, he does not need to achieve anything or prove he is somebody. He is very clear and open and without pride. And strong. Not a weak person, but strong. I think it is not so important to analyze the character of the pope, but I understand the interest.

What is very interesting is how, together with him, we will develop the path forward for the church. For example, he writes in "The Joy of the Gospel" about the relationship between the center in Rome and the conferences of bishops, and also about the pastoral work in parishes, the local churches and the character of the synods. These are very important for the future of the church. It is also very important that we have a pope. Now everybody in the world is speaking about the Catholic Church, not entirely positively, but mostly.

So Christ did very well to create the office of St. Peter. We see it. But that doesn't mean centralism. I told the pope: "A centralized institution is not a strong institution. It is a weak institution." The Second Vatican Council began to establish a new balance between the center and the local church, because they saw, 50 years ago, the beginning of the universal church. It is not achieved, however. We must make it happen for the first time. Now 50 years later, we see what it might be to be a church in a globalized world, a universal, globalized church. We have not yet organized it sufficiently. That is the great task for this century. The temptation is to centralize, but it will not function. The other challenge is finding a way to explain the faith in the different parts of the world. What can the synods and the local churches do together with Rome? How can we do this in a good way?

*Two issues at the present synod are divorced and remarried Catholics and gay Catholics, especially those in relationships. Do you have opportunities to listen directly to these Catholics*

*in your present ministry?*

I have been a priest for 35 years. This problem is not new. I have the impression that we have a lot of work to do in the theological field, not only related to the question of divorce but also to the theology of marriage. I am astonished that some can say everything is clear on this topic. Things are not clear. The issue is not about church doctrine being determined by modern times. It is a question of *aggiornamento*, to say it in a way that the people can understand, and to always adapt our doctrine to the Gospel, to theology, in order to find in a new way the sense of what Jesus said, the meaning of the tradition of the church and of theology and so on. There is a lot to do.

I speak with many experts—canon lawyers and theologians—who recognize many questions related to the sacramentality and validity of marriages. One question is: What can we do when a person marries, divorces and later finds a new partner? There are different positions. Some bishops at the synod said, "They are living in sin." But others said, "You cannot say that somebody is in sin every day. That is not possible." You see, there are questions we must speak about. We opened a discussion on this topic in the German bishops' conference. Now the text is published. I think it is a very

good text and a good contribution for the discussion of the synod.

It is very important that the synod does not have the spirit of "all or nothing." That is not a good way. The synod cannot have winners and losers. That is not the spirit of the synod. The spirit of the synod is to find a way together, not to say, "How can I find a way to bring *my* position through?" Rather: "How can I understand the other position, and how can we together find a new position?" That is the spirit of the synod.

Therefore it is very important that we are working on these questions. I hope that the pope will inspire this synod. The synod cannot decide; only a council or pope can decide. These questions must also be understood in a broader context. The task is to help the people to live. It is not, according to "The Joy of the Gospel," about how we can defend the truth. It is about helping people to find the truth. That is important.

The Eucharist and reconciliation are necessary for people. We say to some people, "You will never be reconciled until your death." That is impossible to believe when you see the situations. I could give examples. In the spirit of "The Joy of the Gospel," we have to see how the Eucharist is medicine for the people, to help the people. We must look for ways for people to receive the Eucharist. It is not about finding ways to

**The spirit of  
the synod is to  
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not to say,  
'How can I find  
a way to bring  
my position  
through?'**

keep them out! We must find ways to welcome them. We have to use our imagination in asking, "Can we do something?" Perhaps it is not possible in some situations. That is not the question. The focus must be on how to welcome people.

*At the synod, you referred to "the case of two homosexuals who have been living together for 35 years and taking care of each other, even in the last phases of their lives," and you asked, "How can I say that this has no value?" What have you learned from these relationships and does it have any bearing on sexual ethics today?*

When speaking about sexual ethics, perhaps we must not begin with sleeping together, but with love, fidelity and the search for a life-long relationship. I am astonished that most of our young people, including Catholic homosexuals who are practicing, want a relationship that lasts forever. The doctrine of the church is not so strange for people. It is true. We must begin with the main points of the doctrine, to see the dream: the dream is to have a person say, a man and woman say, "You and you, forever. You and you, forever." And we as church say, "Yes, that's absolutely O.K. Your vision is right!" So we find the way. Then perhaps there is failure. They find the person, and it is not a great success. But life-long fidelity is right and good.

The church says that a gay relationship is not on the same level as a relationship between a man and a woman. That is clear. But when they are faithful, when they are engaged for the poor, when they are working, it is not possible to say, "Everything you do, because you are a homosexual, is negative." That must be said, and I have heard no objection. It is not possible to see a person from only one point of view, without seeing the whole situation of a person. That is very important for sexual ethics.

The same goes for people who are together but marry later, or when they are faithful together but only in a civil marriage. It is not possible to say that the relationship was all negative if the couple is faithful together, and they are waiting, or planning their life, and after 10 years they find the way to come to the sacrament. When possible, we must help the couple to find fulfillment in the sacrament of marriage. We discussed this question at the synod, and many synod fathers share this opinion. I was not alone in this opinion.

*Just last month Bishop Johan Bonny of Antwerp, Belgium, said the church should recognize a "diversity of forms" and could bless some gay relationships based on these values of love, fidelity and commitment. Is it important for the church to discuss these possibilities?*

I said in the synod that Paul VI had a great vision in "Humanae Vitae." The relationship between a man and a woman is very important. The sexual relationship in a faithful relationship is founded on the connection of procreation, giving love, sexual-

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ity and openness to life. Paul VI believed that this connection would be destroyed. He was right; see all the questions of reproductive medicine and so on. We cannot exclude this great model of sexuality, and say, "We have diversity," or "Everybody has the right to...." The great meaning of sexuality is the relationship between a man and a woman and the openness to give life. I have also previously mentioned the question of accompanying people, to see what people are doing in their lives and in their personal situation.

*How will the Catholic and Protestant churches mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017? What are the possibilities for greater cooperation among our churches?*

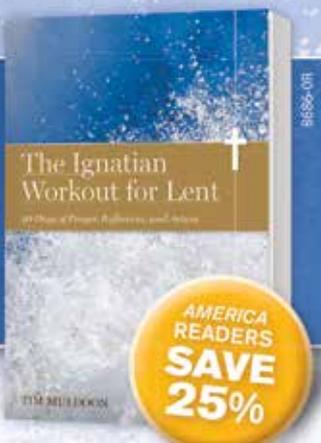
We are on a good path in Germany and at the level of the Holy See, with the Lutheran World Federation, to join our remembrances of this time. We in the Catholic Church cannot "celebrate" this anniversary, since it is not good that the church has been divided during these centuries. But we have to heal our memories—an important point and a good step forward in our relationship. In Germany I was very happy that the heads of the Protestant church are very clear that they do not want to celebrate the anniversary without the Catholics. One hundred years ago, or even 50 years ago, a Protestant bishop would not have said, "I will only celebrate when the Catholics are present." So we are planning it. "Healing Memories" will be a celebration together.

In Germany the heads of the Protestant and Catholic churches will also make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to go back to our roots. We will make a greater celebration not of Martin Luther but of Christ, a Christ-celebration that looks forward: What is our testimony now, what can we do now, what is the future of the Christian faith, and what can we do together. These are our plans for marking the 500th anniversary.

*Pope Francis has called for an increased role of women in the church. What can you imagine as possible? What would help the church better fulfill its mission?*

The declericalization of power is very important in the Roman Curia and the administrations of dioceses. We must look at canon law and reflect theologically to see what roles require priests; and then *all* the other roles, in the widest sense possible, must be open for lay people, men and women, but especially women. In the administration of the Vatican, it is not necessary that clerics guide all the congregations, councils and departments. It is a pity that there are no women among the lay people in the Council for the Economy. The specialists were chosen before I started as coordinator, but I will search for women to serve in this role.

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nals. It does not seem like a big thing, but great things begin with small steps, right?

I say it and repeat it also in my diocese: Please see what you can do to bring lay people, especially women, into positions of responsibility in diocesan administration. We have made a plan for the Catholic Church in Germany to have more leading positions in diocesan administrations to be filled by women. In three years we will look at what has been done.

