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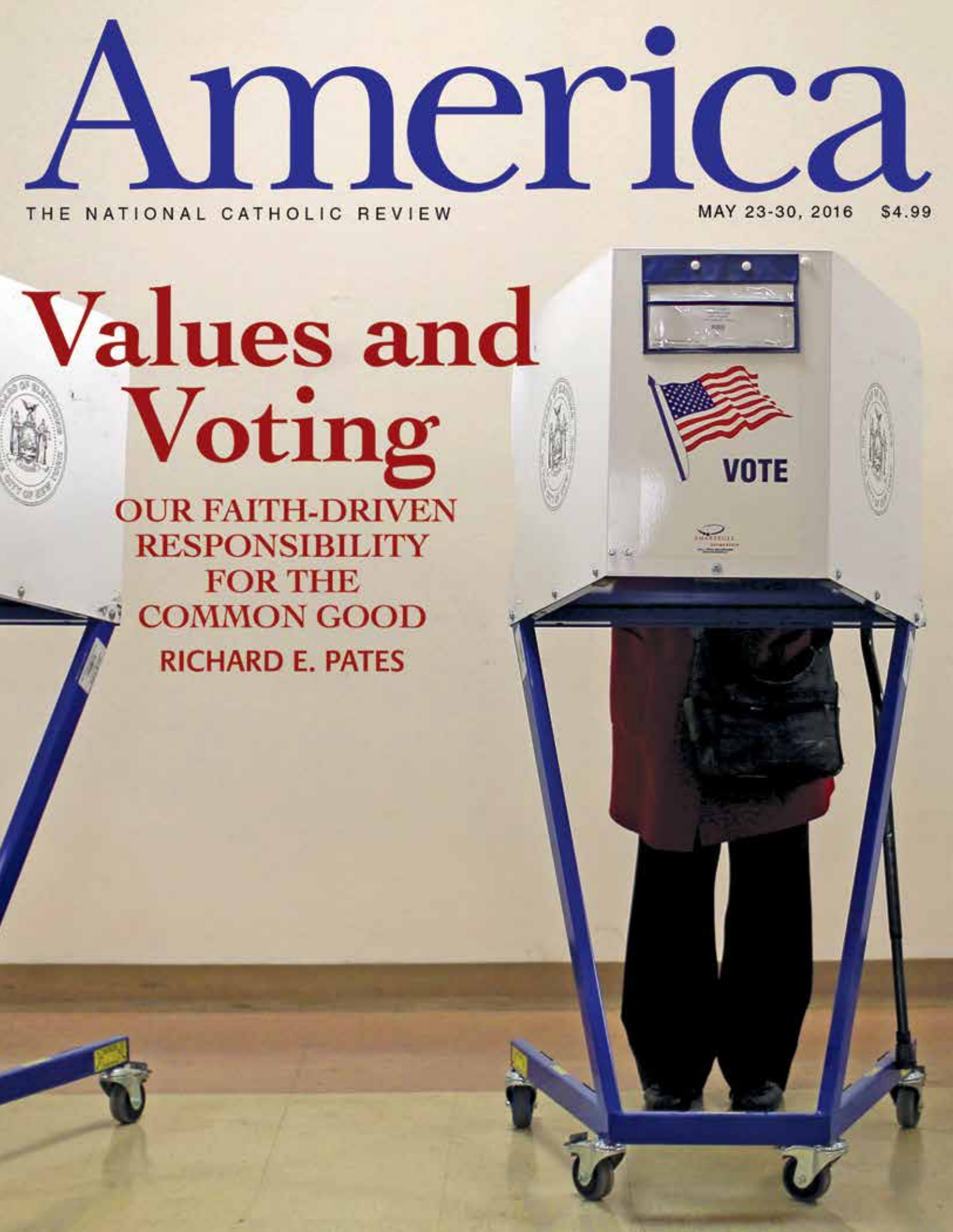
Values and Voting

OUR FAITH-DRIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

RICHARD E. PATES



OF MANY THINGS

Living as I do in a very large glass house, I am reluctant to throw stones. In fact, I don't even permit them on my property. I say this because spring 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. In recent years, in addition to the indispensable, unbelievably 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 who died last year at the age of 91. Girard stumbled onto an idea a few years ago that he calls mimetic theory.

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 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 what Girard calls the scapegoat mechanism: One person, then another, and then a whole group of people point the finger of suspicion at a single 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 rather brutal forms of violence. Perhaps we suspected all of that. The good news, however, is that there is a way out: the Gospel. 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 of human rivalry and violence.

If you're still reading, then you might be interested enough to attend the symposium advertised on the back page of this issue: "Principle and Practice: René Girard, Politics, Religion and Violence." Then again, you might be asking why any of this might matter. 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.

According to Girard's theory, the scapegoat isn't necessarily innocent and frequently is not. A person can be a pretty big sinner and still be the scapegoat. That counterintuitive fact might help explain the sense of self-righteous satisfaction we derive from throwing stones, even and perhaps especially when we happen to be right. And there is a lot of stone throwing at the moment, especially in our politics. The news is full of tales of individuals who have done stupid, even sinful things. Many of us like to point to those individuals—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's a comforting thought, though most likely false. Girard's theory, not to mention revelation and much of human history, challenges that smug, self-righteous assumption. We would all do well to consider how. I myself intend to do so in the quiet, though expansive living room of my glass house.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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Cover: A voter at a polling station during the New York presidential primary election on April 19, 2016. Reuters/Brendan McDermid/File Photo

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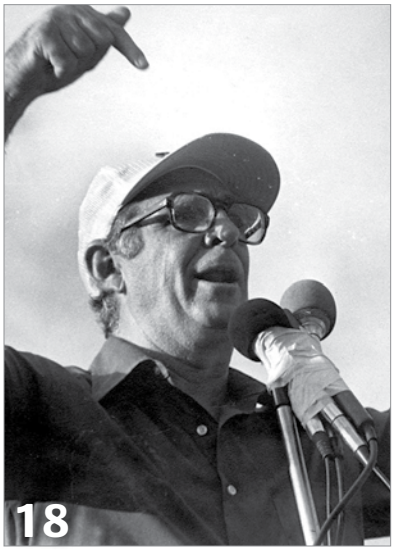

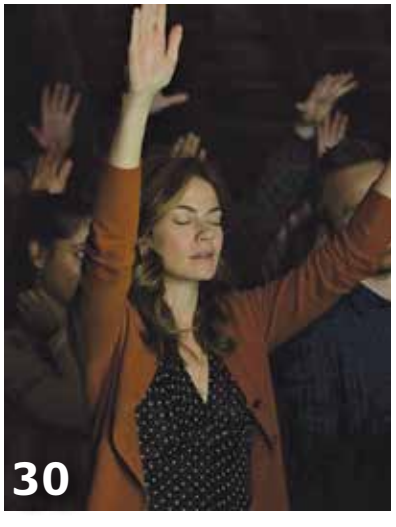

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ON THE WEB

Bishop Edward Braxton discusses **#BlackLivesMatter**, and America Media provides video of the funeral Mass of the poet and peace activist **Daniel Berrigan, S.J.,** right. Full digital highlights on page 29 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.

