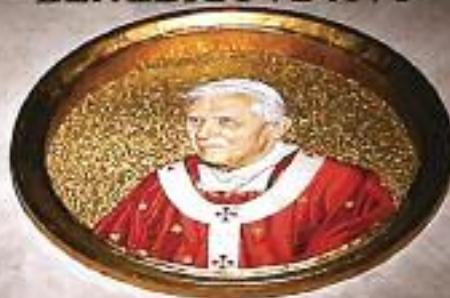


America

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BENEDICTVS XVI



SED ANNO XXI

Looking Back at Benedict

CHRISTOPHER M. BELLITTO • DREW CHRISTIANSEN
TRACEY ROWLAND • DANIEL J. HARRINGTON
JAMES MARTIN • JOHN W. O'MALLEY • OUR READERS

Books on the Bible

OF MANY THINGS

Living as I do in a very large, fragile glass house, I am reluctant to throw stones. I say this because Lent is a good time to take stock of the moral quality of one's relationships and general environs, to get a better idea of how one is or is not a part of the world's problems. There is, however, an occasionally indiscernible line between healthy reflection and self-righteous judgment. In recent years, in addition to the patient grace of God, I have come to rely on a more this-worldly insight in order to make sense of such things: the thought of René Girard, the French-American Catholic cultural critic. Girard stumbled onto an idea a few years ago that he calls mimetic theory, and the basic gist of it is this:

First, Girard says, all human desire is mimetic. Apart from fundamental biological needs, human beings copy one another, not just in basic linguistic and behavioral patterns but also in terms of what we consciously want. Strictly speaking, then, I have no desires that are original to me; rather, I desire according to the desire of another.

Girard's second insight is that human conflict occurs when the desires of multiple people converge on the same object, either seen (that iPad), or unseen (happiness). Third, this conflict, which he calls mimetic rivalry, quickly escalates and can plunge a whole community into crisis. Such crises are resolved through "the scapegoat mechanism." One person, then another and then a whole group of people point the finger of suspicion at an individual, the sacrificial victim, who is then expelled or destroyed. The sacrifice of the scapegoat restores order to the community...until the next crisis.

Admittedly, this is pretty grim news. We are, by nature, not free in the way that we thought; worse, we are prone to pretty brutal forms of violence. The good news, however, is that there is a way out. In the words of one student of

Girard, Michael Kirwan, S.J.: "the Gospel is the biblical spirit that exposes the truth of violent origins, takes the side of the victim and works toward the overcoming of scapegoating as a viable means of social formation." In other words, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus subvert the whole ghastly enterprise.

You may be asking why any of this matters. For starters, if mimetic theory is true, then we may need to rethink some of our most treasured presuppositions. If Girard's world is, in fact, the world we live in, then the modern notion of the autonomous, self-actualizing individual, for example, is nothing more than a romantic myth.

Girard is not without his critics; I have a few questions myself. Still, his theory has some very interesting possibilities. It could help us understand, for example, something that is much on my mind these days: According to Girard's theory, the scapegoat isn't necessarily innocent and frequently isn't. A sinner can still be a scapegoat.

That counterintuitive fact helps explain the sense of self-righteous satisfaction we derive from throwing stones. And there's a lot of stone throwing at the moment; the news is full of tales of individuals who have done apparently sinful things. Many of us like to point to them—prelates, athletes, next-door neighbors, whomever—and say, along with the rest of the group, that there is no way that we could have done what he or she did; that, even in the same situation, in the same circumstances, we would certainly have acted differently. That's a comforting thought, though mostly a lie.

Girard's theory, not to mention revelation and much of human history, challenges that smug, self-righteous assumption. This Lent, we would all do well to consider how. I myself intend to do so in the quiet, though expansive living room of my own glass house.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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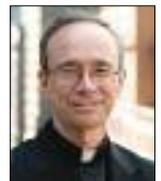
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ON THE WEB

Thomas J. Reese, S.J., right, discusses the papal transition on our podcast. Plus, a video introduction to *Together on Retreat: Meeting Jesus in Prayer*, the new e-book from James Martin, S.J. All at americamagazine.org.



Raising the Minimum

In his State of the Union address, President Obama made an important case for raising the federal minimum wage to \$9 an hour. The last time Congress voted to raise the minimum wage was in 2007, when it authorized a graduated three-year increase. Since then the cost of living has increased significantly, mostly because of an escalation in fuel prices. The current rate of \$7.25 is simply not high enough. Many people who earn the minimum wage have to work multiple jobs to pay the bills. Others must rely on public assistance to cover what they cannot afford. Many young people continue to live at home because their wages are not enough to pay rent.

Raising the minimum wage would make a difference in many lives. One student told *The Huffington Post*: “If the...minimum wage goes up, then I would either be able to make \$200 more a month (which I could put toward loans or, better yet, actually start saving), or I could work about six or seven fewer hours a week, giving me more time to focus on my education.”

The president has also recommended pegging the minimum wage to inflation. This would be a major step forward. Because Congress must authorize every increase, the minimum wage has gradually fallen behind the cost of living. “The remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the more powerful,” wrote Pope John XXIII.

Save the Vote

Testifying in 2006 on the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the historian Alex Keyssar said the “right to vote can be as fragile as it is fundamental.” In the next several months its fragility may be tested.

Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act is directed specifically at 16 states or counties with a history of racial segregation; it requires those jurisdictions to submit changes in voting procedures to the federal government for approval. An Alabama county has challenged the law on the grounds that the law is no longer necessary, and the U.S. Supreme Court will hear the case on Feb. 27. Some of those who have benefited from the law’s protections see the litigation as an attempt to turn back the clock.

A second problem, mentioned by the president in his State of the Union Address, involves reports of voters waiting “five, six or seven hours to vote”—the “long lines” scandal. The Brennan Center for Justice has published recommendations for remedying the problem, which arises from a combination of partisan attempts to screen out ille-

gal voters by means of elaborate identity checks and bad local management. The screening has a disproportionately adverse effect on eligible minority voters. The Brennan report calls for modernized digital registration, a computerized statewide voter database and 10 weekdays and two weekends of early voting as well as an increase in the number of polling places.

There are already at least seven voting reform bills before Congress waiting for attention. A newly appointed bipartisan presidential commission approaches its task with some of their homework already done by someone else. Now all must agree that democracy can flourish only if everyone can and will easily vote.

Hearing All Sides

Some notable voices have responded positively to the latest attempt by the Department of Health and Human Services to resolve a public policy dispute with the U.S. bishops and Catholic institutional employers. The department has dropped ill-advised qualifications for faith-based entities that would be eligible for an exemption from or an accommodation with a new mandate for cost-free contraception coverage in new health insurance plans.

In an initial statement Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, struck a conciliatory tone in the ongoing dispute, noting his desire to find “an acceptable solution...that respects the consciences of all.” After press reports described the U.S. bishops’ statement as a “rejection” of the administration’s overture, Cardinal Dolan took the unusual step of correcting the record, noting the intention of the bishops to study the proposed H.H.S. guidelines and to continue their dialogue with the Obama administration.

The Catholic Health Association described the revision as “substantial progress” and committed the association to further study of the proposed accommodation. And at least two bishops now contemplate a positive end to the dispute with the administration in statements that note points of convergence, the importance of dialogue on public policy matters and concerns about intemperate rhetoric. Bishop Blase Cupich of Spokane, Wash., said the current revision “could be a breakthrough moment.”

These are positions that have not been heard, publicly at least, in the continuing dispute and are grounds for cautious optimism that a settlement will be reached. As the U.S.C.C.B. and other parties continue to evaluate the administration’s proposed accommodation, they should give a full hearing to all voices and perspectives so that a fully informed conclusion can be reached.

A Time to Act

“There are a thousand and one ways to suppress violence by means of violence, but not one of them has ever succeeded in annihilating it,” wrote Nomika Zion, an Israeli woman who lives near the Gaza border, in a letter to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last November.

Ms. Zion speaks for Other Voice, a grass-roots Israeli peace group that has been in dialogue with Palestinians in Gaza. Ms. Zion’s organization is not the only group that has grown weary of the seemingly interminable conflict: Even Hamas has signaled that it might accept a two-state solution to the longtime standoff, which would be a major about-face. And a leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization has expressed his support for President Obama’s upcoming visit to Palestine and Israel, “if it signals an American promise to become an honest and impartial peace broker...rather than repeating the same policy of negotiations for their own sake.”

Recent U.S. presidents, preoccupied with mainly domestic and international security matters, have given little meaningful attention to the Mideast conflict until late in their presidencies. As a result, progress has been halting. The influence of a lame duck U.S. president in international affairs, as in domestic affairs, is greatly diminished. It is encouraging, then, to see that Mr. Obama has decided to make a lasting peace settlement a top near-term priority. The changing political situation in the area also creates an opportunity to act. Until now Mr. Netanyahu has consolidated his power by emphasizing the threat to Israel from its external enemies, by catering to the demands of Israeli settlers and by following through on a popular though unlawful expansion of Israeli territory in East Jerusalem.

Recent events, however, have altered the government’s political position: First, the unexpectedly strong second-place showing of Yahir Lapid, the former television talk show host, in last month’s Israeli elections, revealed that Israeli support for hardline policies may be softening. Mr. Lapid campaigned primarily on economic issues and was not afraid to take on some powerful political constituencies. While Mr. Lapid supports the settlements and has made some troubling statements about maintaining a permanent Jewish majority in Israel, he also believes that talking to the Palestinians is a good idea. Roger Cohen writes in *The New York Times* that Mr. Lapid, who as leader of the second most numerous party in the Knesset, is potentially the second most powerful person in Israeli politics, “must insist

that the continuing undermining of the Palestinian Authority—through soldier or settler violence, military intrusions into Palestinian-run areas and scattered settlement expansion—helps only Hamas.” Mr. Obama also should take advantage of conditions created by Mr. Lapid’s success to persuade the government to adopt more moderate, conciliatory policies.

The Israeli government is being pressured in other ways. Egypt and Qatar are pressing Hamas to support Palestinian reconciliation so as to present a united front before both Israel and the United States. Israel’s liberal party, Meretz, ran in last month’s elections on a platform that called for a peace plan that affirms that the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip belong rightfully to the Palestinians. The Israeli Peace Now movement recently issued a report alleging that Mr. Netanyahu’s support of Israeli settlements seriously undermines the possibility of a two-state solution. One-third of the 6,867 new units Mr. Netanyahu has promoted are in areas that would almost certainly be within the boundaries of a future Palestinian state.

Mr. Obama must make it clear that the settlements constitute a clear and present danger to the viability of a two-state solution and to the future of the U.S./Israeli relationship. The vacillation in Mr. Obama’s first term strengthened Mr. Netanyahu’s belief that he had *carte blanche* from the United States. Mr. Obama must remain faithful to his 2009 declaration in Cairo: “The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements.”

We join our voice with the group of 30 Christian, Muslim and Jewish religious leaders who signed a statement on Jan. 25 urging the Obama administration to work for a “viable two-state peace agreement” in the conflict. “We believe a bold new initiative for an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement should be an immediate priority of the new Administration in 2013,” read the statement of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East, whose signatories included Bishop Richard Pates of Des Moines, the chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on International Peace and Justice.

Nomika Zion concluded her letter to Mr. Netanyahu with the lament that hope has become an illusion. Mr. Obama, in his speeches, sometimes leaves the impression that hope is his middle name. It is time to make it so.



West Bank barrier

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

THE GLOBAL CHURCH

Catholic World Population Center Shifts to South

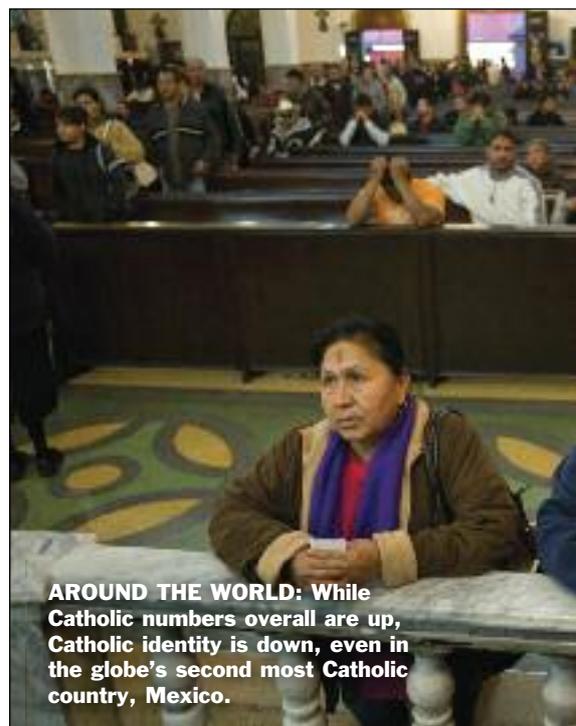
The next pope, whether he represents church “growth zones” like Latin America or Africa or “legacy” regions where secularity and skepticism reign, will have a Catholic world in transformation to shepherd. Over the past century, the number of Catholics around the globe more than tripled, from an estimated 291 million in 1910 to nearly 1.1 billion in 2010, according to a comprehensive demographic study of the global church by the Pew Research Center.