On this issue we must make a great effort for the future, not only to be modern or to imitate the world but in realizing that this exclusion of women is not in the spirit of the Gospel. Sometimes the development of the world gives us a hint—*vox temporis vox Dei* (“the voice of the time is the voice of God”). The development in the world gives us signs, the signs of the times. John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council said we must interpret the signs of the times in light of the Gospel. One of these signs is the rights of women, the emancipation of women. John XXIII said it more than 50 years ago. We are always on the way to fulfilling it.

*Progress is not apparent.*

Sometimes it has become worse!

*What impediments need to be overcome?*

Mentality! Mentality! Mentality! And the decisions of those responsible. It is clear: The bishops have to decide. The bish-

ops and the Holy Father have to begin the change. I was very often in seminars or courses for heads of companies, and that was always clear: the stairs are cleaned from above, not from below—from the top down, not the bottom up. So the leaders must begin; the chiefs must begin. The mentality must change. The church is not a business, but the methods are not so different. We have to work more in teams, in projects. The question is: Who has the resources to bring these ideas forward? Not: Who belongs to the clergy? God gives us all these people, and we say, “No, he is not a cleric, he cannot do this job.” Or “His idea is not so important.” That is not acceptable. No, no, no.

*Pope Francis will make his first visit to the United States in September. What is your hope for the visit?*

I am always astonished by the pope’s capacity to bring people together and to inspire them. I hope the people in the United States can experience this too. One of the main tasks and challenges for a bishop, and for the pope, is to bring people together and unify the world. The church is an *instrumentum unitatis*, an instrument and sacrament of unity among the people and between God and the people. I hope that when the pope visits the United States—and possibly the United Nations—the church can show to the world that the church will be an instrument not for itself but for the unity of the nations and the world. ▲

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# Francis' Spiritual Reform

**M**andated by the cardinals in the pre-conclave meetings to reform the Roman Curia, Pope Francis is taking his task very seriously and moving in a more radical direction than anyone had expected. His aim is not simply structural reform of the Vatican offices, though that is part of it; his primary goal is the spiritual reform of all those working in the offices of the Holy See, a reform of attitudes and hearts.

"The spiritual reform [of the Roman Curia] is my great concern right now, to change people's hearts," Francis said in an interview with *La Nación* on Dec. 7. He revealed then that he was preparing two Christmas addresses: one for the prelates of the Roman Curia, the second for the other Vatican staff members. After that, he said, there would be "spiritual exercises for prefects and secretaries...six days locked in, praying. Just as we did last year, we'll do it again the first week of Lent."

As is well known, his Christmas address to the Vatican cardinals, archbishops, bishops and monsignors was not exactly the kind of pre-Christmas talk they had been accustomed to under recent pontiffs. Francis' talk went to the heart of things; it offered a profound 15 point examination of conscience. He identified 15 "illnesses" that Vatican prelates may have contracted or succumbed to in their service of the Church of Rome. He asked each of them to examine their consciences against his checklist. It had a big impact, and some did not like it one

bit. But it showed that "Francis really knows and understands well the real situation in the Vatican," one Vatican prelate told me recently. Furthermore, he said, the checklist has relevance far beyond the Roman Curia.

After presenting Vatican prelates with this examination of conscience in early December, Pope Francis is now taking them "for spiritual exercises" outside Rome from Feb. 22 to 27.

Francis, the first Jesuit pope in the history of the church, came to the See of Peter with a lifetime of experience as a spiritual director and retreat-giver. Though widely recognized as a man of government, he is first and foremost a spiritual leader. He has learned from Jesus in the Gospel the importance and value of withdrawing from the crowd to a quiet place where one can reflect and pray.

Before Francis became pope, the annual Lenten retreat was always held inside the Vatican; prelates would turn up for common prayer and for the morning and afternoon talks given by the retreat director in the Redemptoris Mater chapel of the Apostolic Palace. But not all prelates abandoned their work schedules in those days; some choose to work at home during the retreat week. Francis has changed that.

Last year he decided that the Lenten retreat for the pope and Roman Curia should be held outside Rome, at a center run by the Pauline religious family called the "Casa Divin Maestro," near the town of Ariccia in the Alban Hills, 18 miles from the Vatican. Overriding security concerns, he traveled there by

bus, accompanied by 82 members of the Roman Curia. He is likely to do that this year too.

It should be noted, however, that Francis is aiming at a spiritual reform not only in the Vatican; he is seeking to promote it also in dioceses, parishes, communities and, of course, in individual believers throughout the Catholic world. His message for Lent, issued on Jan. 27, is a step in this direction. In

it he addresses what he sees as one of the great challenges in our world today: "the globalization of indifference."

He first used this striking expression on July 8, 2013, when on his first journey outside Rome, he traveled to the island of Lampedusa, off the southern coast of Italy, to weep for the tens of thousands

of migrants who had drowned in the Mediterranean Sea in recent years. During his homily at Mass on the island, he denounced what he called "the globalization of indifference," which he said had deprived us of the ability to weep.

Since then he has used the expression on a wide variety of occasions, and this year he has developed his Lenten Message around that same theme. In it, he describes the "globalization of indifference" as "indifference to our neighbor and to God" and says it is "a real temptation for us Christians." His message explains how we can combat it and "become islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference!"

**GERARD O'CONNELL**

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**GERARD O'CONNELL** is *America's Rome correspondent*. *America's Vatican coverage is sponsored in part by the Jesuit communities of the United States*. Twitter: @gerryorome.

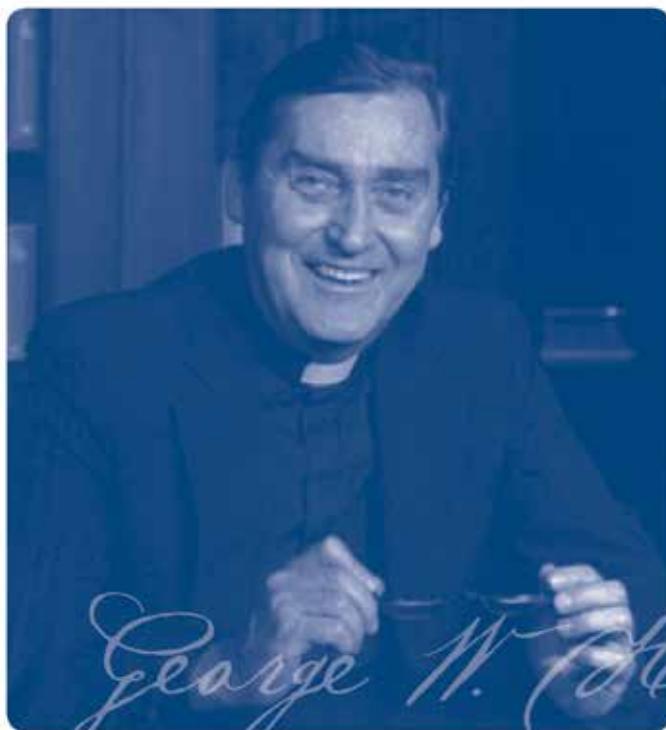
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George W. Hunt, S.J., served as the 11th editor in chief of *America*, the national Catholic review published by the Jesuits of the United States. A native of Yonkers, N.Y., Father Hunt entered the Society of Jesus in 1954 and was ordained a priest in 1967. He earned a theology degree from Yale Divinity School in 1970, later remarking that his decision to study Kierkegaard with Professor Paul Holmer was "the best and most fruitful decision in my entire academic life," for it set the stage for a life-long study of the literary arts.

George W. Hunt, S.J., retired as editor in chief in 1998, at the conclusion of the magazine's most prosperous year to-date. He remains the longest serving editor in chief in *America's* history. Later that year, Father Hunt was named director of the Archbishop Hughes Institute for Religion and Culture at Fordham University, where he dedicated himself to "exploring the relationships between religion and other aspects of contemporary life." George W. Hunt, S.J., Jesuit priest, author and friend, died in 2011 at the age of 74.