A Court That Never Says No

In early May, Reuters reported that the secret court established under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act approved every one of the 1,457 electronic surveillance applications the government brought before it in 2015. This continues a remarkable streak for the government; the FISA court's last denial was in 2009. According to data collected by the Electronic Privacy Information Center, the court has denied surveillance orders only 12 times since 1979, with an overall approval rate of 99.97 percent. Reuters did, however, report a slight increase in the number of orders the court modified before granting them, from 19 in 2014 to 80 in 2015. There are also many more requests made to companies without court oversight through "national security letters," which are usually accompanied by a gag order that prevents public discussion of the requests. The Federal Bureau of Investigation used such letters more than 48,000 times in 2015.

The government clearly needs the authority to conduct surveillance, and to be effective that surveillance needs to remain secret. But security must be balanced with some degree of transparency to sustain confidence that these surveillance powers have practical limits and are subject to meaningful oversight. The recognition that the FISA court almost never denies government requests has exactly the opposite effect, unfortunately. This is, after all, the same court that, as Edward Snowden revealed, ordered Verizon to provide records of all phone calls on an "ongoing, daily basis" to the National Security Agency.

It is exceedingly unlikely that only 0.03 percent of government surveillance requests are unjustified or overly broad. The court that oversees these requests would inspire more confidence if it involved some kind of adversarial process that at least occasionally produced adversarial results.

Indigenous Suicide Spike

Last month in Ontario, Canada, James Bay, the chief for the Attawapiskat First Nation, declared a state of emergency after the indigenous community of about 2,000 people had 11 suicide attempts on a single day, April 9. Sadly, the indigenous communities in Canada have long struggled with high rates of suicide. In the Manitoba First Nation communities, five people have killed themselves since Christmas; and since last fall, over 100 people have attempted suicide in the Attawapiskat community. According to a report from Health Canada, suicide "is the leading cause of death for indigenous young people and adults up to 44."

Indigenous communities in other parts of North America are also suffering. According to a study from the National Center for Health Statistics, suicide levels in the United States have reached a 30-year high, and Native American teens are at the greatest risk. In both countries, community leaders say that a variety of factors contribute to suicides among indigenous tribes, like poverty, inequality and inadequate health services. Both the Canadian and U.S. governments should do more for these communities, beginning with providing greater support for indigenous communities to deal with mental health issues. We must not forget these communities; as Pope Francis reminds us, every life "has inestimable value" and should be protected.

Reusable Rockets

On April 8, the world witnessed a great leap forward for human spaceflight when a rocket landed on a ship at sea. After delivering cargo to the International Space Station, SpaceX successfully landed the booster stage of its Falcon 9 rocket on a drone ship. The importance of this accomplishment toward changing the economics of spaceflight cannot be overstated. Most of the cost in getting something into orbit is in building the very expensive rocket, which until now has been a one-shot device. It may be possible to make several trips into space with the same rocket.

Blue Origin, another commercial spaceflight company, launched and landed a rocket in November and then relaunched it in January, a significant achievement, even though its flight only reached the edge of the atmosphere rather than orbit. In December, SpaceX successfully returned a rocket to land. Many of the most useful launch trajectories, however, do not allow for enough fuel to fly the rocket back to solid ground. This is what makes the ability to land on a ship at sea critically important.

In addition to being an engineering triumph, SpaceX's successful launch and landing testify to the importance of effective public-private partnerships. On the edge of bankruptcy in 2008, the only way SpaceX survived long enough to develop its technology was with a $1.6 billion multiyear contract from NASA to supply the space station. The history of massively expensive projects at NASA makes it unlikely the government agency could have achieved this kind of success entirely in house; SpaceX's finances made it impossible for the company to do so alone. We should both celebrate this success and learn from it, continuing to look for similar opportunities to align government priorities with commercial engineering expertise.

EDITORIAL

A Force to Reckon With

Most people in Chicago, particularly on the South and West Sides, did not need another internal investigation to know that the Chicago Police Department has deep problems. Anyone familiar with the stories of the serial torturer Jon Burge, the drug racketeer Joseph Miedzianowski, the crime wave authored by the C.P.D.'s Special Operations Section and, sadly, many more examples already knew the department has fallen far short of what its motto promises: "We Serve and Protect."

The lowlights from a recent institutional examination of conscience, nevertheless, still manage to shock. A task force pulled together in December 2015 in the aftermath of the 16-shot execution of the teenager Laquan McDonald by a police officer on a South Side street released its findings in April.

The report, which offers a disturbing look at institutional racism inside the C.P.D., was, as The New York Times put it, "blistering, blunt and backed up by devastating statistics."

"C.P.D.'s own data gives validity to the widely held belief the police have no regard for the sanctity of life when it comes to people of color," task force members wrote. "Stopped without justification, verbally and physically abused, and in some instances arrested, and then detained without counsel—that is what we heard about over and over again."

This is grim news all around at a grim time for Chicago. But this frank report also offers a unique opportunity for a civic reboot. A wise deployment of resources will be essential if practical reform and civic rejuvenation, and not another decade of empty rhetoric and souring community relations, are to be the outcomes. A recent survey by The New York Times and the Kaiser Family Foundation found Chicagoans of all backgrounds to be deeply concerned about the future of their city and distrustful of police and other public institutions. Chicago faces a civic crossroads: restoration or surrender to the same decline that has haunted other post-industrial Midwestern cities.

So far Mayor Rahm Emanuel's response to the report's confirmation of an institutional bias that places the public at peril has been tentative at best. There is a grave danger that this 190-page report will end up on a shelf alongside previous indictments of the police force that have not led to meaningful change. Dramatic reform is called for. It could be that the mayor is not up to the job. If that is the case, other civic leaders, especially from within the city's religious community, need to step forward to shepherd change.

Archbishop Blase Cupich has distinguished himself in Chicago through his activist stance on many of the city's most pressing problems. He has already joined efforts to intervene against gang violence and has added his voice to demands for a comprehensive approach to gun proliferation. He has also shown willingness to engage further on the issues confronting the C.P.D.