Pew reports that Catholics have made up a remarkably stable share of all people on earth during that time frame. In 1910 Catholics comprised about half (48 percent) of all Christians and 17 percent of the world’s total population. A century later, the Pew study found, Catholics still comprise about half (50 percent) of Christians worldwide and 16 percent of the total global population.

What has changed substantially over the past century is the geographic distribution of the world’s Catholics. In 1910 Europe was home to about two-thirds of all Catholics, and nearly nine in ten lived either in Europe (65 percent) or Latin America (24 percent). But by 2010 only 24 percent of world Catholics were in Europe, and the largest share—39 percent—are now located in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As a percentage of regional popula-

tion, the largest growth occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, which went from about 1 percent Catholic in 1910 to 21



AROUND THE WORLD: While Catholic numbers overall are up, Catholic identity is down, even in the globe’s second most Catholic country, Mexico.

percent Catholic in 2010. The Catholic share of the population in the Asia-Pacific region grew from 1 per-

GERMANY

Church Officials Address ‘Morning After’ Pills in Rape Cases

After two Catholic hospitals in Germany provoked an outcry in January when they declined to offer emergency contraception to a reported rape victim, German bishops agreed on Feb. 21 to permit certain types of “morning after” pills to be administered to women who have been sexually assaulted. While the church remains opposed to abortion and artificial birth control, in Germany it will now differentiate in cases of rape between pills that prevent sperm from fertilizing an egg in the womb and pills that induce an abortion.

Archbishop Robert Zollitsch of

Freiburg, chairman of the German episcopal conference, said that at its spring meeting in Trier the conference had “confirmed that women who have been victims of rape will get the proper human, medical, psychological and pastoral care” at church-run hospitals.

“That can include medication with a ‘morning-after pill’ as long as this has a prophylactic and not an abortive effect,” he said in a statement. “Medical and pharmaceutical methods that induce the death of an embryo may still not be used.” That means there is no change to the church’s ban on so-called abortion pills based on the drug

Mifepristone or RU-486.

The 25-year-old victim at the heart of the policy shift had been referred to Catholic hospitals in Cologne after she was drugged at a party and woke up on a park bench fearing she had been raped. In a statement on Jan. 31, Cardinal Joachim Meisner of Cologne said her experience “shames us deeply because it contradicts our Christian mission and our purpose.”

The German bishops’ decision received the endorsement of a Vatican official on Feb. 22, who said the church has accepted the possibility of preventing ovulation by means of medication in a woman who has been raped as an “unassailable rule” for 50 years.

According to Carol Keehan, D.C., president and chief executive officer of the Catholic Health Association, “mis-



cent to 3 percent during this period. Meanwhile, the Catholic share of North America's population grew

from 16 percent to 26 percent.

In several countries with large Catholic populations, the share of the populace self-identifying as Catholic has declined over the last decade. Brazil has the largest Catholic population in the world, but the share of self-identified Catholics in Brazil dropped from approximately three-quarters (74 percent) in 2000 to about two-thirds (65 percent) in 2010. Mexico, the country with the second-largest Catholic population in the world, went from about 89 percent Catholic in 2000 to 85 percent Catholic in 2010.

The United States is home to about 7 percent of all Catholics in the world. As of 2010, an estimated 23 percent of U.S. adults and 24 percent of the total U.S. population are Catholic. The U.S. Catholic population has lost more members than it has gained from denominational switching. In fact, one in 10 adults in the United States is a former Catholic, according to the Pew

Research Center's 2009 report "Faith in Flux."

In addition, the Catholic population in the United States has been heavily shaped by immigration and includes a rising share of Latinos. More than half (52 percent) of all migrants to the United States are Catholic. Of the estimated 75.4 million Catholics in the United States in 2010, according to Pew, just over 22 million were born outside the United States (30 percent). By comparison, slightly more than 13 percent of the overall U.S. population is foreign-born.

Three-quarters (76 percent) of Catholic immigrants living in the United States are from Latin America and the Caribbean, while about 10 percent each have come from Asia-Pacific and Europe. A Pew survey of adult U.S. Catholics finds that 60 percent are non-Hispanic whites, 33 percent are Hispanic and 7 percent are other minorities, including Asians.

understanding" surrounds the issue. Some, despite scientific evidence to the contrary, insist that "morning after" treatments act as abortifacients, and others allege that rape victims cannot receive proper care at Catholic hospitals in the United States. Neither is true, said Sister Keehan. The church's "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services" are clear on the permissibility of treating rape victims with contraceptive drugs. Sister Keehan said, "Frankly I am not sure of any [U.S. Catholic] hospitals that do not allow it."

Hospitals that maintain rape treatment centers, both Catholic and non-Catholic, according to Sister Keehan, are the best places for rape victims to be taken because they specialize in treatment for sexual assault. They will

provide emergency contraception and preventive care for sexually transmitted diseases and H.I.V., and they will be more experienced in evidence collection and counseling.

"It may be because of a confusion about the E.R.D. and a lack of experience in treating rape victims," she explained, "that some Catholic hospitals may not offer contraception."

So-called morning-after contraception has become one of the major sticking points in the current dispute between the U.S. bishops and the Obama administration over new mandates included in the Affordable Care Act. Though the A.C.A.'s new requirements for women's health care exclude RU-486 specifically, they do include Plan B and ella. Some who oppose the new mandate describe these drugs as

abortifacients, but emerging medical research indicates that the drugs work by preventing ovulation from occurring.

"Hospitals and caregivers sometimes get pressure and misinformation," said Sister Keehan. "[But] Catholic hospitals need to be places where a woman experiencing this horrible trauma gets the best and most compassionate care."



POLICY SHIFT: Cardinal Joachim Meisner of Cologne, Germany

Stop the Drones?

Ellen Grady, a member of the Catholic Worker from Ithaca, N.Y., does not like the idea that war has come home to her backyard. The war, in this case, is the country's war on terror. The place where it is being waged is the Hancock Field Air National Guard Base near Syracuse, a little more than an hour north of where Grady lives. Hancock is one of several U.S. bases where drone operators pilot unmanned aircraft in their search for suspected Muslim militants halfway around the world. For the third time in two years, Grady, 50, was arrested for protesting the drones during a nonviolent act of witness on Ash Wednesday to mark the beginning of the season of Lent. She was one of nine people arrested after refusing to leave base property. The group held signs calling for the end of drone warfare in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. A statement released by the nine said they came to Hancock "to remember the victims of our drone strikes and to ask God's forgiveness for the killing of other human beings, most especially children."

Tamil Appeal

A Sri Lankan Catholic bishop and 132 Christian clergypersons and religious from different churches in north and east Sri Lanka have written a letter to the U.N. Human Rights Council appealing for an end to the crisis in that country. They charge that thousands of Tamil people, including church leaders, have been killed or "disappeared." The letter seeks "a strong and action-oriented resolution in relation to accountability, reconciliation and human rights in Sri Lanka." It asks the United Nations press Sri Lankan authorities on disappearances,

NEWS BRIEFS

Mary Jo Copeland, founder of Sharing and Caring Hands and Mary's Place for the homeless in Minneapolis, Minn., was honored on Feb. 15 with the **Presidential Citizens Medal**. • A Pew Research survey reports Americans favor President Obama's proposal to **raise the minimum wage** to \$9 an hour by almost 3 to 1. • Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, urged House members on Feb. 15 to extend **federal conscience protections** to the new mandates for private health plans. • In one of his last efforts to clean up the image of the **Vatican bank**, Pope Benedict XVI approved the hiring of the German industrialist Ernst von Freyberg, 54, as the bank's new president. • To support **prayer for Pope Benedict XVI** and the selection of a new pope, the U.S. bishops' Secretariat of Divine Worship is offering liturgical and musical resources and specific prayers at bit.ly/USCb1w. • The Holy See and the **Republic of South Sudan** established diplomatic relations on Feb. 22 as tensions continued between the new republic and the nation of Sudan to the north.



Mary Jo Copeland

press restrictions, the release of political prisoners and land reparation. "In the last year, those criticizing and challenging the government in peaceful ways, including by engagement with the U.N., have been assaulted, questioned, arrested, threatened, discredited and intimidated by government ministers, officials, military and police," the Christian leaders say.

Kasper Proposes Women Deacons

A diaconate for women should be considered as a new role for women in the church. Cardinal Walter Kasper made this proposal during a study day discussing how to involve more women in church life, convened as part of the spring assembly of the German Bishops Conference in the city of Trier, in western Germany, on Feb. 21.

Kasper spoke of a "deaconess" role that would be different from the classic deacon but could include pastoral, charitable, catechetical and special liturgical functions. The deaconess would not be designated through the sacrament of orders, but by a blessing. Many women already perform the functions of a deacon, he argued, so as a practical matter the possibility cannot be ignored. Cardinal Kasper noted that the female diaconate was foreseen in the church in the third and fourth centuries. Regarding the ordination of women, however, the cardinal said, "I do not think you could change anything in the fact that women cannot be ordained priests; it is the unbroken tradition of the Eastern Church as well as the West."

From CNS and other sources.



The Pope They Missed

On the morning Pope Benedict announced his resignation, I was at a Catholic Charities program for people struggling with mental illness, addiction and homelessness. This example of faith in action is an overlooked part of Benedict's legacy. In two of his three encyclicals, Benedict taught clearly and eloquently on the duty to care for the poor and vulnerable, declared "justice is the primary way of charity" and placed these obligations at the core of Catholic life: "Love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind is as essential to her [the church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel" ("Deus Caritas Est," No. 15).

Later I watched news coverage of the announcement, which focused properly on its unprecedented nature, legitimately on the sexual abuse scandals and then predictably on Benedict's teaching on abortion, same-sex marriage and a male, celibate priesthood. The pope and church were presented as out-of-touch opponents of the sexual revolution. It escapes some that opposing the destruction of unborn children and a redefinition of marriage does not make Benedict a conservative pope, but a Catholic pope. Sometimes I wonder who is more obsessed with sexual issues, the Catholic Church or American television.

Benedict's greatest disconnection from U.S. elites may not be about sex, but social and economic life: His advo-

cacy for the life and dignity of the poorest and most vulnerable, his warnings to avoid military force in international disputes, his groundbreaking call for sacrifice to care for God's creation and his warnings about "a selfish and individualistic mindset which finds expression in an unregulated financial capitalism." These themes do not fit into poll-tested political messages about the middle class, the "makers, not the takers" and the avoidance of hard choices and sacrifice.

Washington sees events through its own narrow categories. It is both intrigued and appalled by a quick, secret election without declared candidates, polls or political consultants. At the White House in 2008, Benedict offered a different view:

The preservation of freedom calls for the cultivation of virtue, self-discipline, sacrifice for the common good and a sense of responsibility towards the less fortunate. It also demands the courage to engage in civic life and to bring one's deepest beliefs and values to reasoned public debate.

Benedict consistently called for defending the lives and dignity of all. He insisted that "charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and...their political activity, lived as social charity" (D.C.E.) and that "the market...must not become the place where the strong subdue the weak" ("Caritas in Veritate"). He taught that the church's role in public life is

inescapable, demanding and limited:

It is not the church's responsibility to make this teaching prevail in political life.

Rather, the church wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interest (D.C.E., No. 28).

For those who listened, Benedict is more the pope of *and*.

For secular Washington, Benedict was the pope of *no*. For those who listened, Benedict is more the pope of *and*, connecting

charity and truth, faith and reason, protection of life and the pursuit of justice, religious freedom and peacemaking, responsibilities and limitations of government and markets, care for creation and care for "the least of these." For Benedict, there is "one teaching," both moral and social.

The stories of resurrection I heard at Catholic Charities left me grateful to be a part of a faith community that does such lifesaving work. I wish I were part of a political community that sees our church and its retiring leader through more than issues of human sexuality. Our ecclesial, political and journalistic institutions all need to better reflect the "Caritas...love" that is at the heart of Benedict's leadership, and now of his legacy.