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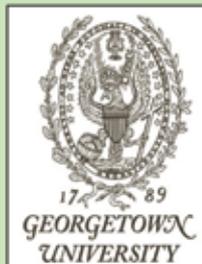
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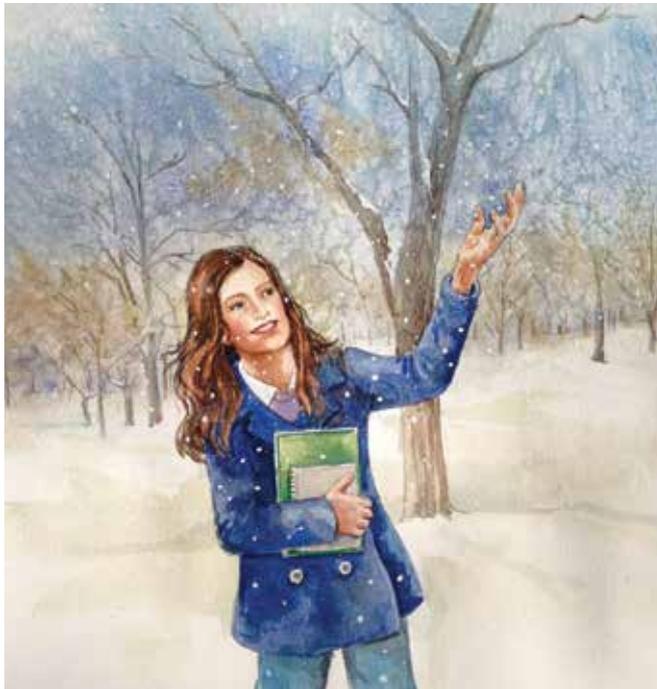
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# A Winter Soul

Breaking through the coldest months

BY JESSICA MESMAN GRIFFITH

**T**he first time I saw snow, I was 26 years old. I'd moved to Pittsburgh for graduate school after a lifetime in southern Louisiana, where I'd never owned a coat, hat, scarf or mittens. I remember I walked outside the coffee shop where I was studying and stood there, turning circles in wonder like some alien fallen to earth, looking every bit the yokel I was, overpowered by the beauty of the fat, white flakes, by the sudden hushed silence that seemed to descend upon the city, by the way it actually sparkled. I remember thinking, in complete earnestness, *This is magic.*



But Pittsburgh's winters were mild and short compared to the winters in South Bend, Ind., where I moved after my wedding. After three years of bone-crushing cold and life under the "permacloud," which rolls in sometime around November and doesn't budge until May, I threatened my husband that I would never again live above the Mason-Dixon line. He got a job in Virginia, and I swore we'd never leave. I said, many times, he'd have to dig my bony fingers out of the red clay. He did.

When I looked at the map to see

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**JESSICA MESMAN GRIFFITH** is the author, with Amy Andrews, of the memoir *Love & Salt*, A Spiritual Friendship in Letters, and a regular contributor to *Good Letters*, the *Image Blog*. She lives in northern Michigan with her husband, the writer Dave Griffith, and their children.

where Traverse City, Mich., was before he left for his job interview, I cried.

It is Up North (they capitalize that here). Way Up North: 45th parallel north, 300 inches of snow last winter north, subzero temperatures north, winter for nine months north.

I made the best of it last year. Really, I did. It pricked my pride to have so many people warn me about how awful the winters would be, and I adopted a mantra: *You won't break me.* I'm a fast learner and a die-hard romantic. I would study northerness. I would write us into a winter story. We would not just survive; we would thrive. We would snowshoe.

I read Norse myths and Norwegian novels and memoirs and got a (temporary) tattoo of Thor. I told myself I had a winter soul, made for sitting by

the fire and reading epic novels. (When we couldn't find a rental with a fireplace, I bought a fire pit and parked it outside the living room window so I could at least watch the sparks in the darkness.) I was determined to emerge from my first Northern Michigan winter victorious, sporting Viking horns and braids and a breastplate of bones and feathers.

I learned a lot. I learned to stop washing my face and hands with soap and water to prevent my skin from cracking and bleeding. I learned to wear makeup every day, not for beautification but as an extra protective layer.

I learned to avoid cotton and denim and to invest in a down coat and the most expensive boots I could afford. I learned the terms *polar vortex* and *Alberta Clipper*. I learned, sort of, to drive in snow (I'm the one crawling along holding up traffic into Traverse City—sorry). I learned several different ways to tie a scarf. I learned how to make a hot toddy and to drink fish oil with breakfast.

When we lit our spring equinox bonfire in snow up to our waists on March 21, I was a little discouraged.

On Easter Sunday, we hunted eggs in gloomy snow piles and walked in gale force winds on Sleeping Bear Dunes. Admittedly, the temperature was starting to rise, and we were grateful to be outdoors at all, but the gloom was unrelenting. All I could think of

APT: ANN KISSANE ENGELHART

was the dogwoods in full bloom back in Virginia, the daffodils long since up and withered. We drove the 20 minutes back to our gray ranch house in the gray north woods, and I crawled into bed and cried.

By the time I woke up to snow on my son's birthday in May, I was well beyond broken.

### A Time to Thrive

In hindsight, my naïveté seems cute. Now that I'm a hardened northerner, I know that winter isn't a time to thrive. It's a time to buy a light therapy box, take massive amounts of vitamin D and get on antidepressants. In the worst months, January through April, anyone who can afford to leave for a while, does. But most people just put their heads down, feed their fires and press on. Or they ski. A lot. As my neighbor says, *There's no way out but through*. And sometimes going through just isn't pretty. Sometimes you crawl to the finish.

Sometimes, winter breaks us. And maybe that's okay.

St. Paul reminds us again and again that without death there is no resurrection, no restoration. Look around you, fools, he says, it's the law of na-

ture—that which you sow does not come to life unless it dies (1 Cor 15:36). Suffering and death are necessary, not meaningless. A crusty old Anglican theologian named Richard Sibbes said that as “winter prepares the earth for the spring, so do afflictions sanctified prepare the soul for glory.”

There is plenty of beautiful writing about winter as a fallow time—a season of rest and emptiness necessary for farmlands and humans to continue producing a healthy harvest. Caryll Houselander, my favorite Catholic eccentric, said in her Advent essays that many are too impatient with winter. “A seed contains all the life and loveliness of a flower,” she writes, “but it contains it in a little hard black pip of a thing which even the glorious sun will not enliven unless it is buried under the earth. There must be a period of gestation before anything can flower.” She urges us to trust that Christ grows in the fallow time, in our sorrow, and “in due season all the fret and strain and tension of it will give place to a splendor of peace.”

This is all very nice and reassuring and exactly what might pop up in my Instagram feed as an inspirational meme on some February morning. But when February isn't even near the

halfway mark of a northern winter, it doesn't quite get to the heart of things.

Fallow is too gentle a word for this kind of winter. This is not a season of quiet melancholy, a few weeks at a slower pace to be savored over a cup of tea. This is months trapped inside with small children. This is influenza and whooping cough. This is getting stuck halfway into the bank parking lot and blocking traffic. This is black ice and zero visibility. This is breaking bones in a fall. This is holes in the roof from the weight of the snow and the holes in the road that swallow your tires. This is what comes before the fallow time. This is a harrowing.

A harrow is a horrible-looking farm tool with wheels and spikes and teeth. It breaks up the earth, crushes, pulverizes, plunders. Sound too extreme? Then I've captured it perfectly.

New year, new mantra. As this winter gets underway in earnest, I say, go ahead and break me. Plunder me, take me down, so I can be made new. Maybe that is exactly what I need—not merely a rest but a reinvention.

If I can't be a Viking, Lord, make me the Darkling Thrush of Thomas Hardy's poem, who though “...frail, gaunt, and small, in blast-beruffled plume” flings his soul upon the growing gloom and sings.

*So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled  
through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he  
knew  
And I was unaware.*

If I survive another polar vortex, it will not be by my own schemes and strengths and romantic fantasies but by grace (and a nice long hiatus in New Orleans). My soul might be the only thing that can grow in this weather. **A**



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**THEATER** | ROB WEINERT-KENDT

## LOOK AT THIS

*The strange, seductive worlds of 'Cabaret' and 'Side Show'*

A show that skewers show business strikes a slippery bargain with its audience, and it can backfire. While we may smile knowingly at its insights into backstage chicanery and the cynicism of producers, and enjoy its winking parodies of other, implicitly lesser shows, a piece of entertainment intended to make us think critically about the value of entertainment itself risks having its own judgments turned back on itself. If we are meant to see, after all, that the people who make theater are just out to turn a quick buck by selling cheap thrills to gullible audiences, then who are we, and how is the show we are watching not just another scam?