In March he spoke at St. Sabina's parish on the South Side, saying that people should be held accountable for breaking the law, whether they are residents who cross the line or police who do the same in the execution of their duties. But that accountability, he added, "is not to exclude, not to deny; it's an accountability that says: 'You're my brother. You're my sister. And I want to have joy of addressing these issues together.' That's hard."

It is hard, but it is essential. The essence of the problem of racism and excessive use of force within the C.P.D., as elsewhere, has been the emergence of an institutional "race" that is neither white nor black but "blue"—officers who perceive themselves as a community apart from the community they have sworn to protect and serve.

Restoring the wholeness of community is as much a spiritual challenge as a structural one. Archbishop Cupich is uniquely credible as an advocate for that spiritual wholeness. He is positioned, perhaps better than any other leader, to guide the police—many of whom are Catholic—to a re-appreciation of their vocation as a call to serve fellow members of their community, not a campaign to intimidate and detain "enemies" on the streets.

While this report has brought into focus the acute need for reform in Chicago, the same issues are of concern in police departments all over the country. The Chicago Police Department has become one example of the toxic effects of institutional racism. The task force report, however distasteful its content, creates an opportunity for the restoration of the department that could make it an exemplar once again—this time of a police force that has exorcised its demons and embraced a true vocation of protection and service, a police force of and for its community.

REPLY ALL

Focus on Forgiveness

Re "An Astounding Mercy," by the Rev. Raymond P. Roden (5/2): At least this version of St. Maria Goretti's story focuses on forgiveness and not just her fighting for her purity, as some interpret it. As a survivor of sexual assault, I know how hard it is to forgive. St. Maria Goretti, even at her young age, was able to forgive her murderer just as Jesus forgave those who put him up on the cross. Pray for us, dear little saint, that we may also follow Jesus in his extraordinary mercy and learn the healing that comes with true forgiveness.

MARIA SZABO GILSON
Olathe, Kan.

Resisting Rape Culture

This entire story needs to be expunged from the church with an apology to the murdered fifth-grader, Maria Goretti, and all the millions of young people who were taught that she "overcame temptation" when she resisted her own rape. In not just canonizing her but making her a martyr, the church has been complicit in so much violence toward women. There is no grace here—just the sanctification of rape and rape culture.

KAREN ELIZABETH PARK
Online Comment

'They Were Patriots'

Re "Imposing Independence," by Séamus Murphy, S.J. (4/25): The huge majority of the Irish people would reject the author's tortured revisionism and his attempt to put Catholic social teaching, of all things, at the service of British imperial hegemony over Ireland. They would much more readily recognize their country and its history in the words of the veteran resistance leader Martin McGuinness, first minister of Northern Ireland and champion of the Irish peace process, describing the leaders of the revolution:

> They were patriots and visionaries. They were republicans and socialists who saw all around them in the tenement slums of Dublin the deeply destructive effects of British rule. And they decided to act—not in their own self-interest but in the interests of the Irish people and of future generations.

ROBERT P. LYNCH
Online Comment

Tired of Ireland

There are far too many articles and columns about Ireland published in this magazine. While the emphasis may play well to **America**'s East Coast (or rather New York and Boston) readers, I find it tiresome to focus on the Irish and Ireland when there are so many other injustices in the world. I have nothing against the Irish but am simply tired of repeatedly reading about them in a U.S. magazine.

RAYMOND D'ANGELO
Westerville, Ohio

A Better Option

The more I read of "City of God," by James Dominic Rooney, O.P. (4/18), the more I disagreed. The Second Vatican Council happened, and to the faithful Catholic who believes in the Holy Spirit, its decrees and its spirit are the direction in which God wants the church to move. Although Father Rooney acknowledges the spiritual priesthood of all the faithful, a key council concept, he also describes his "private Mass" on retreat. That practice evolved in the Western church only during the Middle Ages. Vatican II respected that tradition and allowed it to continue. But the council's emphasis upon liturgy as the work of the people of God makes a "private Mass" an anomaly. Jesus instituted the Eucharist as a community meal. Why turn it into a private snack?

The parallel later in the article between a "post-Roe v. Wade" and a "post-Obergefell v. Hodges" America is a very weak comparison regarding social ills. How can a ruling that sanctioned the murder of millions of babies and has therefore done irreparable harm to the innocent be compared with a ruling that harms no one and, in terms of social stability, might be beneficial?

The suggestion that the Dominic option is preferable to the Benedict option is, I believe, worthwhile; but I personally doubt that the future of the church lies in communities grouped around and inspired by celibate males. That option worked in many ages of the church, but I hope for a day when the gifts of all God's people are lifted up and used as models.

MICHAEL MARCHAL
Online Comment

Subtle Anti-Semitism?

In Of Many Things (4/4), Matt Malone, S.J., shares a meditation on Holy Saturday from "One of the greatest Christian writers who ever lived." It is an elegant, poetic expression from a second-century homilist. But I wonder if it also subtly represents a primitive magisterium edging toward anti-Semitism. "I was handed over to Jews from a garden and crucified in a garden"—some Vatican-II ears might hear it this way. I did.

JEROME LEARY
Red Bank, N.J.

Tools of Repression

In "Fair Campaign Funding" (Editorial, 4/4) the editors lament the huge sums of money spent on political races in the United States but fail to properly

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diagnose its actual cause. In my view, "Big Money" in politics is just a logical byproduct of "Big Government."

Instead of reducing corruption and protecting democracy, campaign finance laws can be used as tools of political repression. In arguing the Citizens United case before the Supreme Court, Malcolm L. Stewart, the deputy U.S. solicitor general, actually said that the federal government could prevent the publication of a book by a corporation if it endorsed a political candidate. **America** could face censorship if government bureaucrats decide to interpret an editorial or article that discusses an election as an illegal campaign contribution.

It is really sad that in our supposedly free society, so many people who claim to support "democracy" are all too eager to legally restrict the rights of their opponents to influence public opinion, public policy and the election of candidates.

DIMITRI CAVALLI
Bronx, N.Y.

Sacred and Secular

The comments on Steven Millie's article, "A Sacred Calling" (3/28), were useful and thought-provoking. As an advocate of the Teilhardian view of the secular and the sacred, I see the need to continually find ways to integrate and synthesize the language that we use to express our understanding of both the secular and the sacred. For me there is only one reality—God's! Politics should be humanity's way of discovering and implementing the values that come from God as enumerated in Catholic social teaching: the common good, solidarity, human dignity and so on. It is the ongoing forum where honest dialogue between persons and nations takes place to discern the values the Spirit is continually pointing us toward.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's synthesis of the secular and sacred is an important step toward helping our politics become more humanizing while at the same time more divinizing. His view of all reality converging into Christ seeks the oneness, unity and community toward which true politics should be moving.