JOHN CARR

JOHN CARR, *Washington correspondent for America*, has served as director of justice, peace and human development for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and as a residential fellow at the Harvard Institute of Politics.

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A Pope's Progress

Assessing Benedict's legacy

BY CHRISTOPHER M. BELLITTO

Church historians measure time in centuries, not weeks, so it is a daunting challenge to attempt even a brief assessment of a pontificate just concluded. Daring to go where prophets should fear to tread, what follows can only be a tentative *status quaestionis* of Pope Benedict XVI's papacy at this fascinating moment in the church's life.

Achievements

It's about Jesus. From the very beginning of this papacy, it was clear that Pope Benedict saw himself as a professor-pope whose main subject is the Son of God. His inspiring encyclicals on the theological virtues, three volumes on Jesus and lovely *Angelus* and Wednesday audience talks on the early church and saints' lives will likely be his greatest scholarly and pastoral

HISTORY LESSON: A child reviews an exhibition in Cologne, Germany.

CHRISTOPHER M. BELLITTO is chair and associate professor of history at Kean University in Union, N.J. His recent books include *101 Questions and Answers on Popes and the Papacy* (Paulist Press).

legacies. In the main, they did not explore the dense and controversial theological positions that distinguished his pre-episcopal career but rather the central sources of Christianity. The challenge to balance faith and reason, which began in the Greco-Roman context of the first believers and worked its way through the medieval and Enlightenment centuries, remains with religious believers of all persuasions to this day. These are valuable resources.

The papacy, not the pope. Even before the resignation, it was clear that the quiet Pope Benedict was not the extroverted Pope John Paul II. The cult of the priesthood, papacy and person of Karol Wojtyła that was distasteful to some was not to be repeated. Even the way Pope Benedict celebrated Mass—with a large crucifix centered on the altar, much to the consternation of cameramen—put the focus on the Eucharist, not the celebrant. By separating the person from the papacy, Benedict may have helped recover a healthier conception of the papacy as an office with invested authority and not personal power—an important distinction lost in virtually every hierarchy, religious or secular.

Controversies

A papacy of unintended consequences. Pope Benedict XVI and his curia did not communicate well with the world. Not a few observers believed that Pope John Paul II's perfect pitch was replaced by a somewhat tone-deaf musician pope. Pope Benedict angered Jews when he reinstated a schismatic bishop who was revealed to be a Holocaust-denier. His expansion of the use of the Latin Mass did not remove offensive language about Jewish conversion and blindness from the Good Friday liturgy. In 2010, when Pope Benedict instituted some helpful procedures to investigate and remove pedophile priests, the same Vatican document aligned the question of ordaining women to the priesthood with the sexual abuse crisis. The pope showed he could learn from his mistakes, however, like his decision to take a well-received trip to Turkey in 2007 to try to make amends for the misunderstood speech in Regensburg about Islam the year before. Yet he could sometimes muddle his own message and then seem surprised by reactions.

The scandal surrounding the sexual abuse of children and the cover up of such actions by bishops and priests. It appears that as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Ratzinger wanted to act more decisively against

priests accused of sexual abuse of minors but was unable to do so. As pope he decried what he called “filth” among guilty priests, but it took him some time before he met with victims. The Vatican's 2010 directives concerning abusive priests offered some hope: the statute of limitations for investigations was doubled from 10 to 20 years, laicization procedures were sped up, possessing child pornography was declared a grave crime and lay participation in the juridical process was increased.

But greater transparency and accountability were not extended to investigating bishops who might have moved those priests from one parish to another to avoid scandal instead of acting to protect children. The investigation by outside bishops of the response to abuse in Ireland is praiseworthy, yet it remains an exception to a process that cries out for a standard, objective investigation by a board of qualified men and women

(clergy and lay) of a supervising bishop simultaneously with an accused priest. With investigation must come real punishment; the church cannot move on without decisive action on these crimes and sins.

A culture of distrust. At a moment when the church is blessed more than ever with theologians, ethicists and church historians of both sexes from many cultural contexts and vocations, the misunderstood, sometimes heavy-handed disciplining of those suspected of undermining the magisterium continues to harm the church, as it has for more than three decades. The teachings of many scholars have been questioned without a peer-reviewed and dialogue-based forum for discourse. This fact has alienated some of the best and the brightest who were motivated by the Second Vatican Council's openness and invitation. Instead, they found their efforts under scrutiny by a system that appeared bereft of due process that would honor the dignity of the accused and their well-intentioned efforts to serve the church. We can hope that the investigation of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious will now be resolved so that we can all say with pride and gratitude (and not simply defiance), “Thank you, sisters.”

Unresolved Issues

Ecumenical, interreligious and intra-Catholic dialogue. We should not be surprised that Pope Benedict made minimal progress when dealing with our brother and sister

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Christians, along with non-Christians, since much of his time at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was spent emphasizing how Roman Catholic beliefs are different from other faiths, even as Pope John Paul II highlighted shared values. Yet despite missteps with Muslims and Jews, Benedict was not afraid to apologize and to work hard to repair those relationships, though with mixed results. His back-bending outreach to Anglicans, however, angered some within the Anglican Communion, who saw him as raiding their community. Some Roman Catholics charged him with caring more about non-Romans than about them—and that is before we consider how much time was spent trying to bring the numerically few Society of St. Pius X adherents back into the fold.

Vatican II: church governance and reform. If Pope John Paul II could be called the most medieval pope in recent history—influencing church and state in equal measure—then Pope Benedict was more of a Renaissance monarch, who reportedly consulted few and could disregard good advice. He let the curial drift of Pope John Paul II's papacy worsen, which led to damaging problems like the "VatiLeaks" and Vatican bank scandals. Shared governance and greater collegiality among bishops as well as among clergy, religious and laity was a great hope to come out of the Second Vatican Council, but there is more to be done, specifically when it comes to real decision-making. Popes and bishops must seek out the creative and deliberative skills of learned, active and faithful men and women who want to serve the church with the gifts and experience that the Holy Spirit has bestowed on them.

For all the talk of Benedict XVI reforming the reform of the Second Vatican Council and seeking to turn back the clock, especially liturgically, no less eminent scholars than the ecclesologist Rev. Joseph Komonchak (*Am.* 2/2/09) and the church historian John W. O'Malley, S.J. (*Theological Studies*, September 2012) have pointed out that in a talk Benedict gave to the Curia in December 2005, the pope essentially legitimated discussing Vatican II as a dynamic council of real reform when he declared, "It is precisely in this combination of continuity and discontinuity at different levels that the very nature of true reform consists." What Pope Benedict has said about the Second Vatican Council then and since continues to be parsed, but he may have opened a pathway to a synthesis of the council's goals that church history teaches is only possible at least 50 years after its adjournment.

Pope Benedict's honesty in acknowledging that he could no longer do his job resonates with the Christian paradox that we can be strong with God when we are weak as human beings. Moreover, his action allows us to have conversations that we know are necessary but could not speak aloud before.

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As Pope John Paul II suffered before our eyes, it seemed impolite to ask what would happen if he slipped into a coma. Pope Benedict's selfless action opens the discussion; we can now talk about a pope's living will.

This was servant leadership at its generous best. Most resignations are forced or accompanied by the phrase "in disgrace." Pope Benedict's resignation seems voluntary and planned. Whether a shoe of

ON THE WEB
Questions and answers about the papal election.
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scandal will drop seems unlikely, but the fact that so many feel there must be more to the story than just advanced age and poor health bears troubling testimony to the lack of credibility that church leadership holds in the eyes of some believers and the world.

Still, in our age of bullying and raw power, who walks away? The answer: Someone who realized that his time had passed, that he had accomplished what he could and that the right thing to do was step down in a noble, honorable and praiseworthy manner. In the end, Pope Benedict XVI may have been a man better suited for another time—a shy, scholarly pontiff more fit to preside when the church needed a strong manager. While his resignation may not vindicate his missteps, it could well turn out that this teaching pope's greatest lesson is that humility is still a virtue. **A**



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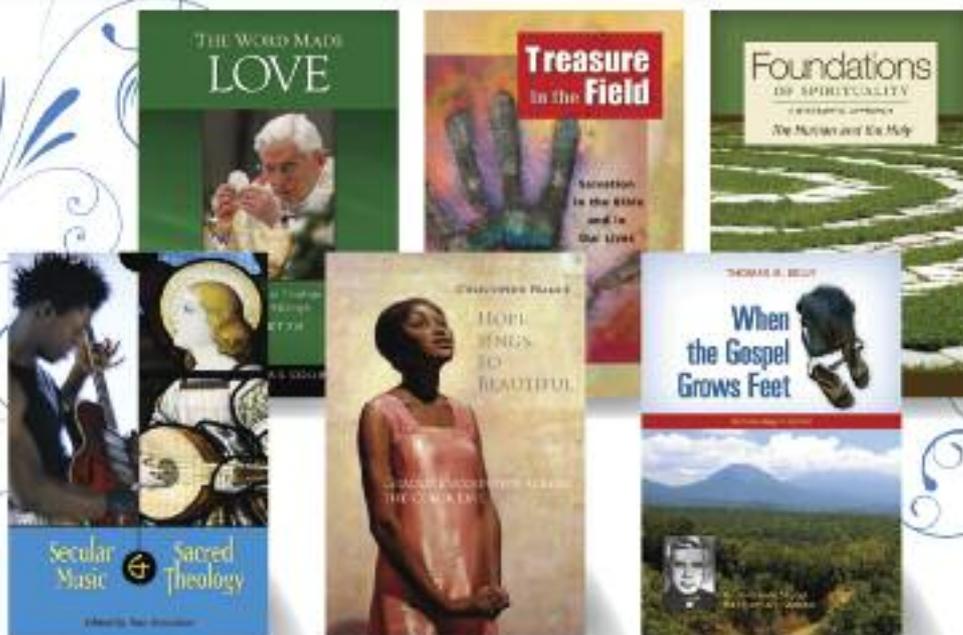
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Reading Benedict

Reviewing the pope's love of the word

Pope Benedict XVI's announcement on Feb. 11 caught the world by surprise and moved many to reflect not only on his decision to step down from the See of Peter, but on the highlights of his eight-year papacy. We asked four contributors to reflect on Pope Benedict's legacy, as evidenced in his encyclicals, his role as a theologian, his Jesus trilogy and his Angelus messages. Reader responses to the pope's announcement follow on page 20.

The God of Love and Learning BY DREW CHRISTIANSEN

Thumbnail portraits of Pope Benedict XVI invariably describe him as a scholar. Readers of his encyclicals will surely agree. They are replete with citations from the fathers and doctors of the church. But unlike statements of other modern popes, they are rich as well in references to secular authors, ancient and modern, like Plato, Cicero, Nietzsche, Marx and Dostoevsky. He employs the Western intellectual and artistic tradition to convey his vision of faith to both church and world.

Pope Benedict's writings lack the memorable phrases of Paul VI, like "Development is the new name for peace" and "civilization of love," and the geopolitical grand vision of John Paul II, whose words inspired revolution in Eastern Europe. What he has offered instead is a well-integrated understanding of faith and the Christian life, clearly and precisely written—from the heart. His social teaching, however, is innovative and even radical in its proposals.

His first encyclical, "Deus Caritas Est," limned the mystery of divine love at the heart of the Christian life. At a time when the new atheists were holding forth, he chose to write about love, the heart of the Christian vision. He treated human love, especially sexual union, as holding intimations of immortality, a necessity for self-giving and a desire for fulfillment in God. He defined the life of discipleship as "communion" with Christ and in Christ with all Christians, and affirmed the essential unity of love of God and neighbor.

The second part of the letter explained that the church's service of charity, including work for justice, together with proclamation of the Gospel and celebration of the liturgy, is central to the life of the church. Yet its caveats about the

conduct of officially sponsored Catholic charities raised concern about unnecessary Vatican centralization. In January this year, those worries grew when the Vatican laid down regulations affirming bishops' responsibility for charities under them and placing international ones under the supervision of the Roman Curia.

"Spes Salvi," Pope Benedict's second encyclical, is difficult to read but pastorally instructive. The letter starts as a meditation on the text, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1). After a long appreciative argument with "the God that Failed," the myth of material progress found especially in 19th and 20th-century Marxism, he turns to personal experience, reflecting on the unfolding hopes of a single lifetime. Humans need, he writes, both "the great hope" in God and "lesser hopes" that mark the human lifecycle. Each generation, moreover, is called to contribute to human progress. Our ultimate hope, however, is realized in Christ in whom we share the unconditional love of God.