It gets more complicated, and the stakes are much higher, when the critique is more ambitious. The point of the great, troubling musical **Cabaret** is not just that show business is craven and corrupt but that it signifies a deeper social corrosion—that all too many of us would prefer to fiddle while Rome burns or, to be more specific, to party while the Nazi Party takes over.

The Roundabout Theatre's current re-run of its hit 1998 revival is a smart, slick contraption that drives that point home, to a fault. "There was a city called Berlin in a country called Germany. It was the end of the world, and I was dancing with Sally Bowles, and we were both fast asleep," recalls Cliff Bradshaw (Bill Heck), the callow American writer who gets caught up in the whirl of the city's seedy nightlife and who elsewhere compares the scene to "a bunch of kids playing in their room, getting wilder

and wilder, and knowing any minute their parents are going to come home."

But it is the bullies who will crash the party, since the only grown-ups around—like the sympathetic but compromised Fräulein Schneider (Linda Emond)—are too deeply implicated in the social breakdown and anxious scarcity of Weimar-era Germany. Who can afford to take a stand when there are bills to pay? As the lurking emcee played definitively by Alan Cumming sings at one point, chillingly, "Hearts grow hard/ On a windy street/ Lips grow cold/ With the rent to meet."

Indeed, though the center of the show is supposed to be the fluttering chanteuse Sally Bowles, played compellingly if jaggedly by Emma Stone, it is Fräulein Schneider who emerges as the show's true conscience. (It doesn't hurt that the grounded, unsentimental Emond is giving the performance of a lifetime.) It is Schneider who early on has the ostensibly benign welcoming waltz "So What?," in which she shrugs off the poverty of a new tenant because she has few other offers. Her nonchalance about her fate—"It'll all go on if we're here or not/ So who cares, so what?"—may sound like I've-seen-it-all wisdom. Instead it is setting the tone for a world where nothing has any real value, only a price.

In a show with no shortage of haunting moments, perhaps the most



**OLD CHUMS.** Alan Cumming and the cast of "Cabaret"

PHOTO: JOAN MARCUS

quietly devastating one comes when Schneider is wooed by a courtly grocer, Herr Schultz (Danny Burstein). He gently extols the virtues of marriage in song, and she is moved; as they get up to dance, the tune is taken up by the blond prostitute who lives next door, singing in German under moonlight-blue nightclub lighting as Cumming's spidery emcee looks on. This new couple's feelings may be sincere, but this overlay reminds us of the illusory, transactional world in which they live. How can love survive in a bordello?

It gets worse. Schultz is Jewish and Schneider not; their unhappy ending is foreordained. As the Nazi shadow advances, "Cabaret" is in danger of receding into history; the moral short-hand for ultimate evil that the swastika too easily represents can distance us from the complicity in which the show has artfully entangled us. After all, we're enjoying a show with ticket prices north of \$150, drinking \$19 cocktails at cabaret tables that place us in a nightclub much like the fictional Kit Kat Club (and in the former Studio 54, no less); we're encouraged to leer at the exposed flesh and snicker at Cumming's explicit provocations.

But hey, at least we're not in bed with Nazis!

I can't say for sure if director Sam Mendes's production actually encourages this sort of dismissive stance. We hardly need to be reminded of the Senate torture report or the Ferguson grand jury or the immiseration of immigrants and the poor to conjure parallel injustices in our own time and place. But it's unsettling to think that "Cabaret," as sharp a takedown of complacency and decadence in the face of encroaching evil as has ever been written, may itself have become a kind of bread-and-circuses diversion.

Some critics have seen parallels to "Cabaret" in the recent Broadway revival of **Side Show**. This cult musical about the real-life Hilton sisters, conjoined twins who enjoyed a brief career as a novelty act in vaudeville, also has a grinning emcee (Robert Joy) who invites us in the opening number to "look at the freaks." In director/adaptor Bill Condon's expert production, said freaks are outfitted in seamlessly authentic costumes, from a bearded lady to a lizard man, and the actors playing the Hilton sisters, Erin Davie and Emily Padgett, are attached at the hip by unseen magnets.

But this is a more conventional, rise-and-fall showbiz fable than "Cabaret," as the sisters trade one exploitive impresario for another, a slick young cad (Ryan Silverman). The show's central image—of two distinct individuals inseparably, tragically joined as one—is not just its strongest element, it is pretty much the whole show. Though Condon has tightened and strengthened the script, it remains essentially a series of variations on the theme of split identity. Visually, this never loses its fascination, as Padgett and Davie dance delicately in tandem, or strain palpably at each other's limits when they are at odds offstage. Just to watch them descend stairs or sit down together is to marvel at their hard-won poise.

The show also relentlessly returns to the awkward subject of romance, treating the question of how exactly that might "work" with varying degrees of sensitivity and playful prurience. "Side Show" does not shrink from any chance to wring emotional conflict from this conundrum—which is another way to say that its bathetic score, by Bill Russell and Henry Krieger, lays the power ballads on pretty thick. There is a kind of loud Broadway belting that has earned the semi-affectionate label "park and bark," and apart from a few nimble vaudeville pastiches, "Side Show" is a quintessential park-and-bark property. That earned the show, which debuted briefly on Broadway in 1995, a cadre of rabid fans, though not enough to keep the show open. It closed at the St. James Theatre on Jan. 4, after only 77 performances. I cannot say that it would have run longer if it were a more challenging show—if it dared to ask us, as "Cabaret" does, to consider how our taste for diversion may make us complicit in or blind to oppressive social forces—but it would certainly make "Side Show" more than, well, a side show.

**ROB WEINERT-KENDT**, an arts journalist and associate editor of *American Theatre* magazine, has written for *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York*. He writes a blog called *The Wicked Stage*.



# ASHES MARK THE FRONTIER

On Ash Wednesday a couple of years ago, we had Mass in the morning at our Jesuit headquarters in Chicago and distributed ashes. That afternoon I met a young man new to our office, a recent graduate of Northwestern University, who told me right out that he felt bad because he had not been to Mass that day. I was impressed. Later, after dinner, I took a walk through the neighborhood. It was February, warm with an early hint of spring. And I kept spotting foreheads marked with an ashy cross. A young woman chatted on her phone—she had her ashes. A young man engrossed in his iPod—his cross bobbed with the music. Three young women rounded a corner by a bar laughing—ashes in a bar? A man clipped along in shorts and T-shirt—his sweaty ashes clearly said penance. A woman knotted her face and clutched the wheel of her S.U.V. as she sped through a red light—no crusader ever wore a more threatening cross! Throughout the neighborhood, which draws many young adults, ash-marked faces abounded.

At the Jesuits' general congregation in 2008, Pope Benedict told the Jesuits to go to the frontiers. Father General Adolfo Nicolás has repeated the challenge. By implication, Jesuit schools and other ministries are called to be out there on the edges. Those young faces I saw along Halsted Street on Ash Wednesday, were they showing that we had done our job? Or were they a healthy push to do much more? Were they showing us where the frontiers lie, the borderlands of new mission, new ideas, new commitment?

We know stories of decline. Bishops have spent much energy facing the need to close or to consolidate parish-

es. Every school closing evokes lament. Every church closed feels like a collective death. The Rev. Andrew Greeley once explained that this is because the Catholic Church is powerfully incarnational. It invests in bricks and doorframes, blackboards and statues, candles that flicker and bells that ring. We know our religion is more than these, but when lights burn out and the bells go silent, we feel loss. We have tied our memories and our imaginations to places where we have been and celebrated life's passages. No, the gates of hell will ultimately not prevail, but the solid rock foundation feels the erosive power of turbulent tides.

A number of studies have attested to this erosion. Christian Smith's *Soul Searching* affirmed religious desires of teenagers, but these desires often do not translate into practice. Earlier studies (Peter Steinfeld's *A People Adrift*; Tom Beaudoin's *Virtual Faith*) offered various analyses, but each said that we have much work to do.