(REV.) PAT IPOLITO
West Falls, N.Y.

Voting Values

In Of Many Things (3/14), Matt Malone, S.J., writes of his father "that he didn't leave the Republican party. The party left him." I have always been a Republican, primarily because of economic policies. This year, however, I will vote for the lesser of two evils. I cannot give up my Christian values simply because I have always been a Republican. Jesus taught that we are to love. Jesus taught that we are to help the poor and to welcome the stranger.

Sadly, some do not yet realize how much richer our culture becomes because of the contributions of those who have chosen to immigrate here. Non-Christian values have infected American politics at various times of history. The Know-Nothing Party (also called the American Party) in the 19th century was founded on hatred of immigrants—Catholic immigrants in particular. Americans have always eventually triumphed over the toxicity that occasionally infects its politics. I have hope.

SANDI SINOR
Online Comment

An Individual Duty

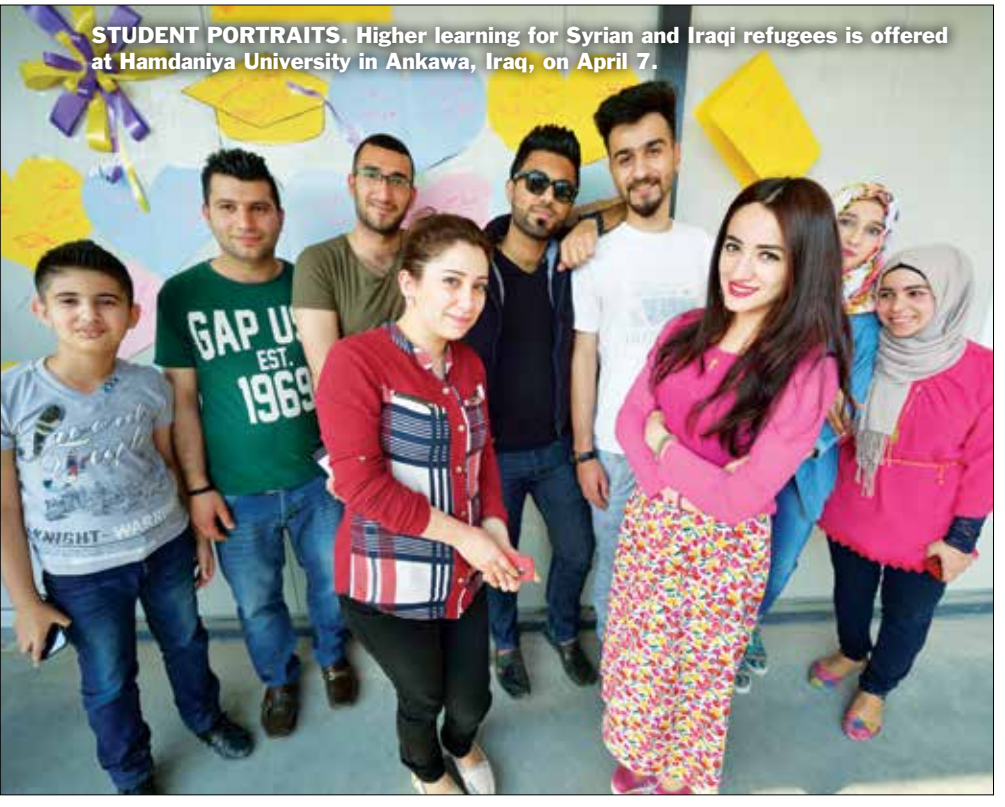
Re "Property and People," by Robert Maloney, C.M. (3/7): Compulsory charity is not charity, and collective responsibility for individual decisions is not justice. Our God-given individuality, our own conscience, defines our trek through this life, and it is therefore the individual who should be charitably giving from his or her own heart as moved by the Spirit. To empower a government to be charitable on your behalf is nothing short of avoiding your individual responsibility and foisting it onto another. This is categorically immoral.

The matter of property and its ownership can be similarly understood. It should be the individual who determines ownership, not some bureaucrat who has some starry-eyed notion of equality. It is our difference that makes us who we are, and it is our individual responsibility and duty—not that of some government entity—to be considerate to others.

RUSS HAMILTON
West Orange, N.J.

MIDDLE EAST

Can Education Slow the Exodus Of Syrian and Iraqi Christians?



STUDENT PORTRAITS. Higher learning for Syrian and Iraqi refugees is offered at Hamdaniya University in Ankawa, Iraq, on April 7.

As heavy fighting continues across the Nineveh Plain, some Christians displaced by the Islamic State have given up the dream of returning home and joined the stream of refugees leaving the war-torn country. Others remain in Iraqi Kurdistan, clinging to the hope that they can someday go back to their villages.

"When we fled our convent in Qaraqosh in 2014, we thought we'd be gone just a few days; then we could go home. But now it's been almost two years, and the future is uncertain. Some of the displaced want to return home as soon as they can. Others have had enough, and they want to leave for good," said Sister Maria Hanna, superior of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena.

The Dominican sisters opened a school for displaced children in Ankawa last August with 500 students. By April, Sister Hanna said, the enrollment had dropped to 445. The others have left the country with their parents. And the numbers continue to drop.

"We're preparing the children for the future, but we don't know what that future will be," she said.

"There are no good choices. And the most poor have even fewer options," she said.

Displaced young people here are not of one mind about their future.

Rand Khaled, 21, is confident she'll go home to Qaraqosh, from which she fled in 2014. "I have friends who've gone to the U.S.A. and Australia. All of my uncles and aunts have left the country. We keep in touch on Facebook, and they're always asking me why we aren't leaving," she said.

"But why should we leave? I want to live in my country, become a teacher in the university there. I want to stay at home and make my dreams come true. We need only safety to return. We have lots of hope but little security. And so we wait," she said. While she waits, Khaled studies accounting.

One of her classmates sees the future differently.

"We all want to leave here as soon as we can. In Europe it's safe. There is freedom and no ISIS, no bombs in the streets," said Alsajed Asaad, a 21-year-old Muslim student who fled Tikrit when the Islamic State captured the city in 2014.

"I don't want to return to Tikrit even if ISIS goes away. My uncle is in Finland, and I have friends who have gone to Germany, Sweden and Turkey. They say life is good there, that they are respected, that there is peace and safety. Of course I want to leave here," he said.