The last third of "Spes Salvi" is dedicated to practices of hope. This whole section is worth prayerful consideration, particularly in Lent. The last unit on final judgment is remarkable for its uplifting treatment of a usually dolorous topic. "The encounter with [Christ] is the decisive act of judgment. Before his gaze all falsehood melts away."

"Caritas in Veritate" was Pope Benedict's first, full, social encyclical. Written in the middle of the world financial crisis and in the wake of rapid globalization, the 2009 letter called for an authority to regulate international financial transactions and called for greater global governance. It called for an economy based on trust and urged new economic models that combined the profit motive with contribution to the common good. Correcting misimpressions created by "Deus Caritas Est," he affirmed structural reform as "political charity," declaring it "no less excellent" than direct service to the neighbor.

Pope Benedict's encyclicals do not make for easy reading, but their close study will reward the reader. At times his theology has the potential to inspire. It is far more centrist than his critics allow, and the particulars of his social teaching are downright radical.

DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J., *the former editor in chief of America, is a visiting scholar in the theology department of Boston College.*



PROOFREADING: Pope Benedict XVI holds a copy of his book *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives* in November 2012.

CNS PHOTO/L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO VIA REUTERS

A Christian Humanist Pope BY TRACEY ROWLAND

Joseph Ratzinger once observed that it was impossible for him to say how much he owed to Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar as intellectual mentors. As a seminarian he found that reading de Lubac's *Catholicism* gave him not only a new and deeper connection with the thought of the church fathers but also "a new way of looking at theology and faith as such." He also found in de Lubac's *Corpus Mysticum* a new understanding of the unity of the church and the Eucharist, and this in turn gave him a way into the mind of St. Augustine. De Lubac's ecclesiology and Christocentric anthropology strongly undergirds his second and third encyclicals, "Spe Salvi" and "Caritas in Veritate," and the hallmark Balthasarian emphasis on the transcendental of beauty appears in so many of his publications that in the future he may well be remembered as that early 21st-century pope who went to war against liturgical philistines.

In addition to de Lubac and von Balthasar, another key mentor for Ratzinger was Romano Guardini. Karl Rahner

described Guardini as "a Christian humanist who led Germany's Catholics out of an intellectual and cultural ghetto and into the contemporary world." Ratzinger said that he was taught by Guardini that the essence of Christianity is "not an idea, not a system of thought, not a plan of action. The essence of Christianity is a person: Jesus Christ himself." This principle became enshrined in "Dei Verbum," the 1965 conciliar document that Ratzinger helped to draft and that formed the central theme of his first encyclical, "Deus Caritas Est." Guardini's liturgical theology also fed into Pope Benedict's 2007 apostolic exhortation "Sacramentum Caritatis" while Guardini's scriptural hermeneutics fed into the 2010 apostolic exhortation "Verbum Domini." According to Ratzinger, Guardini recognized that: "the liturgy is the true, living environment for the Bible and that the Bible can be properly understood only in this living context from which it first emerged. The texts of the Bible, this great book of Christ, are not to be seen as the literary products of some scribes at their desks, but rather as the words of Christ himself delivered in the celebration of holy Mass."

Pope Benedict's interest in the theological virtues of faith, hope and love can be tracked to his studies of the philosophy

of Josef Pieper. He has acknowledged that his own publications on the theological virtues were an attempt to extend the philosophical insights of Pieper into the territory of theology. His pre-papal work *The Yes of Jesus Christ: Spiritual Exercises in Faith, Hope and Love* was dedicated to Pieper on his 85th birthday. It was Pieper who first put the Archbishops of Krakow and Munich-Freising into contact with one another.

In the many magisterial documents of Pope Benedict XVI one will not find heavy doctrinal pronouncements but rather an eloquent synthesis of insights drawn from two millennia of Catholic scholarship, with a view to shining light onto some contemporary spiritual pathology. One can see the Ignatian influence of de Lubac and von Balthasar, the Thomist influence of Pieper, Guardini's Bonaventurian Christocentrism, a Benedictine liturgical sensibility, a Bavarian Marian piety and now an encounter with the desert spirituality of the Carmelites in deep affinity with Pope John Paul II.

In the papacy of Benedict XVI the church has been blessed with a son of Catholic Bavaria who along the pathways of life managed to meet and befriend the greatest minds in the church of his time, and through his friendships with them placed the intellectual and cultural treasures of the church at the service of a Christian humanism.

TRACEY ROWLAND is dean and permanent fellow of the *John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family* in Melbourne, Australia.

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The Pope's Jesus

BY DANIEL J. HARRINGTON

Pope Benedict XVI's Jesus books are both an affirmation of the principles of the Second Vatican Council's "Dei Verbum" and a challenge to biblical scholars and theologians today. The first volume covers events in the Gospels from Jesus' baptism to his transfiguration. The second volume focuses on events of Holy Week. A third volume treats the infancy narratives in the Gospels. Never before has a reigning pope written such books for the general public and claimed to welcome criticisms of his work.

The young Joseph Ratzinger wrote a major commentary on "Dei Verbum," the 1965 document on divine revelation, and through the years he has maintained a strong interest in the relationship between the Bible and theology. He presided at the sessions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission that issued in the 1993 document "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church." In response to the 2008 synod on the Bible in the life and ministry of the church, he issued the apostolic exhortation "Verbum Domini" in 2010, which is an extensive summary of recent Catholic Church teachings on the Bible and its interpretation. An important part of his legacy as theologian and pope is his effort at clarifying and encouraging the study of the Bible and its pastoral applications.

The genre of the pope's Jesus books is best described as theological exegesis. He approaches the Gospels not only as the words of human authors but also (and especially) as the word of God. He often uses the methods and results of historical criticism, which he repeatedly describes as "indispensable." However, he is equally insistent that simply determining what a text might have meant in its original setting is not enough. Thus he emphasizes also the importance of the spiritual or theological reading of biblical texts. In carrying out his program of theological exegesis, he joins historical exegesis of the Gospels with Old Testament precedents, patristic theological insights, modern theological concerns, liturgical practice and contemporary experience.

At the outset of his first volume, the pope states clearly his principles of Gospel interpretation. He maintains that the portrait of Jesus in the Gospels is trustworthy and that this (and not some modern scholarly reconstruction) is the proper object of study and devotion. For him, the "historical Jesus" is the Jesus of the Gospels. He takes this Jesus to be the key to interpreting all the Scriptures, and so he reads the Bible as a whole from a christological-canonical perspective. And while he attends to Jesus' historical context, his major interest in writing about Jesus is his theological significance.

The pope's Jesus books are not biographies of Jesus or exegetical commentaries or a systematic treatise on Christology. Instead, they are a form of biblical theology or theological exegesis, a series of learned reflections on various episodes in the Gospels. They freely use Old Testament passages as a way of understanding New Testament texts. They interpret Scripture by Scripture and are attuned to the liturgical and sacramental implications of the Gospel texts. Thus they illustrate how one very learned reader of the Gospels applies the principles of "Dei Verbum" and other modern Catholic documents on the Bible.

Pope Benedict XVI is well known for his love of music, and so his theological method has often been compared to a symphony in which all the different instruments join together to form a pleasing whole. My advice in reading the pope's Jesus books is to respect them for what they are, enjoy the theological symphony and learn from a master composer and conductor.

DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J., is professor of New Testament at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry in Brighton, Mass. This article has been adapted from the author's article "Benedict's Passion" (*America*, 4/11/2011).

Introducing Others to Christ

BY JAMES MARTIN

One of the most underreported and yet most appealing facets of Pope Benedict XVI's papacy was his extensive series of Angelus messages. At noon on Sundays, when in Rome, the pope appeared on the balcony of the papal apartments overlooking St. Peter's Square and, along with the crowd, prayed the ancient prayer known as the Angelus. This has been a papal practice since Pope John XXIII, though other popes have used the occasion in different ways. For Benedict, the Angelus was a perfect time to reflect on Sunday's Gospel reading, a saint associated with the Gospel (say, one of the apostles), a recently canonized saint, a nearby feast day or the beginning of a liturgical season. Occasionally he used the opportunity to comment on an event in the life of the church, like the closing of the recent synod of bishops. Mainly, though, his Angelus messages functioned as small homilies.

As in his three-volume book *Jesus of Nazareth*, as well as in his other publications (beside the encyclicals, his published works range from books and essays on the church fathers, on prayer, on devotion to the Blessed Mother and other topics), the Angelus messages showed Benedict at his best: a brilliant theologian whose greatest strength is making the Gospel, the traditions of the church, the church fathers and the lives of the saints accessible to mod-

ern-day believers. In Benedict one finds that most appealing of Christian teachers: a person who has, over decades of study and prayer, so thoroughly imbibed what he has learned that he is able to convey it with great clarity. Another benefit of these messages was their brevity. No more than four or five paragraphs, they were easily heard by the crowd and easily digested by anyone who would later read them.

To take one example, here is the pope's meditation, in his Angelus message on Jan. 27 of this year, on the reading from the Gospel of Luke (4:14-21), when Jesus preaches in the synagogue at Nazareth. He offers a brief reflection on Jesus' dramatic words, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

This Gospel passage also challenges us "today." First of all, it makes us think about how we live Sunday, a day of rest and a day for the family. Above all, it is the day to devote to the Lord, by participating in the Eucharist, in which we are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ and by his life-giving Word. Second, in our diversified and distracted time, this Gospel passage invites us to ask ourselves whether we are able to listen. Before we can speak of God and with God we must listen to him, and the liturgy of the Church is the "school" of this listening to the Lord who speaks to us. Finally, he tells us that every moment can be the propitious "day" for our conversion. Every day (*kath'ēmeran*) can become the today of our salvation, because salvation is a story that is ongoing for the Church and for every disciple of Christ. This is the Christian meaning of *carpe diem*: seize the day in which God is calling you to give you salvation!

In his encyclicals, books, homilies and especially in his Angelus messages, one finds the heart of the pope's ministry: the desire to introduce people to Christ. As any good pastor does, he tries to "actualize" the text, making it accessible and relevant. As any good theologian does, he draws on the church's rich tradition (here he speaks of the Eucharist; in other places he will quote church fathers). And, like any good scholar he cannot resist a little Greek! (Here Benedict is referring to the use of "daily" later in Luke.)

Shining through his Angelus messages is a passion to communicate the person of Jesus to his audience. One also senses that this is what the pope enjoys most: writing and speaking about Christ. May he have many more years for this ministry of the Word.

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is editor at large of *America*. His e-book *Together on Retreat: Meeting Jesus in Prayer* has just been released.

Off the Net

News of the pope's pending resignation sparked much commentary on America's Web site. Here we offer a selection of the responses. To take part in the discussion, visit americamagazine.org.

It is revealing the different decisions made by saints and popes facing similar conditions. The uniqueness of each human being reflects how God guides each conscience through his/her own path when discerning and making serious life decisions. Benedict XVI's historic resignation shows the Spirit leading the church. The mystery of the future is just that, the mystery of God's plan.

CODY SERRA

The Christocentric depth, beauty and deep spirituality of the pope's theological writing continues to take my breath away and has been instrumental in opening a door to Jesus, so long blocked for me. I had not expected it. Reading his original work was an encounter with the "author of life" this pope unflinchingly loves.

MELANIE STATOM

I think the resignation in many ways reflects a return by the pope to an earlier stage in his ecclesiology, for it fits perfectly with the reformed vision of the church's future that he sketched in his 1969 radio address, "What Will the Church Look Like in 2000?" This post-conciliar vision of reform saw times of both crisis and renewal ahead for the church, which would issue in a smaller yet holier institution. It would be a church that shed its arrogant claims to worldly greatness in the pursuit of a humility born of the meeting with Christ at its heart and soul. As our Lord reminds us, faith need not be physically large to be fruitful, for the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed.

NATHANIEL CAMPBELL

There is hardly a situation that occurs in the life of man that Shakespeare has not summarized in a phrase. I paraphrase Malcolm's words in *Macbeth*: "Nothing in his papacy became him like the leaving it. He resigned as one that had been studied in his resignation to sign away the highest role a priest can aspire to as if his talents were not up to the task" (Act I, Scene IV).

JOSEPH QUIGLEY

I always considered that as a good German, this pope would doggedly do his duty as a pastor. This may be his finest hour. The rest of the story must be handed over to the Spirit; we have to pray that the human instruments listen to the Spirit and not make it into a Curial football match.

JONATHAN WOODHALL

After Feb. 28, will Cardinal Ratzinger (formerly known as Pope Benedict XVI) kiss the new papal ring? This would be the ultimate act of humility.