Much great work is happening. I am on a national seminar on Jesuit higher education, where I have heard stories of strong programs founded to study and promote Catholic identity, Catholic imagination and Catholic thought. I have learned of the hundreds of faculty and staff members at Catholic universities and colleges dedicated to making a difference. I have spoken with eager students grateful for the difference these schools make in their lives. This is equally true of Catholic high schools,

parishes, spiritual centers and media.

On the Friday after my Ash Wednesday walk, I stopped in the local Walgreens. Before me in the checkout line was a woman who, with her husband, did much great work with local Jesuit schools. She mentioned a young man, Peter, an alumnus of two Jesuit schools, who was involved in that work.

Peter is one of many Jesuit alums attracted by the chance to put their education to work. They have a great education, and they want it to make a difference.

Here is the challenge. I do not know if Peter was one of those walking by on Ash Wednesday with their faith written on their faces. It does not matter. I do not know if he was in church last Sunday. That does matter, but it is not all. What matters is that here is a connection, a beginning of a network

of faith. The young women and men looking for something beyond residual faith, beyond virtual religion, beyond noise and clutter and hype—they are calling out to the church for companionship on their journey. They may be our farthest frontier, our most challenging borderland.

Ash Wednesday's marked foreheads represent far more than personal piety. They let us recognize our fellow strugglers and know that we can call out for help along the way. They are a brief reminder of an enduring reality, that we can go to the frontiers together and from our ashes build a society that is more just and more faithful.

Ashes are  
a brief  
reminder  
of an  
enduring  
reality.



EDWARD W. SCHMIDT

# UNCOVERING MEANING

## AIMLESS LOVE New and Selected Poems

By Billy Collins  
Random House. 288p \$16

## BLUE HORSES Poems

By Mary Oliver  
Penguin. 96p \$24.95

## DYLAN THOMAS A Centenary Celebration

Edited by Hannah Ellis  
Bloomsbury. 272p \$33

If anyone could predict which books will sell, publishing wouldn't be the dumb business it really is. Publishers have always made their living guessing, pretending we have fingers on the pulse of what readers want and need. Most often, we're wrong, which is why only one in a 100 books sells 5,000 copies. So when you hear that a book has sold, say, 50,000, well, that's a remarkable bestseller. Occasionally, but only *very* occasionally, a poetry volume reaches that level.

Take a look at the best-sellers in the poetry category at any given time, and you'll find a mix of lightweight, inspirational/spiritual fluff, classics that college kids are pretending to read and then one or two truly marvelous contemporary poets who by some hermetical miracle have made their way to financial success. In this latter category I am talking only about the poets Mary Oliver and Billy Collins; they can actually make a good living at it. Their sales are a few times more than those of, say, Wendell Berry. Other well-deserving, terrific living poets like Sharon Olds, Jane Hirschfield, John Ashbery and Louise Glück stand in what we might call third place. Then the sales of Geoffrey Hill, whom many consider the greatest living

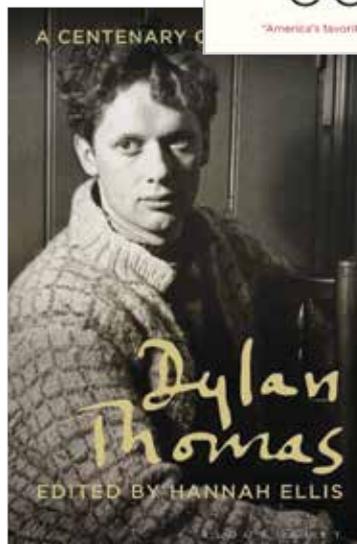
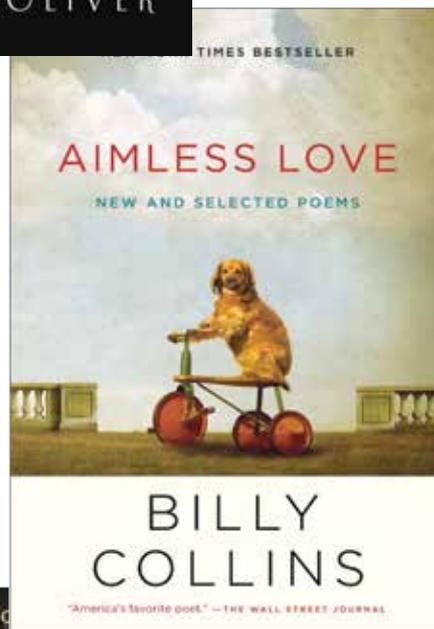
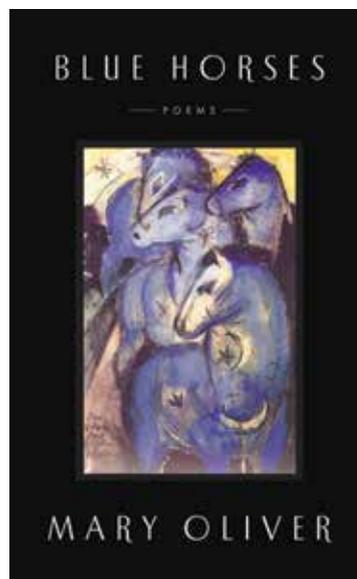
poet in English, are minuscule outside institutional collections.

What is the secret of poetry that reaches a truly wide audience? This quote from fellow poet Alice Fulton appears frequently on Collins's dust jackets and in his press coverage: "Billy Collins puts the 'fun' back in 'profundity.'" Perhaps that's a good way to put it—but while *Aimless Love* hit the New York Times best-seller list upon publication in hardcover last year, and it is a mix of fun and profundity, I think the two rarely if ever track together in the same poem.

Every line from his 2008 collection, *Ballistics*, included in *Aimless Love*, is hard-earned wisdom, rough-edged verse. I love these lines from "The First Night," one of several poems about life endings, in which the poet is reflecting on what it must be like on the evening of one's death: "...it is enough to frighten me/ into paying more attention to the world's day-moon,/ to sunlight bright on water/ or fragmented in a grove of trees,/ and to look more closely here at these small leaves,/ these sentinel thorns,/ whose employment it is to guard the rose."

There are 51 new poems in *Aimless Love*, and many of them show this same ability to observe the world in digestible,

enviable ways. We want both the eyes and heart of what's expressed in a great Billy Collins poem—as in these from the title poem, "Aimless Love": "This morning as I walked along the lakeshore,/ I fell in love with a wren/ and later in the day with a mouse/ the cat had dropped under the dining room table." Concluding: "...my heart is always propped up/ in a field on its tripod,/ ready for the



next arrow."

But others in *Aimless Love* come across as silly, ephemeral and without much importance or depth. Perhaps they are there to make us pause, like the Selah in the Psalms; if so, that works.

A half-generation ago, the mantle

of popular poet was worn lightly by Seamus Heaney, who was never flip or foolish with his gift. When Heaney died in 2013, it was reported that during several years of the last decade of his life his books accounted for two-thirds of all poetry sales in the United Kingdom. His sales were even a higher percentage in his native Ireland, and certainly higher in total numbers sold in the United States, where Heaney taught at Harvard for the better part of a quarter century. His funeral was broadcast live on Irish television.

In the 1950s, it was Robert Frost and Dylan Thomas, appealing not only to tens of thousands each time a new collection appeared, but filling auditoriums throughout the United States on their reading tours. Each man would read not only his own poems but also classics by others. Some of these readings were recorded and released on Caedmon and Columbia Records LPs, which also sold briskly. The new *Dylan Thomas: A Centenary Celebration* re-

minds us of those days, combining short, personal reflections, including an interesting one by Philip Pullman, and essays of literary criticism from experts, including a fascinating piece on Thomas and plagiarism by Welsh bookseller Jeff Towns, with poems of homage by an unexpected cadre, including Rowan Williams and former President Jimmy Carter. Sadly, however, this finely edited collection also reminds us of Thomas's lechery and lewd behavior, and has the potential to relaunch the ancient myth that a great poet must be a magician, a trickster or a martyr who uses the sadness of his own life to bring meaning to our own.