Khaled and Asaad study at Hamdaniya University in Ankawa. It's a newly independent version of what was formerly the Qaraqosh campus of Mosul University. To help with the onslaught of displaced students, the Chaldean Catholic Archdiocese of Irbil provided land and classrooms so that 1,400 students can take classes in Arabic.

The Catholic University launched its first classes in December in a sprawling new facility in Ankawa. Teaching is in English and follows an international curriculum. Archbishop Bashar Warda of Irbil said it will help displaced Christians and others to prepare better for their future, whether that is back home or in exile elsewhere.

"Just as we've helped with shelter and food and health care, it's our

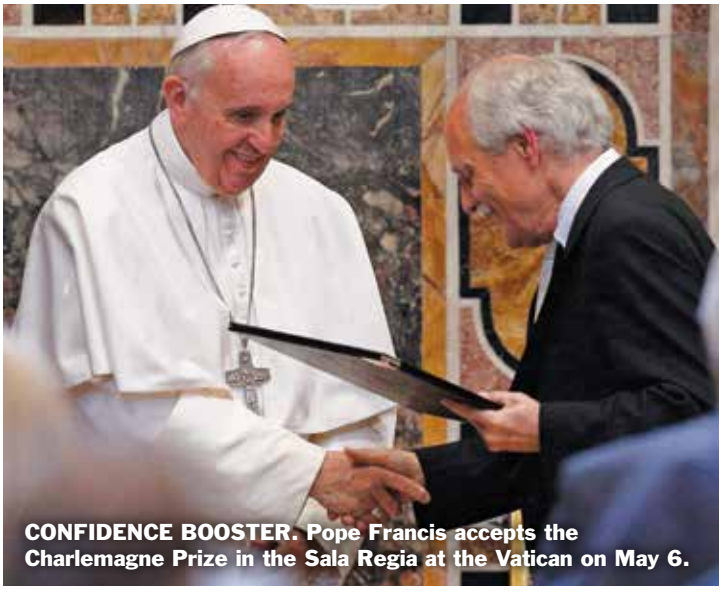
mission to provide education. And once the displaced get a solid education, that will ensure a better future wherever they end up," he said. "Most people who leave here leave because of the future, not the past. We only ask that they think twice before they leave. The new university gives them an alternative to think about. It gives them a choice."

EUROPE

Pope Francis Has a Dream of Unity

Pope Francis, accepting a prize for promoting European unity, on May 6 bemoaned that the continent's people "are tempted to yield to our own selfish interests and to consider putting up fences."

"I dream of a Europe where being a migrant is not a crime but a summons to a greater commitment on behalf of the dignity of every human being," he told an audience that included Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, Premier Matteo Renzi of Italy and King Felipe VI of Spain.



CONFIDENCE BOOSTER. Pope Francis accepts the Charlemagne Prize in the Sala Regia at the Vatican on May 6.

"I dream of a Europe that promotes and protects the rights of everyone, without neglecting its duties toward all. I dream of a Europe of which it will not be said that its commitment to human rights was its last utopia," said the pope.

Pope Francis, the son of European immigrants to Argentina, accepted the International Charlemagne Prize for his "message of hope and encouragement."

Echoing the famous "I have a dream" speech by U.S. civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., Francis offered his vision of a Europe that cares for children, the elderly, the poor and the infirm as well as "those newcomers seeking acceptance because they have lost everything and need shelter."

Notwithstanding the prize's underlying positive message, the pope tacitly acknowledged a backdrop of a Europe engulfed in a crisis of confidence, prompted by the threat of terrorism and surge of migrants, and giving strength to nationalistic sentiments that seek to undermine the notion of a united continent.

He also said youth unemployment was sapping the continent of its dynamism, and he called for new economic models that are "more inclusive and equitable."

"There is an impression that Europe is declining, that it has lost its ability to be innovative and creative, and that it is more concerned with preserving and dominating spaces than with generating processes of inclusion and change," Francis said.

He urged Europeans to undergo a "memory transfusion," citing a phrase by the Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, to remember Europe's fractured past when confronting issues that threaten again to divide it.

"A memory transfusion can free us from today's temptation to build hastily on the shifting sands of immediate results, which may produce quick and easy short-term political gains but do not enhance human fulfillment," he said.

The pope said the church can play a role in "the rebirth of a Europe weary, yet still rich in energies and possibilities."

Before the ceremony in the frescoed Sala Regia, Francis met privately with Merkel, as well as with Martin Schulz, president of the European parliament and a previous Charlemagne Prize recipient, E.U. Commission President Jean-Claude Junker and E.U. Council President Donald Tusk, who also attended the ceremony.

Junker, in his remarks, praised the pope for taking three Syrian refugee families to Rome with him at the end of his recent visit to Greece.

"When you take in 12 refugees, in proportion to the population of the Vatican that is more than any E.U. member state—you fill our hearts with new courage," Junker said.

The Charlemagne Prize, consisting of a medal and a citation, is awarded annually by the German city of Aachen for contributions to European unity. Previous winners include the former U.S. president Bill Clinton and St. John Paul II, who received a special edition of the prize in 2004. The prize is normally given in Aachen but was transferred to the Vatican for the pope's convenience.

The Holy Roman emperor Charlemagne once ruled a large swath of western Europe from Aachen, near the Belgian border.

DANIELA PETROFF (AP)

Fort McMurray Fire

As wildfires continue to blaze in northern Alberta, churches of all denominations across Canada have been offering prayers and helping relief efforts. More than 100,000 residents of Fort McMurray have fled the inferno—most have lost their homes completely. Bishop Paul Terrio, bishop of St. Paul, said: "Even as we still are all in shock with the wildfire destruction and damage in Fort McMurray, let us give thanks to our Lord and God that, with some 60 to 70,000 people evacuated from the community in a matter of hours, there has been no loss of life." Thousands of evacuees have been put up in sports and community centers since the crisis started. Archbishop Richard Smith of the neighboring archdiocese of Edmonton requested that special collections be taken up at Masses over the May 7-8 and 14-15 weekends in support of the people of Fort McMurray. Donations are also being collected by the Archdiocese of Toronto through its website (www.archtoronto.org).

Berrigan Remembered

Daniel J. Berrigan, S.J., was remembered during his funeral Mass as a "fierce, mischievous visionary," a "Beatnik Jesuit friend," a priest who "taught the sacrament of resistance" and a loving uncle ruled by faith, not fear. More than 800 people packed the Church of St. Francis Xavier in New York to cheer the life of the Jesuit at a festive service on May 6. Berrigan, a poet, author and longtime peace activist, died on April 30 at age 94. Stephen M. Kelly, S.J., said that Berrigan and his late brother and fellow activist Philip were men who lived the Resurrection and challenged religious leaders to know "bomb-blessing has no place in Jesus' self-giving." Elizabeth McAlister, widow of Philip Berrigan, ended her eulogy with a call to service. "Sisters and brothers, it is of no service to Dan or to his memory for us to simply hold him up as an icon, especially in ways that exempt us from responsibility," McAlister said. "How much better would it be if we asked for a double portion of Dan's spirit, and better yet, if we acted on it?"