DUNCAN YUN

How interesting that there is no mention here of what many Catholics will most remember about his papacy—his total and absolute failure to hold a single bishop accountable for enabling child abuse and protecting the abusers. Instead, he often promoted bishops who were involved in protecting criminal priests.

ANNE CHAPMAN

I'm truly sad that Pope Benedict is stepping down. How fast almost eight years have passed since his election as pope after the sad days that followed the death of Pope John Paul II. God bless him. I can only imagine what a difficult decision it must have been for Pope Benedict XVI to resign, but he more than anybody understands the brutal challenges the church is facing in the very near future that demand a healthy and younger man. Let's pray this Lent that Christ and Mary give the church a young and

vibrant Peter ready to kick some sense into a manic world.

CARLOS OROZCO

The resignation is a sign of wisdom. Moving "a stone's throw away" from the Petrine *cathedra* itself...not so much.

CRAIG MCKEE

The tribute to Pope Benedict XVI by James Martin, S.J., is accurate and substantive and certainly reflects a perspective that all who love the church should remember. There can be no doubt that the demands on any successor to St. Peter are immense, regardless of the times in which he is called to this ministry. That said, I daresay Father Martin's words are also quite kind, perhaps overly so. I pray that history is kind to Benedict, though time will tell what his lasting legacy will be. I cannot help but think of His Holiness without also remembering with great pain the way in which he has marginalized God's LGBT sons and daughters. His pursuit of a smaller, holier church can and should be challenged regarding its faithfulness to fundamental Gospel values and Jesus' example of welcome and inclusion.

(REV.) TIMOTHY MACGEORGE

I think time will tell if this was an "act of a humble Christian" or a calculated move to ensure he has a say in his successor. I will hold judgment until I see how this plays out.

MARY HANLON CASTRONUOVO

Via Facebook

In the age when so many people are living longer and longer, it is good to allow popes the freedom to decide when it is time to retire from active ministry. It's a good example for other bishops, too. Personally, I wouldn't mind if popes had "term limits" of 10 years each, but this is a good start.

JULIE MCCARTY

Via Facebook

THE Catholic Funding Guide

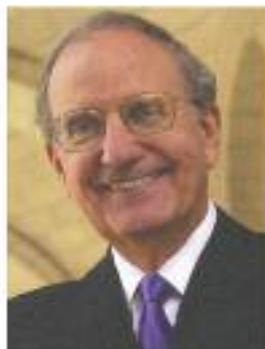
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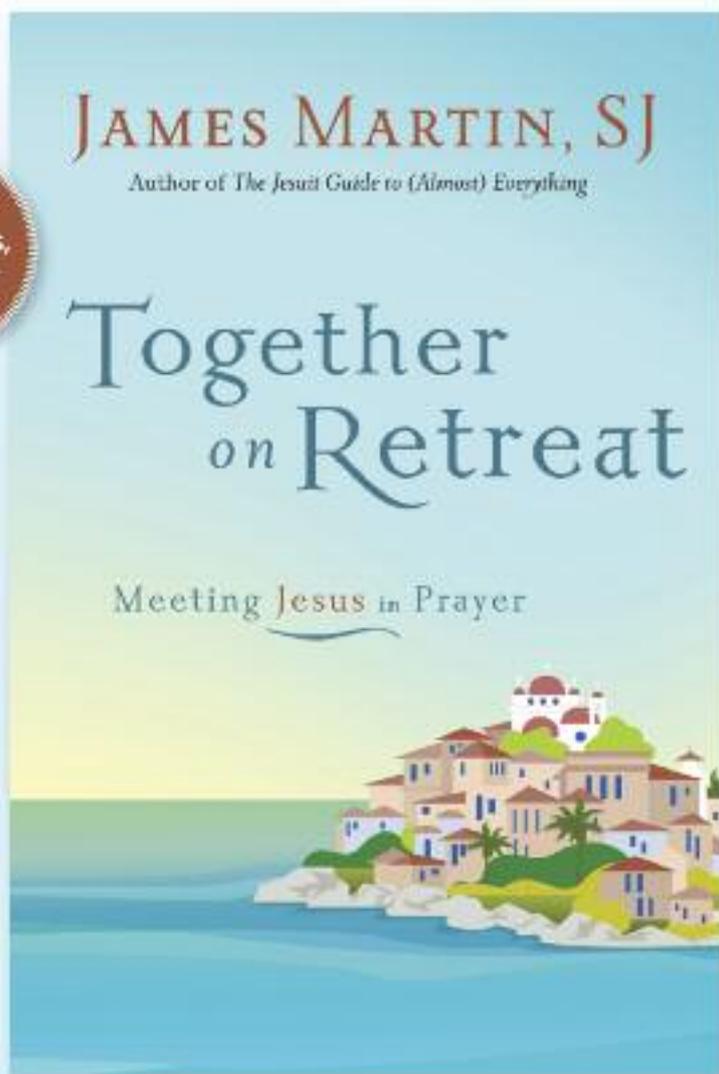


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Hello, I Must be Going

A history of papal resignations

BY JOHN W. O'MALLEY

Pope Benedict XVI's resignation on Feb. 28 has prompted many questions about this historic act. Who was the last pope to step down from his office? How many popes have resigned? These questions are not quite so easy to answer as they might seem.

Canon 332 specifies that to be valid a resignation must be "free"—not coerced. Nine or 10 popes are conventionally described as having resigned. That number would be larger if we included the so-called anti-popes, some of whom, like the first John XXIII (1410-15), may very well have been the legitimate claimant. No matter how long or how short the list, few on it resigned altogether "freely." Yet, whether free or coerced, the resignations seem to have worked out for the good of the church.

Pope Celestine V (1294) is the best candidate for a freely resigning pope and also the most famous. Dante placed him in hell for this "great refusal," that is, for shirking the responsibility for which God chose him (*Inferno* 3.61), but most people think that in resigning Celestine "did well," as a chronicler from the time put it. His election was unusual, to say the least. After a conclave that lasted over two years, the cardinals in a desperate compromise chose Celestine, a pious hermit. If the pope could not come from their own numbers, the cardinals seemed to reason, the next best thing was to elect a holy person who would be guided by the Spirit. Celestine, in his 80s when elected, was also barely literate in Latin and completely overwhelmed by his duties. In his naiveté he became an unwitting pawn in the hands of King Charles II of Anjou. Elected on July 5, he resigned on Dec. 13. He was pope, therefore, for about five months.

Did he resign freely? There is no hard evidence to the contrary. He explained his action by saying he was ill, lacked the necessary knowledge and experience and wanted to retire to his hermitage. Rumors spread nonetheless that the man who succeeded him as Pope Boniface VIII used undue influence on Celestine to persuade him to resign so that the way be opened for his own election. Whether these rumors are true or false, Boniface's enemies ceaselessly threw doubt on the legitimacy of his pontificate because of the unusual,

putatively unprecedented event of the resignation. As Boniface's archenemy, King Philip IV of France, put it in a scathing bill of indictment that included almost every imaginable sin and heresy, "He is publicly accused of treating inhumanly his predecessor Celestine—a man of holy memory and holy life who perhaps did not know that he could



Pope Celestine V resigning from the papacy in 1294

not resign and that accordingly Boniface could not legitimately enter upon his see."

Pontian (230-35) is perhaps the next best candidate for a freely resigning pope. In the persecution of the emperor Maximus Thrax, Pontian was deported to the mines in Sardinia. Since such a deportation was the equivalent of a

JOHN W. O'MALLEY, S.J., is a professor of theology at Georgetown University and author of *What Happened at Vatican II*.

life sentence to hard labor, he gave up the papacy on Sept. 28, 235, the first precisely recorded date in papal history. He did so in order that the church in Rome might choose a successor and thus not be without a leader. His was a noble act and, technically speaking, free, but Pontian would not have resigned had his ability to govern not been forcibly taken from him.

Martin I's (649-53) case is similar—and different. He strongly opposed the Monothelite heresy (Christ has only one will), which for political reasons Emperor Constans II was promoting. Henchmen of the emperor seized the pope in Rome and brought him, sick and defenseless, to Constantinople to stand trial for treason. Martin was convicted, publicly flogged and condemned to death, though the sentence was commuted to banishment. Martin complained bitterly about being abandoned by the Roman church, which not only had done nothing to help him in his troubles but against his express wishes elected a successor while he was still alive. Martin nonetheless acquiesced in the done deed and prayed God would shield the new pastor of the church of Rome from heresy and enemies.

Other resignations? Clement I (92?-101), once on the list, has been taken off for lack of convincing evidence. For Marcellinus (296-304) the evidence, though perhaps not altogether trustworthy, is better. In the persecution by the Emperor Diocletian, Marcellinus purportedly sacrificed to idols in order to save his life. According to some accounts he was formally deposed, but in any case by committing this act of apostasy he was automatically disqualified from priesthood, which left the Roman church without a head. Whatever happened, it was certainly not a “free” resignation. Benedict V (964), who perhaps should be reckoned more as an anti-pope than the genuine article, reigned only a month before he was deposed by a synod at the instigation of Emperor Otto I. Hardly free.

Benedict IX (1032-45) is a curious case. He was the nephew of both Pope Benedict VIII and Pope John XIX. To keep the papacy within the family, his father bribed the electors in favor of the future Benedict IX, a layman still in his 20s. For the next 13 years Benedict aroused hostility by his political machinations and provoked scandal by his openly dissolute life. By 1045 not only had his situation become unstable but, according to some, he wanted to marry. That year he resigned in favor of his godfather, but not before securing from him a large sum of money. Free decision or

not, it was certainly a sordid one. The simony it involved threw doubt on the legitimacy of the new pope, Gregory VI. The next year Emperor Henry III descended into Italy from Germany and had both Benedict and Gregory deposed at a synod at Sutri outside Rome. A third claimant to the papacy, Silvester III, was also condemned at the synod. The emperor, disgusted with the Roman situation, named an upright German as pope, Clement II, an act that turned out to be the first step in rescuing the papacy from the moral morass into which it had fallen and thus the immediate prelude to the Gregorian Reform.

The last pope on the list is Gregory XII (1406-15). His resignation effectively marked the end of the Great Western Schism, that period of church history between 1378 and 1415 when two, then three men each claimed to be the legitimate pope. At the insistence of the German king (later emperor) Sigismund, the first Pope John XXIII, one of the claimants, with great

reluctance convoked a council at Constance to resolve the schism. Once the council was in session it became clear to everybody there that to save the papacy, the slate had to be wiped clean, which meant the resignation or deposition of all three claimants. With that John bolted the council in the hope of disrupting it. He had the misfortune, however, to be captured and brought back to the council as a prisoner. Put on trial and deposed, John, now broken in spirit, admitted to wrongs he had done, confirmed the authority of the council and formally renounced any right he might have to the papacy.

The second claimant, Benedict XIII, refused to recognize or deal with the council and consequently was deposed by it. After his deposition and the successful election of the new pope, Martin V, support for Benedict evaporated except for a few die-hards. There remained the third claimant, Gregory XII. Once John had been deposed, the council entered into negotiations with Gregory to try to persuade him to resign. By this time Gregory had only a small following, probably saw the handwriting on the wall and, to give him the benefit of the doubt, was finally ready to do what he could to end the schism. He agreed to resign on condition that he be allowed to convoke the council afresh, so as not to concede any legitimacy to the original convocation by his rival. On July 4, 1415, the council heard his bull solemnly convoking it and then heard the announcement of his resignation. Since that date no popes have “resigned”—until Feb. 28, 2013. **A**

How many popes have resigned? The question is not quite so easy to answer as it might seem.

ON THE WEB

John W. O'Malley, S.J., talks about papal resignations. americamagazine.org/podcast

Who's Next?

More questions about the next pope

BY THOMAS J. REESE

Who might be elected? It should be remembered that prior to the death of Pope John Paul II, no one in the media predicted the election of Cardinal Ratzinger. His name surfaced prominently only after Pope John Paul II's death. As a result, prophets should be modest in their projections. It is better to speak of the qualities we might see in the next pope; then, at least, one has a chance of being partially right.

Age. The next pope will probably be a cardinal between the ages of 63 and 73 who speaks Italian and English and reflects Pope Benedict's and Pope John Paul's positions (liberal on social justice and peace; traditional in church teaching and practice; and ecumenical but convinced the church has the truth) but has a very different personality from either man.