Mary Oliver's sadness always seems to be useful to her. *Blue Horses* is what we have come to expect of this fine American poet who will turn 80 in September. One primary reason for her popularity is surely her ability to show us how to see things that we otherwise walk right past. This she shares with the best of Billy Collins, but to

my taste, Oliver is the subtle master of the practice. We instinctively know that Oliver writes about things that are true, and we are drawn to her work because, even if we don't learn to slow down ourselves and see, we may use her senses if only for a few minutes. I have often heard my friend, the poet Mark Burrows, call this "poetry of allurements," and he's right.

That said, I do have one small complaint with Oliver's new book that has nothing to do with the work itself: her publisher has made a book out of half a one. Each poem begins on a right hand page; and since most of them are not long enough to continue onto the back of that page (the verso), 29 pages are left blank in a book with a total page count of 79. Nevertheless, what's here is vital.

Oliver always writes poems, like "Angels" in *Blue Horses*, that stop me in my tracks. Kingfishers, owls, and human love are here in this collection, and that will remind you of other

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Sincerely yours,



Rev. Matthew Malone, S.J.

Oliver poems, but there also are more elusive, spiritual creatures. The poet is, in fact, looking for them. "Angels" ends with: "I'll just leave you with this./ I don't care how many angels can/ dance on the head of a pin. It's/ enough to know that for some people/ they exist, and that they dance." Later, in "Such Silence," Oliver tells us: "I sat on the bench, waiting for something./ An angel, perhaps./ Or dancers with the legs of goats./ No, I didn't see either.

But only, I think, because/ I didn't stay long enough."

If we can slow down, will we see such things? Perhaps. This is why so many of us still read poems: we are always looking, and some poets help us see. The poet doesn't so much make meaning as uncover it.

---

**JON M. SWEENEY** is the editor in chief of *Paraclete Poetry* and author of many books, including *When Saint Francis Saved the Church* and *Inventing Hell*.

the ways daily life in the country is permeated by a deep sense of history.

Frank also has personal roots in Cuba. His grandfather went to Cuba in the 1960s and wrote a book on it, after decades of writing about Latin America. Frank married into a Cuban family and raised two daughters in Cuba. He has a deep feeling for the country, but that is not to say that he is an apologist. Frank writes: "Discontent runs deep in Cuba, where no one has made a living wage for two decades." He describes the heavy-handed tactics of the state and does not shy away from describing the state as repressive. But at the same time, he points out that the nature of the Cuban state's repression is rather different from what is portrayed in the United States. The "official" dissidents who are touted in the United States and elsewhere are for the most part marginal and within Cuba are widely viewed as corrupt and ineffectual. There is far more political space than we would think, and it works rather differently than we would expect. The Cuban mass media have often been quite narrow and limited. But, as Frank shows, the views expressed by filmmakers, artists and intellectuals are diverse and often sharply critical of the state.

*Cuban Revelations* also makes clear that Cuba must be understood in part through the lens of its turbulent relationship with the United States. There is a generation of political exiles in Miami, marked by bitterness and obsession. There is an economic embargo, more than a half century old, which undermines Cuba's access to everything from Braille printers to science conferences to global financial institutions. Every Cuban child knows about the Platt Amendment of 1901, in which the U.S. government authorized itself to intervene at will in Cuba, while few Americans have ever heard of it. There are family members in the two countries who have not seen

**BOOKS** | JOY GORDON

## THE FORBIDDEN ISLAND

### CUBAN REVELATIONS Behind the Scenes in Havana

By Marc Frank

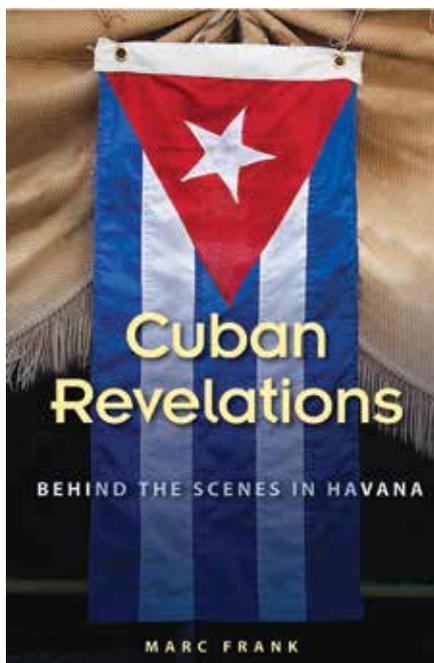
The University Press of Florida. 344p  
\$29.95

Much of what we in the United States know about Cuba is in the form of stereotypes, often cartoonish and unrevealing: there is Fidel (the dictator); and Raúl (no different from Fidel). But of course, how things work in Cuba is in fact nuanced and complex. The recent thaw in U.S.-Cuban relations has opened up new possibilities for Americans to acquire a sense of what Cuba is really like.

Marc Frank is one of the few Americans who has lived in Cuba long enough to have a deep understanding of the country. But more than that—he can interpret Cuba for Americans in a way that makes it possible to understand how it works and where things do not work at all; which political leaders are viewed as credible and legitimate and why that is so. Frank, a reporter for Reuters, has been living and working in Cuba for nearly three decades, and he is considered the dean of the foreign press corps in Havana. This has given him an understanding of the country that few foreigners can claim.

*Cuban Revelations: Behind the Scenes*

*in Havana* is a vivid, engaging exploration of Cuban politics, culture and economic life. Frank witnessed the collapse of the economy in the early 1990s and the desperation that gripped the



entire population. He captures the complicated relationship between the state and Cuba's religious communities; the movements of the state as it scrambles in the face of one crisis after another; Cuba's artistic and intellectual life; Cuba's foreign relations and its role in the region; Cuba's history and

each other in decades, sometimes out of rancor, sometimes because of visa denials and the ever-changing travel restrictions. At the same time, U.S. politics are influenced by the outsized influence of the Cuban American community, which has more representation in Congress than any other immigrant population, as well as a strong grip on Florida's electoral votes in any presidential election.

Frank also explores the complicated relationship between the Cuban state and the Cuban Catholic Church, which is the largest organized body in Cuba apart from the state. In the period after the revolution, the church was deeply antagonistic to the state. Jaime Ortega, now the cardinal, was subjected to a "re-education" camp in the 1960s and has long been an outspoken critic. But the relationship of the state and the church has become increasingly civil, particularly since the visit of St. John Paul II in 1998. The first diplomat received by Raúl

Castro upon assuming the presidency in 2010 was Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, the Vatican's foreign minister. Relations between the state and the Catholic Church are now quite cordial, with the church providing a voice that both carries moral weight and also has the respect of the state. In 2010, Cardinal Ortega played a critical role in negotiating the release of the dissidents arrested in the crackdown in 2003. The Catholic Church in Cuba has, for the last several years, been a respected advocate for reform. It played a central role in brokering the recent exchange of prisoners and the reopening of diplomatic relations.

But perhaps the book's greatest strength lies in making sense of Cuba's economy, including the implications of the dual currency system. If you have not lived in Cuba, then it is hard to fathom exactly how the dual currency system works, much less how much it shapes everyone's lives. Frank does a superb job of capturing the state's pro-

found ambivalence about ceding control over the economy. Even for those who follow Cuba, the economic policies can seem like a sequence of baffling and unpredictable measures—licenses for home barber shops are offered, then cancelled, then offered again, then cancelled again. Cuba eagerly pursued foreign investment with scores of new trade partners, then jettisoned many of them and focused much of its trade in large-scale partnerships with allies, particularly China and Venezuela, and more recently Brazil.

Frank also shows that, while the U.S. embargo creates an endless series of obstacles and burdens, Cuba's economic difficulties are at least equally rooted in the tremendously inefficient practices that have been in place for decades. Cuba's efforts at economic reform are tied to everything else—the emigration of Cuba's best and brightest, the corruption, the sense of uncertainty that young Cubans have about their future. At the same time, the economic reforms are

# FOLEY POETRY CONTEST

Poems are being accepted for the 2015 Foley Poetry Award.

Each entrant is asked to submit only one typed, unpublished poem on any topic. The poem should be 30 lines or fewer and not under consideration elsewhere. Include contact information on the same page as the poem. Poems will not be returned.