Electric Effects

Something developed countries take for granted—electricity—could go a long way to stem violence often attributed to religion, said Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto, Nigeria, in the country's northwest. Only major cities, like state capitals, have reliable electricity, the bishop said on April 29 during a visit to Washington. Because of the lack of electricity, people cannot do ordinary work without a generator, and generators are expensive. The problem is intertwined with pervasive corruption. "If the lights would come on...the small people would get busy," said Bishop Kukah. Often violence in Nigeria is attributed to religious conflicts, he said, but "more often it is just a battle for survival and a battle over resources." Bishop Kukah said Nigerians send their children to school, and they graduate from college, but then there are no jobs. He said the country has infrastructure, but people cannot access it.

NEWS BRIEFS

Taking the oath

Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry told hundreds of mourners at the funeral of **Sister Clare Crockett**, killed in Ecuador during an earthquake on April 17, that "a life given in loving sacrifice is never wasted." ⬩ Twenty-three new Swiss Guard recruits pledged during a ceremony on May 6 to **"faithfully, loyally and honorably"** serve and protect the pope and, if necessary, sacrifice their lives for him. ⬩ The Vatican announced on May 5 that Pope Francis has appointed **Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen**, 54, a former refugee who fled war-torn Vietnam by boat, to lead the Australian Diocese of Parramatta. ⬩ In an early morning raid on May 2, Honduran authorities **arrested four men** for the murder of the environmental activist Berta Cáceres Flores, but family members and Catholic organizations remains skeptical and continue to call the international community to carry out its own investigation. ⬩ In book extracts published on May 3, the former president of the German bishops' conference, Cardinal Karl Lehmann of Mainz, charged that names of candidates submitted to the Vatican as potential bishops **are being vetoed** by "unlawful outside influences" in Rome.

From America Media, CNS, RNS, AP and other sources.

DISPATCH | LOS ANGELES

Going Totally Digital

They are filmmakers and coders, journalists and communications experts. Their portfolios include transforming the sleepy Facebook page of a radio station into a site followed by 3.6 million people; working on major marketing campaigns for Hyundai and Warner Brothers and films for Michael Bay and Janusz Kaminski; and serving as press secretary for a recent mayor of Los Angeles. Their average age is 28.

No, this isn't the staff of the latest Silicon Valley startup or hot new Hollywood production company. This is the 12-person digital media team of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Two and a half years ago, Archbishop José Gómez came to the social media expert Matt Meeks with a dream: Find new ways of sharing the stories of the faith. "If we're not reaching the people of faith now, how can we reach them?" he asked.

Meeks was intrigued. He suggested creating an outside media agency that the archdiocese could contract the work to.

Archbishop Gómez wanted more. "We need the young people inside the building," he responded. "We need to grow from within."

So in July 2013 Meeks became the archdiocese's chief digital officer. But he kept his agency concept as well. Rather than imposing ideas on archdiocesan institutions, the digital media team would function as "the servants' servants," "hired" by different clients for various undertakings. Currently they manage 15 Facebook pages and more than a dozen Twitter and Instagram feeds, and they keep 32 separate projects going.

"When we started," Meeks remembers, "the archdiocese's primary means of communication were the newspaper, whose circulation was about 60,000, and the media office, which was understaffed. Today, the archdiocese reaches on average per week anywhere from three to seven million people."

Rather than imposing ideas, the digital media team would function as "the servants' servants."

Part of the group's success is attributable to the strong original content created by the team. The look of the websites they design— for St. John's Seminary, for example—is clean and simple, handsome widescreen photos matched with just enough text. The archbishop's Facebook page likewise offers a lovely piece of art or a photo each day with a short spiritual quotation. Most posts are reshared thousands of times and receive hundreds of comments. Some, particularly those that highlight the rich Christian heritages of Los Angeles's many ethnic communities, have even garnered followers from other parts of the world.

But the team's greatest insight is that the most important expressions of faith lie not in their office but in the community. "Our goal," says Meeks, "is to highlight the inspirational stories that are already taking place and hope they can be a guide to other people.

"You can sit down and catechize someone all day. But what's going to help them believe is a story that wins their hearts."

There's enthusiasm among them, a hope-filled, can-do sense of the future. Someone recently brought in an Oculus Rift, the immersive virtual-reality headsets that seems likely to be "the next big thing"; the group riffed about the possibilities.

"What if we could show Creation," asks Meeks. "'Let there be light,' and this big light explodes all around you, while Morgan Freeman narrates." (Everyone laughs.)

"We could walk the steps that Jesus took," suggests chief communications officer Carolina Guevara, or the current path of Syrian refugees: "What a way to change a person's life, bringing them into that experience," imagines Meeks. "It's not just news. 'I was present on the boat.'"

Tasked with helping L.A.'s Catholic cemeteries tell their story, they suggested tying in with local Day of the Dead celebration. They hoped 500 people might come to their event at Calvary Cemetery. They got 2,000, and the next year nearly twice as many.

What's more, staff from all over the archdiocese have pitched in and made the effort their own. When this group talks social media, they really want it to be social—collaborative, fostering real relationships and actual encounters. In their office they keep one desk empty for anyone from the archdiocese who wants to come and sit in with the team.

The contemporary media landscape can fill many with apprehension. "We are in new waters," Meeks acknowledges, but he encourages people not to be afraid, to experiment. "The church has always been good about putting out into the water and going to uncharted places. That's what we do."

JIM McDERMOTT

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., *a screenwriter, is America's Los Angeles correspondent. Twitter: @PopCulturPriest @jmcdsj.*

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The Other Campaigns

As the presidential race moves toward nomination of two historically unpopular candidates, two other campaigns are underway. President Obama is working to secure his legacy. Speaker Paul Ryan is trying to offer an alternative to Donald Trump's angry messages.

I've seen these two campaigns in action. President Obama came to Georgetown for an unprecedented panel on overcoming poverty. He was passionate and challenging and sought common ground as he addressed a priority he clearly cares about but rarely talks about. Mr. Ryan recently came to Georgetown and offered a stark contrast with the candidates who now dominate the Republican race, renewing his consistent call to take on poverty in the United States.