Prior to the 2005 conclave, I predicted the cardinals would choose someone between 62 and 72 years of age. I was wrong. Of the nine popes who reigned in the 20th century (beginning with Pope Leo XIII), their average age at the time of election was 65 years, with Pope John XXIII the oldest at 76 and Pope John Paul II the youngest at 58. The average age of the current group of cardinals is 72. Benedict was 78 when elected, older than all but three popes elected by cardinals through the centuries. It is unlikely the cardinals will choose another old cardinal.

Languages. Pope John Paul and Pope Benedict have shown how important it is for the pope to be multilingual. Italian is important because it is the language of the people

of Rome, for whom the pope is diocesan bishop. It is also the working language of the Roman Curia. English is important because it is almost everyone's first or second language. Spanish is valuable because it is the language of so many Catholics. Languages are also important because the cardinals will want to be able to converse with the pope



using a language in which they are comfortable.

Positions. There is not a great amount of difference between Pope Benedict and Pope John Paul on the important issues facing the church, although Benedict may be a little more conservative than John Paul on interreligious dialogue, ecumenism and liturgy and a little less activist in justice and peace issues. John Paul and Benedict have appointed all the current cardinals under the age of 80 who will elect Pope Benedict's successor. In appointing cardinals, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict have done what anyone would do if they were pope—they have appointed men who agree with them on the major issues that face the

THOMAS J. REESE, S.J., editor in chief of *America* from 1998 to 2005, is the author of *Inside the Vatican* (Harvard, 1996).

church. The next conclave, as a result, will not elect someone who will reject the legacy of Pope John Paul or Pope Benedict. With the next pope, we will see more continuity than change.

As a result, there will be more continuity than change in church doctrine and policy. That means someone who is liberal on political and economic issues but traditional on sexual morality and internal church issues, someone who supports ecumenical and interreligious dialogue but is convinced the church has the truth. In short, I do not support the “pendulum” theory when it comes to doctrine, but it may be true on personality and governance style (see below).

Personality. While there will be continuity in policy, there will be a change in personality; cloning is against church teaching. There is no one with a personality like Pope John Paul’s in the College of Cardinals, with a background as a Polish actor, intellectual and teacher who grew up under Nazism and Communism. Nor is there anyone like Pope Benedict, with his background as a German theologian and prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who grew up in Germany during the Second World War.

Less Centralization? Prior to the 2005 conclave, I predicted that when the cardinals gathered in conclave, they would praise Pope John Paul “of happy memory,” but there might be a backlash against the Roman Curia, whose power had grown during his papacy. Even the most conservative cardinal, I argued, wanted to run his diocese the way he thinks best without interference from Rome. The cardinals may therefore look, I argued, for someone who would support more decentralization of decision making in the church—more power to bishops and bishops’ conferences. Considering the election of Cardinal Ratzinger, who played a major role in centralizing power in Rome under Pope John Paul’s papacy, I was obviously wrong. On the other hand, there have been complaints about the poor administration of the Roman Curia under Benedict—although his secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, has borne the brunt of that criticism. As a result, some argue that the next pope should have greater administrative skills than his immediate predecessors.

A Curial Cardinal? Two thirds of the cardinals are diocesan bishops who are running local churches. In the past, I argued that they would want someone who knows what it is

like to be a local bishop, not simply a Vatican bureaucrat. Many cardinals working in the curia, like Cardinal Ratzinger, had diocesan experience before they came to Rome, and some Vatican officials left the curia and became cardinals as archbishops of local churches. Cardinals with both types of experience have an advantage. Of the popes elected during the 20th century, only Pope Pius XII had no diocesan experience, and only three (Pope Pius X, Pope John Paul I and Pope John Paul II) never worked in the Vatican. The remaining five had worked in the curia but were leaders of archdioceses when elected pope.

What are the chances of an American being elected?

Almost zero. First, although a number of the American cardinals are fluent in Spanish, Americans are not great linguists. Second, and most important, the cardinals would worry about how the election of an American would be perceived around the world,

especially in the third world and Muslim nations. Many in the third world might suspect that the Central Intelligence Agency fixed the election or Wall Street bought it. Muslims might fear that an American pope was going to be a chaplain for the White House. Finally, through the centuries the church has tried to keep the papacy out of the hands of the reigning superpower, whether that was the Holy Roman Empire, France or Spain. When France captured the papacy, it moved it to Avignon in 1309, where it stayed until 1377.

Who would you bet on to be the next pope?

I am not Jimmy the Greek, nor do I gamble. If you want to know what a bookie thinks, see paddypower.com on who might succeed Benedict.

What will the cardinals discuss in the conclave?

Former House Speaker Tip O’Neil was correct: “All politics is local,” even in the Catholic Church.

The cardinals from the third world have people who are starving and suffering from the negative impact of the globalization of the economy. They will want a pope who will speak out for social justice and forgiveness of third-world debt and be willing to stand up to the American superpower. Cardinals from Africa and Asia are confronted by growing Islamic fundamentalism. They will want a pope who understands Islam and will not use

While there will be continuity in policy, there will be a change in personality; cloning is against church teaching.

ON THE WEB

Video reports from CNS on the papal transition. americamagazine.org/video

inflammatory words like “crusade,” as did President George W. Bush. They want a pope who, like John Paul, will support dialogue with Muslims but at the same time stand up for the rights of Catholics.

On the other hand, in Latin America there are few Muslims. The concern there is the evangelicals and Pentecostals who are “stealing their sheep.”

In North America and Europe, the cardinals will want a pope who will continue the fight of Pope Benedict against secularism and relativism but also support ecumenical dialogue with Protestants and Jews. Given the growing alienation of educated women, they would also want someone who projects an understanding of women’s concerns. The last thing they would want, for example, is a pope who would decide to get rid of altar girls. The American cardinals would also want someone who understands and supports what they are doing to deal with the sexual abuse crisis. Europeans are concerned about the growing number of Muslims in Europe.

The principal challenge of the church and the new pope is how to preach the Gospel in a way that is understandable and attractive to people in the 21st century, especially young people. St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas did this in their time by using the best thinking of their times. For Augustine, that meant using neo-Platonism, and for Aquinas it meant using Aristotle. Our task today is not just to quote these saints but to imitate them by using the best thought of our day to explain Christianity to our generation. To do this requires giving freedom to theologians and scholars to develop new ways of talking about the faith. This sometimes frightens people. Remember, Aquinas’ writings were burned by the bishop of Paris.

In the past two conclaves, the electors voted for the smartest man in the room. Perhaps, this time, they will vote for the man who will listen to all the other smart people in the church. **A**

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MEDIA | JIM McDERMOTT

HOME ALONE

Binge-viewing Netflix's 'House of Cards'

Odds are, if you have checked out the entertainment section of a newspaper recently, you have heard something about **House of Cards**, Netflix's first major original series. Perhaps you have heard the fact that in February Netflix released all 13 episodes of the program's first season at once; or that any number of people watched all 13 episodes in the first weekend (they are known by the flattering term "binge viewers"); or that the quality is quite

high—maybe not quite as strong as AMC or HBO, but aspiring to greatness.

The premise, in a nutshell: Kevin Spacey plays Frank Underwood, a House majority whip whose party has just won the White House. During the campaign, the now-President promised Underwood that he would be Secretary of State, but now that the campaign is over, the president has gone with someone else. But Frank is not someone you cross. Neither is his

wife Claire (played with ice cold steel by Robin Wright). The two embark on a plot to get even and get ahead.

"House of Cards" originally was a U.K. property starring the fantastically disturbing Ian Richardson as the majority whip—think a twisted Obi-Wan Kenobi. Adapted by writer Beau Willimon, the American version takes from the original not only the basic premise and plot line, but the unusual technique of having Frank speak directly to the audience. For some, that may be a deal breaker. It certainly jars. But much like Frank himself, the technique has a wonderfully insidious way of creeping in and getting comfortable. The viewers become Frank's co-con-

CARD DEALERS: Kevin Spacey and Robin Wright in "House of Cards"



MELINDA SUE GORDON / KNIGHT TAKES KING PROD.

spirators, the keepers of his secrets, the ones he talks to, until they are just as seduced as everyone else around him.

The real question is, will consumers be seduced enough by this show not only to start Netflix memberships, but to keep them? By releasing all 13 episodes at once, Netflix seems to have given potential new subscribers an easy way out: One could quite conceivably pay for one month of the service, watch the entire season in that time, cancel the subscription and be out a grand total of \$7.99.

Netflix management has said their release-as-a-package approach reflects their desire not to be bound by the tired strategies of network TV. A worthy goal, and who knows, perhaps it will yield the growth for which they hope. Netflix certainly has a TV and film library that is broad enough to be attractive.

But from a buzz-based, water-cooler community point of view, it is hard not to wonder whether Netflix is cut-

ting itself off at the knees. In so many cases, what draws us to a program is the chatter of the community watching it. Look at ABC's "Scandal," about a law team that fixes problems for people in Washington, D.C. The show debuted last spring with a short run of seven episodes and had a solid but not spectacular showing. This year, it was given 13 episodes to start and slowly turned up the heat until, suddenly, "Scandal" is now the "it" show, with its dazzling political twistiness and hot, hot, hot relationships bringing water coolers everywhere to a fierce boil.

That is how TV works. It builds a community among its viewers, and the passion of that community draws in others, sometimes even years after the show has ended. HBO's "The Wire," about drugs and detectives and politics in the city of Baltimore, was critically acclaimed year after year as it aired, but its audience was always relatively small. Yet its popularity has grown so much since it ended in 2008 that some have argued HBO should consider bringing it back.

By releasing all 13 episodes of "House of Cards" at once, Netflix has in many ways blocked the formation of any sort of community. Those who have not watched the whole season have to keep themselves away from those who have, lest their viewing be spoiled. Those who have watched the whole season wait in frustration for conversation partners with whom they can talk. While a good TV show bonds its audience together like participants on a crazy river-rafting journey, the Netflix approach is more like driving in Los Angeles, each person politely keeping everyone else at a distance. And without communal interest to sustain it, in a few weeks the show could be just an afterthought in the rearview.

It does not help that "House of

Cards" doesn't have many delicious "Oh no, he didn't!" sorts of moments to linger over. We know from the moment we meet Spacey's Frank Underwood that he will likely do anything to bring down his opponents. And consequently when over the course of the season he does do just about everything, it is not terribly sur-

prising. Frank and his wife Claire's sheer force of will to rise above their peers is what makes the show compelling. But their drive is a cool, quiet rage that never quite explodes. Where there should be some bangs, there are instead far too many whimpers.

Netflix has other original series to come this year: the horror-thriller "Hemlock Grove" in April; a new season of the hilarious fan-favorite, cancelled-by-FOX show "Arrested Development" in May; and the women's prison comedy "Orange is the New Black" in the summer. If "House of Cards" is any indication, each of these shows will at the very least be worth a look. Despite its flaws, "House of Cards" certainly is, especially for political junkies.

I hope that Netflix reconsiders its distribution approach. Even in an era of DVRs, time-shifting shows and three million channels, television continues to serve as an important element of what binds us together. Just check out Twitter when "Glee" or "The Walking Dead" are on; the site explodes with comments and interchange. At its best television is our Homer before the campfire, gathering us and telling us stories of love and war and gods and men. In an era that tends more and more toward the atomistic, the anonymous and isolated, we need those shared experiences more than ever.

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., is a graduate student in screenwriting at the University of California, Los Angeles.

ON THE WEB

The Catholic Book Club discusses
The Patriarch, by David Nasaw.
americamagazine.org/cbc





Boom and Bust

Late one night, during a song-writing session, my friend Sean said something I'll never forget. "You know The Who's tune, 'Baba O'Riley'?" He got quiet for a moment, considering his words. "This sounds crazy, but I've always felt that God was in the opening chords of that song."

It didn't sound crazy at all. Any sense of transcendent truth I could claim was rooted in the music I loved, not the church I attended. Finding God in a song was not a stretch for me.

His words came back to me recently when I picked up Pete Townshend's memoir, *Who I Am*. As The Who's mastermind, Townshend was the vulnerable, gawky art school misfit. His music testified to rock and roll's cathartic, transformative power for those of us who felt similarly vulnerable and out of place. Townshend was a fiercely intelligent and socially conscious ugly duckling whose spiritual quest led him to a lifelong devotion to the Indian spiritual master, Meher Baba. He was an enlightened, self-aware artist who had been married to the same woman for 30 years. He wasn't a cliché.

Then I read his book.

It was disappointing to see how disconnected Townshend's rhetoric was from his reality. The man who wrote "Behind Blue Eyes" and "The Seeker" and had helped inspire my own creative/spiritual journey was in many ways a petulant star. One minute he was spouting mystical ideas about finding the sound of the entire uni-

verse in a single note, the next he was absolving himself for his own selfish behavior.