Please do not submit poems by email or fax.

Submissions must be postmarked between Jan. 1 and March 31, 2015.

Poems received outside the designated period will be treated as regular poetry submissions and are not eligible for the prize.

The winning poem will be published in the June 8-15 issue of *America*. Three runner-up poems will be published in subsequent issues. Notable entrants also may be considered for inclusion on our poetry site, [americaliterary.tumblr.com](http://americaliterary.tumblr.com).

Cash prize: \$1,000

Send poems to:

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sending shock waves throughout the population, particularly the massive layoffs and reduction in food subsidies. As Frank points out, Cuba has long been the most egalitarian society in Latin America. But the inequalities have grown since the economic crisis, and Frank provides a clear sense of how that has occurred and what it means for the Cuban population.

In his portrayal of Cuba's economic life, as well as throughout the book,

PETER W. WOOD

## IRISH-AMERICAN IDOL

### STRONG BOY

**The Life and Times of John L. Sullivan, America's First Sports Hero**

By Christopher Klein  
Lyons Press. 368p \$26.95

*Strong Boy—The Life and Times of John L. Sullivan, America's First Sports Hero* by Christopher Klein is a raw, powerful and disturbing biography—a head-spinning take on Sullivan's turbulent life. Unlike other sports memoirists, Klein doesn't pull punches; he offers slashing comments on a mythic sports hero.

Sullivan's arrogant boast of the 1880s, "I can lick any son-of-a-bitch in the world," still resonates today inside smoky barrooms across American and Europe. This daring claim could announce only one man: Irish-American John L. Sullivan, the world's heavyweight boxing champion. A legendary fighter, he won the title in the last bare-knuckle championship and then travelled the world like no sportsman before him, defending his title against all comers. But as Klein documents, Sullivan was a legendary drinker who turned up for many of his most important contests scarcely able to defend himself.

Klein's biography gives us an undiluted view of the Boston Strong Boy, a

Frank gives us insights supported by considerable research and analysis that is sharp and compelling. *Cuban Revelations* offers fine storytelling through the lens of Frank's life and work and does much to bring its readers an understanding that is both vivid and deeply substantial about this remarkable country.

JOY GORDON holds the Ellacuria chair in social ethics at Loyola University Chicago.

hero of the ring in the days when prize-fighting was illegal, though avidly followed by every social class. Klein recounts the many times when the law gave Sullivan more trouble than many of his ring opponents. Sullivan fought and beat all the great boxers of his generation—Paddy Ryan, Charley Mitchell, Jake Kilrain—with the notable exception a black fighter, Peter Jackson, against whom Sullivan drew the color line.

For more than a decade Sullivan was invincible. The championship seemed to belong to him. To have met him was a rare honor and people stood in line to "shake the hand that shook the hand of John L. Sullivan," as a popular catchphrase of the time ran.

*Strong Boy* is the story of one of the most feared boxers in history up to that point. Sullivan terrified contenders across the globe. With his swaggering virility he would become one of those outrageous characters that made the turn of the century a colorful era. He drank as he fought, prodigiously, never meeting a saloon he didn't like. And the nation loved him for it. Klein's re-

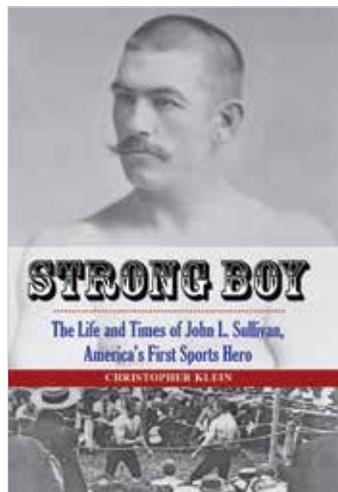
counting of "The Babe Ruth of Boxing" is a story that could only be found in the history pages of early 20th-century America. He was the Muhammad Ali of his generation.

Sullivan was born the son of an immigrant father who fled from Ireland to the United States. The anti-Irish, anti-Catholic discrimination faced by the famine refugees was not subtle. It blared in black and white, in shop windows and newspaper classified ads. He was faced with: "No Irish person need apply" and "Catholics and dogs not allowed." However, Sullivan's toughness and work ethic carried him to the highest levels of one of the most unforgiving sports. When he won the heavyweight belt in 1882, no Bostonians celebrated more than the Irish, who felt blistered by the Brahmin scorn since their arrival. Now one of their own was champion of America. Sullivan instantly became an Irish-American idol, one of the country's first ethnic heroes. In London Sullivan was lauded by the Prince of Wales; Teddy Roosevelt considered him an outstanding American; Baron Rothschild staged one

of the champion's fights on his private estate in France.

After Sullivan became champion, he spent most of his time touring as an actor on the vaudevillian circuit instead of training. Klein chronicles his rapid fistic decline—his spousal abuse, assault and battery, womanizing and his constant drinking. Sullivan's lack of training caught up with him, and with a "tumorous belly, sagging skin, and eyes hanging low in their eye sockets, he was matched with a brash young boxer named Jim Corbett."

The Sullivan-Corbett match was held on Sept. 7, 1892. "Corbett sat in



his dressing room as a priest gave him a blessing, while a relaxed Sullivan cracked jokes with his trainers,” writes Klein. The kid from Chicago was given little chance, but the champion who had a punch like a thunderbolt from Zeus was well past his prime, dissipated by years of boozing and inactivity, and on this night, one of the greatest upsets in sporting history occurred.

In 1915, after losing his title belt, Sullivan announced a new pursuit: “I am ‘coming back’ to have a go with a bigger champion than I ever was—the champion of champions—John Barleycorn.” Klein writes, “His anti-alcohol speech reflected the arc of his life—it was entitled, ‘From Glory to Gutter to God.’” Klein’s book shows the genuine effort made by a troubled soul to gain some understanding of the long, dissipated journey that had been his life. Despite gaining fame and fortune, Sullivan was someone obsessed with the need to redeem himself.

Upon his death, bereaved Bostonians kept spilling in to pay respects to the old gladiator. The mourners were still filing through when it was time to leave for the 10 a.m. funeral Mass at St. Paul’s Church. Klein says, “His coffin was as big as a bed....His iconic white mustache flowed gallantly, with the fine curls on each end. The lifeless right hand that had once delivered such violent punishment clenched a black rosary.”

Father Lyons blessed Sullivan’s grave and reminded all in attendance that Sullivan’s greatest triumph had come outside the ring—his victory over the bottle. Reading *Strong Boy* is like having a ringside seat at the colorful and extravagant world of The Great John L. Sullivan. He was a deeply flawed man, but he remains a great champion, an important cultural figure and a worthy sports idol.

---

**PETER W. WOOD**, a high school teacher, is the author of *Confessions of a Fighter—Battling Through the Golden Gloves and A Clenched Fist—The Making of a Golden Gloves Champion*.

## CLASSIFIED

### Books

*Charles de Foucauld: Journey to Tamanrasset*, by Antoine Chatelard. <http://www.brothercharles.org/wordpress/>.

### Positions

**ADMINISTRATIVE OPENING** for SUPERINTENDENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS. The Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio, is currently accepting applications for the position of Superintendent of Catholic Schools. The superintendent coordinates the Office of Catholic Schools staff, consisting of an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; an Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Government Programs; and a Director of Technology and Professional Development. The superintendent also represents the diocese on educational matters to the civic community and other groups that support the diocesan schools. The superintendent is supported by diocesan-level advisory boards and reports to the Bishop through the Vicar for Educational and Pastoral Services. The candidate must be a practicing Catholic in good standing, able and willing to give witness to the Catholic faith at all times. A graduate degree in education or a related field is required. A doctoral degree is preferred. Relevant experience in Catholic schools, educational leadership and faith formation are highly desirable. Résumé with cover letter, academic transcripts and licenses, and three references with complete contact information can be sent to: Rev. Msgr. John A. Zuraw, Chancellor/Vicar for Pastoral and Educational Services, Diocese of Youngstown, 144 West Wood Street, Youngstown OH 44503. Email: [jjuraw@youngstowndiocese.org](mailto:jjuraw@youngstowndiocese.org). Timeline: opening notice, Jan. 20, 2015; application deadline, Feb. 27, 2015; effective date, July 1, 2015.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.** The Religious Formation Conference (R.F.C.), which fosters and serves initial and lifelong formation for members of religious congregations of women and men, is seeking a new Executive Director for the national office located in Washington, D.C. The successful candidate must be a member of a Roman Catholic religious congregation and have experience with formation or leadership. Qualifications include a master’s degree in theology or equivalent. Applications will be received until March 10, 2015. Go to [www.RelForCon.org/EDSearch](http://www.RelForCon.org/EDSearch) for more detailed information and application process for the Executive Director position.