These two leaders come from different parties, ideologies and backgrounds. Their opposing budgets outline very different policies. They both seem driven by ideas and value time with their families over Washington politics and fundraising. But they often blame each other for their inability to act. Mr. Ryan blames the president's executive orders for failure of immigration reform, ignoring that it was Republican leaders who blocked a vote on bipartisan Senate legislation. Obama often blames the speaker's House Republicans for gridlock and policy paralysis.

In the last year, President Obama has found his voice and a renewed agenda, relying on executive action to overcome Congressional resistance. On Cuba, Iran, climate change and immigration, he has taken steps to be "a consequential president" (which he said in 2008 that Ronald Reagan was and Bill Clinton was not). He is seeking to persuade and embarrass Republicans to act on his nomination of the widely respected Judge Merrick Garland, which would affect the Supreme Court for years.

Mr. Ryan seems appalled by the Republican campaign, breaking his silence to speak out against Trump for demonizing immigrants and banning Muslims from entering the United States, insisting "it's not what this country stands for." He represents the antithesis of Senator Ted Cruz's shutdown politics, reaching agreement with Senator Murray to keep government open. Mr. Ryan came to Georgetown to make the case for an alternative Republican vision, calling for fixing a broken immigration system, overcoming poverty, an alternative to Obamacare and entitlement reform. He simply ignored the fact that his "party of ideas" was about to nominate a leader who opposes many of these ideas.

> Obama and Ryan often blame each other for their inability to act.

Both bring ideological baggage. Mr. Ryan has created and supported budgets that cut essential programs for the poor but not subsidies for the rich. His lonely leadership on poverty comes with proposals that could weaken the safety net. The president's administration often seems preoccupied with cultural issues. The Supreme Court is practically begging the administration to further accommodate religious ministries who object to its contraceptive mandate. Mr. Obama came into office to end wars, but he is sending more special operation forces to deal with chaos in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria and cannot close Guantanamo.

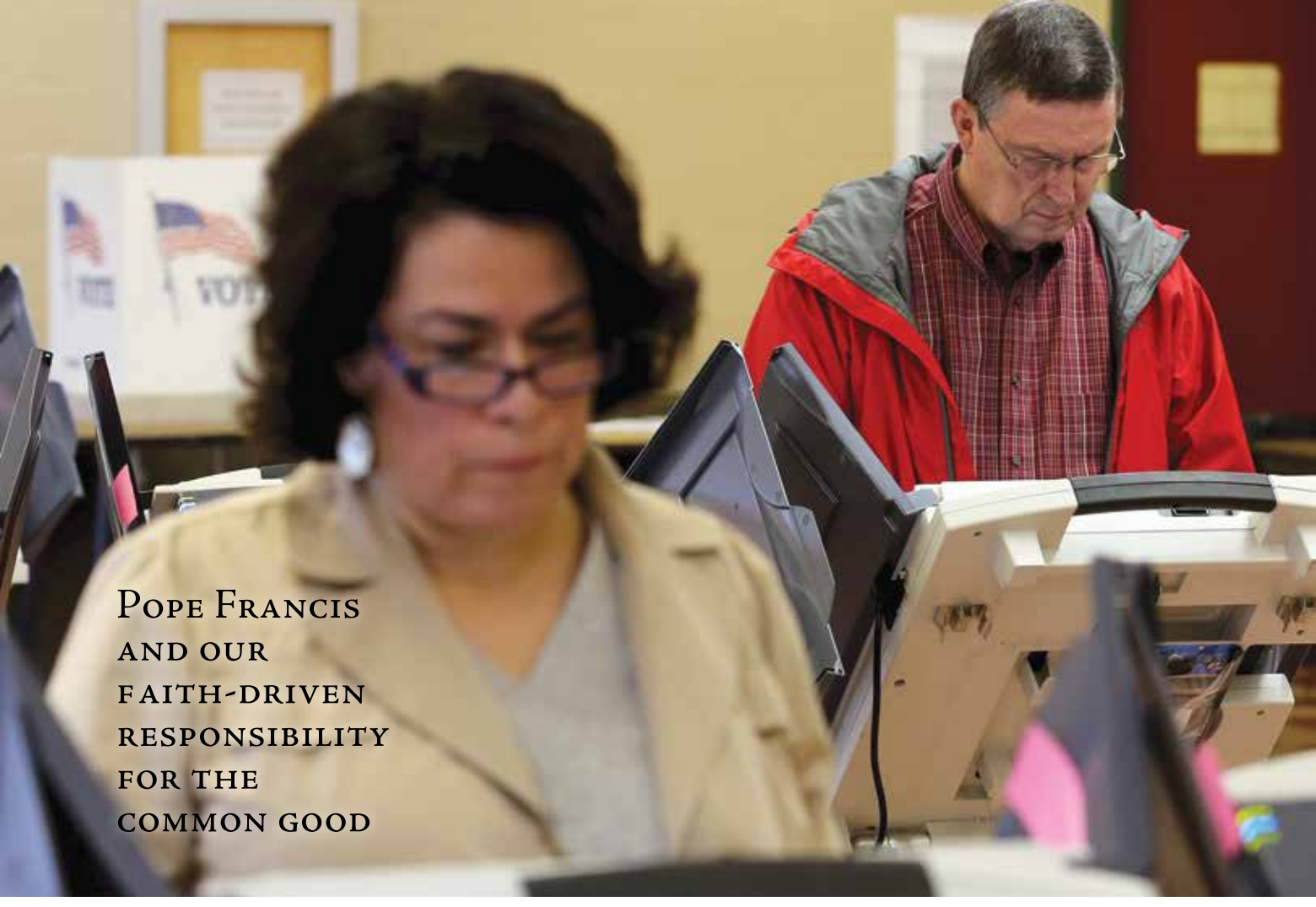
We should hope Mr. Ryan can resist powerful forces of nativism, racial resentment and isolationism in his party. I hope the president can continue to protect immigrants and act on climate change. I also hope both will continue to make poverty a priority. I believe that if we could lock them up for a weekend, they could argue and agree on a much needed bipartisan plan to address economic, family and other factors that create and sustain pervasive poverty in our nation.

Both spoke recently on the failures and possibilities of politics. Mr. Ryan told a group of interns, "Our political discourse...did not used to be this bad, and it does not have to be this way.... We don't have to accept it. And we cannot enable it." Mr. Obama returned to Illinois to insist, "We've got to build a better politics, one that's less of a spectacle and more of a battle of ideas, one that's less of a business and more of a mission."