Discovering my heroes have clay feet isn't crushing anymore, but it does stoke a strange fantasy in which I finally vent some long-simmering frustrations. It goes, tongue-in-cheek, something like this:

Dear Baby Boomers,
On behalf of Generation X,
I want to formally say thank you.

Thank you for David Crosby and Woodstock. While we're at it, thank you for the miracle of Viagra, the wisdom of Dr. Phil, the spiritual insight of Oprah and the ubiquity of Bill Clinton.

In your recounting of the '60s, you created a counter-culture. You told us to "imagine no possessions" and that "a change is gonna come." Since then, you've taught us that our goals should include a "confident retirement" (Ameriprise) while the Most Interesting Man in the World exhorts us to "stay thirsty, my friends" (Dos Equis).

Really? This is how the '60s' idealism ends? I'm starting to think it was less about change and more about you.

If the Greatest Generation is remembered for saving the world from fascism and building our nation, Boomers will be remembered as the Self-Actualized Generation. You're determined to have it all, even if it kills us, while being your kids' best friends and having amazing sex until you die. Actually, I'm pretty sure some of you are secretly planning on never dying.

We get it. You won't be going gently into that good night.

Every generation has its dark side (my apologies for Lance Armstrong and Monica Lewinsky). But after staring at the world through a Boomer lens, it's impossible not to notice a lack of depth perception. To our eyes, you asked important questions on everything from politics and culture to religion, but simply passing on a critique isn't enough. If the arrogance of youth convinces us that history began at our birth, when will the wisdom of age finally temper us to see how we are connected down through countless generations to something larger than ourselves?

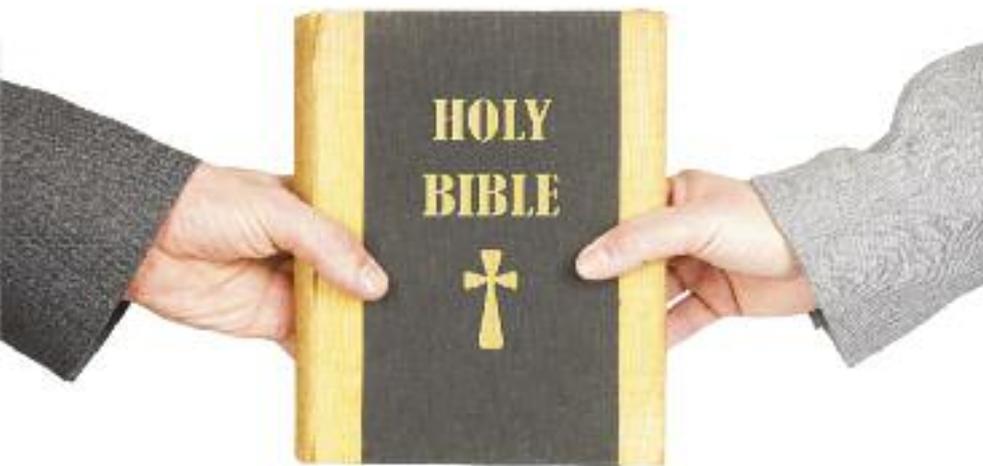
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crushing
anymore.

The explosion of the religiously unaffiliated or nones is well-documented. Having worked for years at the intersection of faith and culture among millennials and fellow Gen Xers, I'm always amazed not only at how religiously illiterate they are but also at how curious they are to know and understand more about faith. A structured belief is no longer baked into their lives; it is one more voluntary choice among many competing for their attention. Unfortunately, compelling translations of ancient truths for a 21st-century audience have been conspicuously lacking.

The Boomers' cultural footprint has been enormous. But ultimately, you can't gut something, then leave behind a void and call it a legacy. Finding God in a song only works if you have a language for God in the first place.

BILL MCGARVEY, author of *The Freshman Survival Guide*, owner of *CathNewsUSA.com* and former editor in chief of *Busted Halo* (2004-10), is a musician and writer.

DISPUTED QUESTIONS



In the biblical field (as in other disciplines) there are matters of debate that remain unsettled, at least for now. The volumes in this year's survey of books on the Bible represent areas in which there are disputes about fundamental issues.

The most disputed and basic question concerns the nature of the Bible itself: Is it merely an interesting book about persons and events of 2,000 years ago? Or can it help people today to encounter the living God? In her *Chasing Mystery: A Catholic Biblical Theology* (Liturgical Press), Carey E. Walsh, associate professor of Old Testament at Villanova University, enthusiastically and often brilliantly defends the second position, provided that the Bible is read with an eye to both the presence and the absence of God.

She begins with the question, "Where did God go?" and develops her biblical theology against the background of the recent phenomena of rampant secularization and the "new atheism." Focusing primarily on Old Testament passages where mystical experiences of holiness occur, she explores how the Bible negotiates the

presence and absence of God. She insists that the God of the Bible is not the omnipotent and omniscient God of the philosophers. She contends that, according to the Bible, the real presence of God cannot be staid, fixed into certainty, but rather has instead pockets of perceived absence, of opaqueness and of uncertainty that enable divine liveliness to blow through. Her lens for reading the Bible results in some fresh readings of texts like Job and Qoheleth, and fresh insights into the problems of suffering and theodicy. Walsh writes in a way that many Catholic readers will find both supportive and challenging. For those wishing to recharge their spiritual batteries during Lent with regard to the Bible, this is an excellent starting point.

When asked to recommend a new book on the history of ancient Israel, I have often said in recent years that the discipline is "in the shop for repairs." Why that is so is well reported by Megan Bishop Moore and Brad E. Kelle in *Biblical History and Israel's Past: The Changing Study of the Bible and History* (Eerdmans). Their goal is to describe the changing study of Israelite and Judean history, and the relationship

of biblical literature to that history since the 1970s, when the idea began to be widespread that the story of Israel's past might at times be quite different from the Bible's description of ancient Israel. The question is whether the ancient Israel of history and the religious Israel of the Bible are one and the same.

What they describe is the struggle between the older "maximalist" perspectives of William Foxwell Albright (1891-1971) and his student John Bright, and the newer "minimalist" perspectives that have emerged since Albright's passing. Whereas Albright found neat correlations between the Bible and archaeology, the minimalists claim that his approach was largely wishful thinking and that recent archaeological research and the use of social-scientific models tend to show that the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible is the product of movements in Persian or even Hellenistic times. While tilting toward the minimalist position, the authors are fair enough in delineating what the issues are, why the maximalists and the minimalists argue as they do and what the current impasse may mean for Old Testament study in the future.

The German New Testament scholar, Ernst Käsemann (1906-98), famously asserted that Jewish apocalyptic was the mother of early Christian theology. To see what that claim means, there is now no better guide available than Frederick J. Murphy's *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Baker Academic). Murphy (1949-2011) was professor of New Testament at the College of the Holy Cross for over 20 years. There he proved himself to be a beloved teacher and a respected scholar. The esteem in which he was held by his peers is evident from the foreword contributed by three of his long-time colleagues at Holy Cross. The goal of this book is to aid modern readers to understand the context of ancient Jewish and Christian apocalyp-

ticism and so to make sense of it for themselves.

In doing so Murphy treats the pertinent Old Testament (Daniel) and extrabiblical texts (including the Dead Sea scrolls and 1 Enoch) and devotes almost half his chapters to the presence of apocalypticism in various parts of the New Testament. Ever the effective pedagogue, he makes clear what these often difficult ancient texts were saying to people in their own time and the challenges for readers today to see what sense they can take from them. The presence of abundant summaries, text boxes, photographs, charts and bibliographical suggestions makes this an ideal textbook and a helpful tool for private study. It is a fitting memorial to its author.

The reliability of the historical sources for Second Temple Judaism remains a matter of dispute. The Hermeneia series, now about 40 years old, long ago established itself as the "Cadillac" of biblical commentaries. Its highly technical volumes aim to be strictly historical, with little or no interest in homiletical application. One of its most recent publications is Robert Doran's *2 Maccabees: A Critical Commentary* (Fortress), in which the author contends that Second Maccabees purports to give the background of the Maccabean revolt in the 2nd century B.C. and to tell the story of the early days of the revolt under Judas Maccabeus. In particular, it explains in vivid and entertaining ways how God repeatedly prevented the desecration of the Jerusalem Temple. Doran, who has taught at Amherst College in Massachusetts for many years, describes the work as a highly rhetorical narrative that sets out not to give a blow-by-blow description of events, but to move its audience to commit themselves to follow faithfully the ancestral traditions of Judaism. His mastery of the ancient text and modern scholarship on it, as well as his ability to integrate several recent important archaeo-

logical discoveries, make his commentary the best available guide to a fascinating but neglected book of the Bible.

For many years the figure of Jesus has been a source of great debate. Gerhard Lohfink, a Catholic priest and New Testament scholar, has written many learned and stimulating books in the area of biblical theology. He is the brother of the well known Old Testament scholar, Norbert Lohfink, S.J. He is notable for resigning his professorship at the University of Tübingen in 1987 and entering the Catholic Integrated Community in Germany, where he has lived and worked ever since. His *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was* (Liturgical Press) is surely his *magnum opus*. In fact, it is the best Jesus book I know. It is based on sound biblical scholarship, full of fresh theological insights, respectful of the Gospels and their portraits of Jesus, and beautifully expressed. It has been expertly translated by Linda Mahoney, his former student and a distinguished biblical scholar, translator and editor in her own right. It merits more consideration in **America** than this short notice can give. Lohfink is especially effective in highlighting the centrality of the reign of God and Israel as the people of God in Jesus' life and work. These themes have run through his publications for many years, and now they come to fullness in this magnificent undertaking.

The first half of the book is primarily concerned with what Jesus wanted; the second half concerns who Jesus was. The Jesus who emerges is based squarely on the Gospels, not on some idiosyncratic modern reconstruction. He does not shy away from hard questions and shows how they can be answered in keeping with the Christian theological tradition and yet challenge people today. His last few words capture that dimension and the passion with which he writes: "Jesus' proclamation and practice of the reign of God is more radical than any utopia. It is more real-



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istic, it is more critical, it knows more about human beings. It is the only hope for the wounds and sicknesses of our planet.”

Recent research on John’s Gospel has been dominated by historical and literary studies. In *Hallowed in Truth and Love: Spirituality in the Johannine Literature* (Wipf & Stock), Dorothy A. Lee, lecturer in biblical studies and dean of Trinity College Theological School within the Melbourne College of Divinity, takes a fresh look at the theology and spirituality manifest in John’s Gospel, the Johannine epistles and Revelation. She contends that these books are pervaded by the conviction that is found on the spiritual path for believers and for the community of faith: the hallowing of their lives before God in truth and love. In treating John’s Gospel, Lee gives special attention to its use of symbolism and how it communicates spirituality with regard to the word, worship, the Spirit-Paraclete, absence, discipleship and the senses.

She then shows how Johannine spirituality extends beyond the Gospel to the Epistles, and boldly proceeds to deal with the unusual and complex spirituality of Revelation. She concludes that Johannine spirituality in all three texts is grounded in the life of God, the dynamic presence of the Spirit, the gracious love of the Father, and the incarnate presence of Jesus, crucified and risen. This outstanding book is well worth reading and rereading. It shows that spirituality is deep within the Johannine texts, not just something we bring to them.

As with John, so with Paul, the focus of recent scholarship has been the subject’s relationship to Judaism and his rhetorical skills. But what about Paul the theologian and the influence of his theological thoughts? While not neglecting the contributions of other scholarship, Frank J. Matera in *God’s Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology* (Eerdmans), seeks to develop a comprehensive Pauline theology in terms of

the theme of God’s saving grace. This is what Paul experienced at his call and conversion, and this theme runs through the narratives of God’s saving grace in Paul’s life, in Christ and in the lives of those who are “in Christ.”

Matera then manages to use this theme to illumine the great concerns of Pauline theology: Paul’s experience of saving grace, Christ as the embodiment of God’s saving grace, the saving grace of Jesus, living in the community of God’s saving grace, living according to God’s saving grace, waiting for the final appearance of God’s saving grace and the God revealed through the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This work is marked by the same virtues—deep learning, good judgment, orderliness, clarity and pastoral sensitivity—that characterize Matera’s classic *New Testament Theology: Exploring Diversity and Unity* (2007) and his many other publications.