**LA SALLE INSTITUTE**, Troy, New York. PRINCIPAL. La Salle Institute ([www.lasalleinstitute.org](http://www.lasalleinstitute.org)), an independent Catholic college preparatory school in Troy, N.Y., serving young men in grades six through 12, is seeking a dynamic, collaborative and mission-driven principal. Established by the Brothers of the Christian Schools in 1850, La Salle Institute enjoys a tradition of excellence, offering a competitive academic and co-curricular

program that includes a J.R.O.T.C. leadership component for students in the grades nine through 12.

The new principal of La Salle Institute will be an experienced, energetic and innovative person of integrity and serve as the academic and pastoral leader of the school community. The successful applicant will be a relationship-builder, forging partnerships with all constituencies. The principal will participate fully in the life of the school, be an exceptional communicator and team-builder, embrace change and demonstrate the ability to articulate a vision and plan strategically for the future. Candidates must be passionate about deepening the school’s commitment to innovation, understand the positive impact of technology on education and work to enhance the student-centered program of the school.

A qualified applicant must be a practicing Catholic, hold a master’s degree in educational administration, possess an administrative certification, have a minimum of five years of successful experience in secondary school administration and present a proven track record of accomplishment. Position is available July 1, 2015. Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience.

Candidates must submit electronically a letter of introduction; résumé; statement describing the role of today’s Catholic secondary school administrator in advancing Catholic values and educational excellence in the Lasallian tradition; and names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers of five professional references to: La Salle Institute Principal Search, Catholic School Management, Attn: Jennifer C. Kensel at [office@catholic-schoolmgmt.com](mailto:office@catholic-schoolmgmt.com). Review of applications begins Feb. 1, 2015.

### Sabbatical

**SUMMER SABBATICAL AT S.A.T.** Come for a month or a week to the San Francisco Bay area. The Summer Sabbatical Program at the School of Applied Theology runs May 30 to June 25, 2015. Topics include: “The Liberated Heart: Becoming Who We Truly Are,” with Joyce Rupp; “Praying with Beauty,” with Br. Mickey O’Neill McGrath; “The Path of Desire: Adventures in Spirituality,” with Lisa Fullam; and “Mysticism and the Future of Christianity,” with Michael Crosby, O.F.M.Cap. For more information, go to [www.sargtu.org/summer2015](http://www.sargtu.org/summer2015), or contact Celeste Crine, O.S.F., Associate Director, at (510) 652-1651.

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# In the Wilderness

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (B), FEB. 22, 2015

Readings: Gn 9:8–15, 44–46; Ps 25:4–9; 1 Pt 3:18–22; Mk 1:12–15

*“Repent, and believe in the good news” (Mk 1:15)*

Many theological reasons for Jesus’ baptism have been proposed, explaining it as a sacramental model for the church, an act of solidarity with sinful humanity or “a manifestation of his self-emptying” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1224), but any answer must stress that “the baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God’s suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners” (No. 536). After Jesus’ baptism, “the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.” Because Jesus aligns himself with sinful humanity, the act immediately following his baptism is to do battle with evil, as each of us must do daily.

Jesus, who takes on all of our humanity, did not travel from baptism straight to the glory of the transfiguration but went from baptism to the wilderness, because it is a place that haunts our fragile humanity no matter where we are, and it demands redemption. Jesus’ redemption of humanity begins with the incarnation, but we see it advance in his obedience (unlike Adam and Eve) to the will of God and in his steadfastness to resist temptation.

The model Jesus presents to us when “he was in the wilderness 40 days, tempted by Satan” is one grounded in the reality of human life. Life can be hard, life can be unfair, and life can knock you to the ground. A promise

to relax in the car on the way to work can deteriorate into curses cast against the first driver to cut you off. A promise not to drink, and all the hard work that accompanied it in rehab, can fall apart in one visit to the bar, resulting in a sense of frustration and ineptitude. A family gathered in joy can be smashed apart with the sudden death of a child, plunging people into suffering and darkness. Sin crouches nearby, to tempt us in our struggles, our losses and our suffering.

Unlike Jesus, our ability to resist temptation is flawed, even with the gift of baptism, but baptism also allows us to seek safety in the church when evil threatens to overcome us and drive us into the wilderness alone. For Jesus comes out of the wilderness proclaiming, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” The church was built for the ongoing battle and for repentance when we fall. Repentance is a sign of why the church was built: for salvation.

Noah’s ark was built to save those who took refuge in it, and God promised that “the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.” This ark is an ancient Christian image for the church, for as it says in 1 Peter, by it “a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water;” but in a spiritual sense “baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal

to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Repentance functions as this “appeal to God for a good conscience.”

Repentance is available to us because Jesus chose to align himself in the battle against evil so fully that after emerging from the wilderness, “Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark.” There is a question as



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

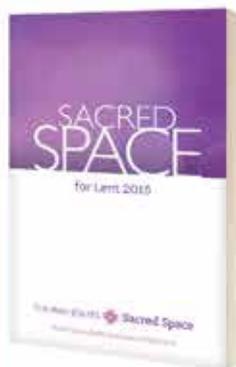
Let Jesus be with you in the wilderness. For what do you need to repent?

to whom these “spirits in prison” represent—whether these spirits are the “fallen angels” or the human dead of the time of Noah—but Jesus’ proclamation to them is built into the church for us: “Repent, and believe in the good news!”

It is Christ—through his battle with evil in the wilderness, his suffering and death and finally his resurrection—who has gained salvation for us. Christ is raised up and at the right hand of God has authority over all powers, human and demonic. We must be encouraged to grasp fearlessly our baptismal mission, for there is no power over which Christ does not rule, and that mission includes repentance when we stumble in our own personal battles. **JOHN W. MARTENS**

JOHN W. MARTENS is an associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn. Twitter: @BibleJunkies.

# LENT 2015

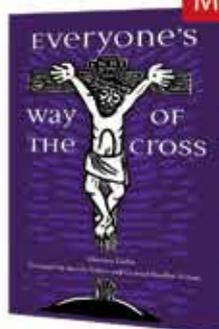


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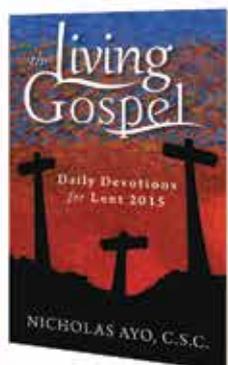
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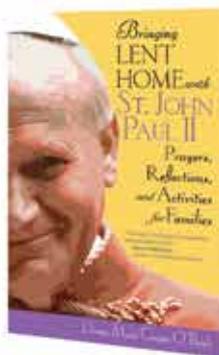


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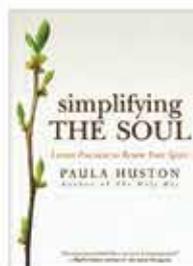


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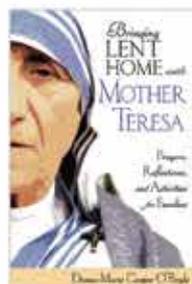
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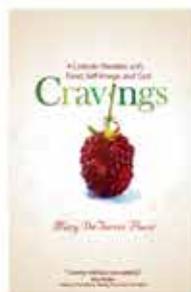
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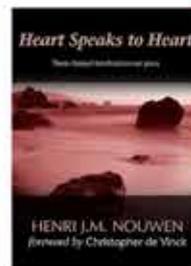
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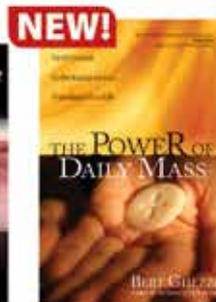
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