The relationship between the Bible and ethics has long been a disputed



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question. It has gained greater urgency in light of the Second Vatican Council's directive that Catholic moral theology "should draw more fully on the teaching of Holy Scripture" ("Decree on Priestly Training"). But this has proved to be easier said than done. In *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life* (Rowman & Littlefield), Yiu Sing Lúcas Chan, a Jesuit from Hong Kong who trained at Boston College, seeks to build bridges between the two disciplines with the help of Christian virtue ethics. The key questions of virtue ethics are, Who am I? What is my goal? and How do I achieve that goal? Done in the Christian key, we are children of God in search of eternal happiness with God through Christ. The cultivation of the appropriate virtues, attitudes and dispositions is the major task of Christian virtue ethics.

In order to illustrate his approach in a concrete way, Chan focuses on two of the most important biblical texts: the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and the Beatitudes in Matthew. For each verse he provides an exegesis of the text in its original context and an interpretation of its significance for people today, with particular attention to the concerns of virtue ethics. At the end of the book Chan discusses the possible reception of the core Christian virtues in the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes in Confucian society, out of his conviction that interfaith or cross-cultural ethics

should begin with specific texts and must be both text-based and interpretive. This remarkably rich work is something of a milestone in the history of the relationship between biblical exegesis and Catholic moral theology.

The development of early Christianity in general and Christian theology in particular from Jesus to Augustine has been the subject of lively debates in recent years. In *Sin: The Early History of an Idea* (Princeton University Press), Paula Fredriksen, professor emerita at Boston University and now visiting professor of comparative religion at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, uses the concept of "sin" as a way of charting some of the most important developments in early Christian theology. Her thesis is that as the concept of sin changed, so did many of the other elements in Christian theology; and that much in these changes was due both to the changing historical and cultural circumstances and to the ongoing attempt to interpret the Bible. She takes as representative figures first John the Baptist, Jesus and Paul (the New Testament); then Valentinus, Marcion and Justin Martyr (2nd century); and Origen and Augustine ("a rivalry of genius"). In her selection, she is more interested in flashpoints and "disjunctures" than in continuities and orthodoxies. She concludes that ancient ideas of sin—like modern ideas of sin—are, like all human products, culturally conditioned. More a stimulating

sketch than a comprehensive monograph, Fredriksen's work illustrates well how some academics today approach diversity and change in early Christianity.

Sexuality is certainly a disputed question in today's world. In *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Eerdmans), William Loader, emeritus professor of New Testament at Murdoch University in Perth, Australia, provides an objective and exhaustive description of attitudes toward sexuality not only in the Jewish and Greco-Roman world, but also considers sexuality in the Gospel tradition and in Paul's writings. Then he deals separately with the issues of divorce, same-sex intercourse, men and women in community and leadership and celibacy, respectively. This book is the last of five volumes presenting the findings of Loader's research into attitudes toward sexuality in Judaism and Christianity in the Hellenistic Greco-Roman era. Loader's mastery of the relevant primary sources and modern scholarship on them is amazing. He looks at all the pertinent texts, reviews the various possible interpretations, and offers his own opinions. He concludes that on the spectrum from leniency to strictness regarding sexual matters Jesus is to be found on the strict end. He also notes, however, that belief in the goodness of creation, including sexual desire and expression, appears to have remained a constant and stabilizing influence throughout the New Testament.

Biblical scholarship in our times is neither static nor finished. New discoveries raise new questions; new times bring new challenges; and new generations of Bible readers and scholars seek and find new perspectives in their texts. The disputed questions covered in this article show once more that "the word of God is living and active" (Heb 4:12).

DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J., is professor of New Testament and editor of *New Testament Abstracts* at The Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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LETTERS

Brother Benedict

When Cardinal Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI, we all knew that his papacy would not last as long as those of some of his predecessors. So his resignation should not be a complete surprise, and we ought to praise God for the eight years that Pope Benedict has been able to serve and lead the Catholic Church.

Still, even though I am not Catholic, I was saddened to read of his resignation. I have known this humble man personally for the last 18 years; and through personal encounters and correspondence, I have developed a deep respect for him. Already as a cardinal, and then as pope, he has been a tireless advocate for the true values of Christianity—values that are sadly being lost and

attacked all over the world.

Pope Benedict is one of the few voices that have had the courage to speak out for true Christ-like discipleship and for traditional family values. With his resignation, we are losing a voice of conscience that we can ill afford to lose, even as it has been rejected and criticized.

I am going to miss Brother Benedict very much and will have him in my prayers. And I pray that the Catholic Church will be led and guided in appointing his successor.

JOHANN CHRISTOPH ARNOLD
Senior Pastor Bruderhof Communities
Rifton, N.Y.

Original Sources

Re “Pius’s Balancing Act,” by David I. Kertzer (2/18): The controversy surrounding Pius XII and the Holocaust is a polarized mess riddled with over-

simplification and biased characterization. Maybe it is hopeless. Maybe folks are just too invested in vilification or hagiography. Maybe “Hitler’s Pope” is too tempting a proxy for other intra-faith and interfaith battles. But here are two ways we might arrive at a calmer, clearer understanding of our church’s history during the worst moral episode of the 20th century.

First, take Pius out of the running for sainthood, at least for the next several decades. God’s judgment does not require ratification by Pius’s acolytes (or his prosecutors). And the idea of a St. Pius XII does not leave a lot of room for gray or nuance.

Second, don’t rely simply on the interpretations and recounting of authors, reviewers and pundits. Use the blessing of technology to read original sources and contemporaneous accounts. Mr. Kertzer refers to the lack of explicit reference to National Socialism in “Mit Brennender Sorge.” A reader of the encyclical, however, would likely note its focus on “the Reich Government” and its indictment of “certain leaders [who] pretend to draw from the so-called myth of blood and race.” Was there any doubt about to whom the encyclical was referring?

Mr. Kertzer also claims that Pius “refused to denounce publicly the Nazis’ invasion of Poland in [September] 1939.” But read “Summi Pontificatus,” issued in October 1939. The New York Times front-page headline read: “Pope Condemns Dictators, Treaty Violators, Racism; Urges Restoring of Poland.” A public library with a generous database will allow readers to see this for themselves and make their own judgments about Pius—and the varying reliability of his detractors.

KEVIN DOYLE
West Nyack, N.Y.

Our Foolishness

Stephen Bullivant offers exceptional insight in his recent article,

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"Foolishness!" (2/11). What a brilliant and much needed reflection. Over the years I've developed a simple habit of looking around during Sunday Mass in wonder, and gratitude, for all the folks who show that I am not alone in affirming such "incredible" mysteries about who we are: calling out to God (yes, God!) as our Father; acknowledging that Jesus, the Christ of the universe, is one of us, who walked to his execution because he tried to show us our Father.

Virtually none of us believed him then, but we believe him now? Really? Nothing short of "foolishness." Those who might consider us believers unbalanced might be surprised by how close we feel to them, how deeply we understand their view and by how humbly we would try to give reasons for the hope that is in us.

ROBERT B. MURRAY
Braintree, Mass.

Prize-Winning Article

For his article, "Foolishness!", Stephen

Bullivant deserves an **America** prize for insight. How aptly he shows how much we believers have to learn from atheists. How relevant is his quotation from Psalms 14 and 53, which provided St. Anselm with the point of departure for the whole of scholastic philosophy. And how well his essay is capped by his other quotation from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians.

I would only add the other quotation from Ecclesiastes, "Infinite is the multitude of fools," which is the inspiration in Erasmus's *Encomium Moriae* and has its culmination both in "Twelfth Night," in Feste's comment, "Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun, it shines everywhere," and in the whole play "King Lear."

What distinguishes this play among all Shakespeare's other plays is its wise collocation of comedy and tragedy—comedy at the end of Act IV and tragedy at the end of Act V. What few Shakespearean scholars, as "non-fools," seem to recognize is how well the dramatist is anticipating Mr. Bullivant's wise requirement, in presenting the Christians in his audience with a topsy-turvy Passion play, putting the joy of the Resurrection before the sorrow of the Passion, thus waking them up from their all-too-dogmatic slumber.

PETER MILWARD, S.J.
Tokyo, Japan

Still Growing

"The Coming Population Bust" (Current Comment, 2/4) was written in the spirit of a dutiful and obedient Catholic, blissfully (and smugly) ignorant of facts regarding population studies.

Did the magisterium break into your editorial offices? A slight down-

tick in the rate of population increase hardly signals an "existential threat to the future of humanity." Planet earth is still adding more than 70 million people per year, with one billion chronically hungry and another eight million dying every year from hunger-related illnesses. Please see the five-part series, "Beyond 7 Billion," published this past summer in *The Los Angeles Times*. It isn't going to get better soon. Start praying.

RICHARD DUBIEL
Stevens Point, Wis.

Prudential Judgments

While everything in the Feb. 4 issue of **America** was rich, I found three items especially intriguing.

I wonder how one could expect the harmony Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl ("The Noble Enterprise") looks for when our bishops focus on safeguarding traditional teachings, while theologians focus on exploring the ramifications of these teachings in the light of expanding or evolving knowledge and information. I suspect the magisterium is confronted with prudential judgments. The late Cardinal Avery Dulles ("Ignatius Among Us") illustrates the pitfalls in that process; three of the cited theologians (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Karl Rahner and Henri de Lubac) were placed under a cloud, only to be rehabilitated by Vatican II.

As I read the article "Misdirections" as part of this triad, John W. O'Malley, S.J., further unveils the human limits of objective interpretation of what we read.

Perhaps the episcopal ring is no more a guarantee of wise prudential decisions than the wedding ring is a guarantee of profound and lasting love.

THOMAS W. MAHAN
Brevard, N.C.

To send a letter to the editor please use the link that appears below articles on **America's** Web site, www.americamagazine.org. Letters may also be sent to **America's** editorial office (address on page 2) or by e-mail to: letters@americamagazine.org.

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The Life Offered

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (C), MARCH 17, 2013

Readings: Is 43:16–21; Ps 126:1–26; Phil 3:8–14; Jn 8:1–11

“From now on, do not sin again” (Jn 8:11)

St. Augustine famously gave voice to his sins, who asked him, “Are you getting rid of us?” And “From this moment we shall never be with you again, not for ever and ever.” The comfort of our sins is a mystery of human life. In order to turn away from them, to cooperate with God’s grace, we must understand, intellectually but even more deeply spiritually, that the life which God offers to us through Christ surpasses the momentary pleasures of a will turned away from God. The joy of a life lived in Christ not only transcends this temporal reality, but gives depth to its genuine pleasures.

The Gospel of John presents us with a passage that is not found in the earliest manuscripts, but in which the church heard the authentic voice of Jesus. In it, a woman caught in adultery is brought forward to be stoned, and Jesus instructs the gathered crowd to “let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” The crowd went away, “and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, sir.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.’” The passage is powerful, for Jesus asks us to place the weight of condemnation on ourselves, not on the other, and allows the woman, condemned under the law

of Moses, to go. Even more powerful than punishment is Jesus’ directive not to sin again.

This directive has at its core the fact that a life with God is more attractive than sin, that even if this woman, or you or I, were to stumble again, Jesus’ message, “From now on do not sin again” remains not as a way to minimize sin, but as a way to maximize grace.

Paul knows the superior attraction of Christ, as he says to the Philippians that he regards “everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” The word translated as “rubbish,” *skybala*, is actually a little earthier in Greek, too crude today to be found translated directly, but the comparison Paul makes is direct: What keeps me from knowing “Christ and the power of his resurrection” is meaningless in light of this goal toward which Paul presses on.

Paul moves on: “Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.” As God says to the prophet Isaiah, “do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”

In the scrutiny rite for catechumens

on the Fifth Sunday of Lent, the goal for which Paul strains, the new thing that springs forth, the resurrection and the life, is foreshadowed in Jesus’ raising Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus’ illness, Jesus says, “does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” In fact, Jesus delays his journey to see Martha, Mary and Lazarus, “after having heard that Lazarus was ill,” in order to make manifest God’s glory through this “new thing.”

Why then, when Jesus saw Mary and her friends crying, was he “greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved”? Why did Jesus weep? John tells us that Jesus was “greatly disturbed” when he came to the tomb, even



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- What sins must I let go of?
- Do I seek Christ above all things?
- Do I consider Christ the greatest of all joys?

though it was Jesus’ plan to raise Lazarus.

Jesus here meets the reality of the pain and suffering created by sin, visible in the tears of those who, like Jesus, loved Lazarus. Here he stands before those who make manifest the very reason for which he became human.

The attractions of sin lead us to a fallen world that inexorably leads us to the grave. “From now on, do not sin again” is about turning from what draws us away from God and turning to “the resurrection and the life.” Jesus says, “Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

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