As President Obama prepares to leave and Speaker Ryan begins to lead, they are warning us of how our broken politics undermines the common good. Their alternative campaigns lack the drama and consequences of the race for the White House, but these two very different leaders are calling us to rise above the anger, personal attacks and mistrust that dominate this election year.

JOHN CARR

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



Pope Francis and our faith-driven responsibility for the common good

Values and Voting

BY RICHARD E. PATES

In January, I attended an international gathering of Catholic bishops in Lisbon, Portugal. I was the only American. The majority came from Africa and Latin America. Upon learning that I was from Iowa, which conducts the first caucuses, the bishops stressed how important U.S. elections are, how they establish a worldwide direction for pursuing peace, grappling with widespread hunger and poverty and the huge migrations of peoples, especially those fleeing Iraq and Syria.

They were astounded at the tenor of our political discourse. Had we Americans not heard of Pope Francis? What did we think he means when he affirms, "We are one human family. We are all brothers and sisters"?

We Americans are called to incorporate our values and beliefs into the political process in a manner that reflects what best serves humanity. But our convictions do not find a readily comfortable home in either major party. We must engage. But how?

POLITICAL CHOICES. Residents of Valley City, Ohio, vote in their primary election on March 15.

REUTERS/AARON JOSEFCZYK

MOST REV. RICHARD E. PATES *is bishop of the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa.*

Pope Francis has emphasized three principal dimensions of our life together that must be addressed if we are to be concerned about human life and living out Gospel values: creation, peace and economy.

Creation. In his address to the United Nations, Pope Francis declared, "The common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned, those considered disposable because they are only considered as part of a statistic. This common home of all men and women must also be built on the understanding of a certain sacredness of human nature."

Pope Francis focused global attention on the environment with his encyclical "Laudato Si'" ("On Care for Our Common Home"). It is a clarion call for universal action to reverse ailing Mother Earth's health condition. Evidence abounds: pollution and waste, widespread experience of radical climate variation, reduction of safe water and loss of biodiversity. More distressing is the impact on human life—where the poor suffer intolerably and societies and cultures are unraveling.

At the heart of this environmental disruption is climate change, and the scientific consensus is that it's for real. The pope asserts that this change with its destructive results is caused by human action.

"Environmental conversion" is required, preserving that which gives life: air, water, fertile soil. We can do so by being responsible in our own situation but also by advocating policies that characterize us as grateful "stewards," so that all God created so lovingly thrives.

We are called to be attentive to the three billion people who are suffering and are left behind in a proportionate sharing of God's providence. They represent what Pope Francis terms the "throwaway culture." One of the ways their lives can be enhanced is by reversing the suffering emanating from environmental degradation. We must also provide future generations with a home that will be habitable, preserving the wonder of God's goodness. At the White House last year, Pope Francis said: "Accepting the urgency, it seems clear to me also that climate change is a problem that can no longer be left to a future generation. When it comes to the care of our 'common home,' we are living at a critical moment of history."

Let me at this point brag about my home state, Iowa. Iowans have been especially blessed and inspired by leaders exercising conscientious stewardship. Farmers are committed to leaving the soil and the water, for which they are responsible, in much better shape than when they inherited it. Wind power has taken off in Iowa. We are now producing more such energy per capita than any other state; 30 percent of our power comes from this source. Right behind is the installation of solar panels, especially in rural areas.

This creates work for people like Justin Doyle, a Catholic engineer in Des Moines, who is practical and committed to healthy economic development. He transforms old buildings through renovation and the installation of solar energy, which is sustainable and very economical operationally. Renewable energy so produced in one of his midsize renovated industrial office buildings is 8 percent beyond the facility's needs.

Individual action in climate change needs to evolve to embrace political consensus. That is where progress will be achieved for the common good.

Individual action in climate change needs to evolve to embrace political consensus. That is where progress will be achieved for the common good. As Pope Francis insists, "Unless citizens control power—natural, regional and municipal—it will not be possible to control damage to the environment."

The Vatican has intervened on the international level, advocating at the Paris Conference for the Environment. In doing so, it emphasizes that all the world needs to be on the same page and committed to those policies and actions intended for the beneficial global outcome of all.

Peace. It is the notion of one human family that has driven the vision of Pope Francis to overcome separation and bring people to the peace table. It is this same vision that has led the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to advocate for renewing diplomatic relationships with Cuba and reaching agreement with Iran on its nuclear capability. Diplomacy, negotiation and most important, as Pope Francis insists, dialogue are far better than hostility and separation.

Divisions of people create fear and negativity and shroud the goodness in every human heart. The Berlin Wall, for instance, perpetuated the artificial separation of two peoples, creating tension and political conflict—a cold war. Aware of that history, as Pope Francis recently said, we do not need more walls. A wall between Mexico and the United States would speak loudly of our inability to resolve issues like immigration, our country's insatiable appetite for drugs, the ensuing corruption and violence and the unraveling of education in Latin America.

In his visit to the Central African Republic, the pope

raised the consequential role of weapons merchants who do lucrative business in supplying death machines to opposing military factions that do not have the common good at heart. In addition, the world still faces the specter of nuclear weapons that could evaporate Mother Earth. These threats to our humanity demand Christian as well as common-sense responses.

When I reflect on Christians seeking peace, I recall a U.N. official from Benin who was in charge of trying to bring peace to Côte d'Ivoire after its recent civil war. He demonstrated convictions and values at the heart of our Christian ethic: forgiveness, mercy, justice, compassion, dialogue, new beginnings, letting go of sentiments of hatred. When I expressed admiration for his putting into practice his convictions, he simply replied, "I am a Catholic, and my faith compels me to such action expressing the love of Christ."

Economy. "What are we going to do about the poor?" Pope Francis asked in response to an invitation to the Davos conference on economic activity in January. His position is well grounded in the Gospels, in the cultural heritage of South America and in the Catholic Church's "preferential option for the poor."

He urged Congress to "keep in mind all those people around us who are trapped in a cycle of poverty. They too need to be given hope. The fight against poverty must be fought consistently and on many fronts, especially in its causes." He added: "It goes without saying that part of this great effort is the creation and distribution of wealth. The right use of natural resources, the proper application of technology and the harnessing of the spirit of enterprise are essential elements of an economy that seeks to be modern, inclusive and sustainable."

As we engage these issues, we identify with David as he battled Goliath. There are 62 billionaires in the world who have the total wealth of 3.6 billion people, approximately half the world's inhabitants, combined. Furthermore, the lack of education, joblessness, hunger, malnutrition, poor health and inadequate housing, lack of proper sanitation, corruption, poor government, etc. that the poor endure seem almost insurmountable. But our Christian convictions tell us we should engage without hesitation or fear.

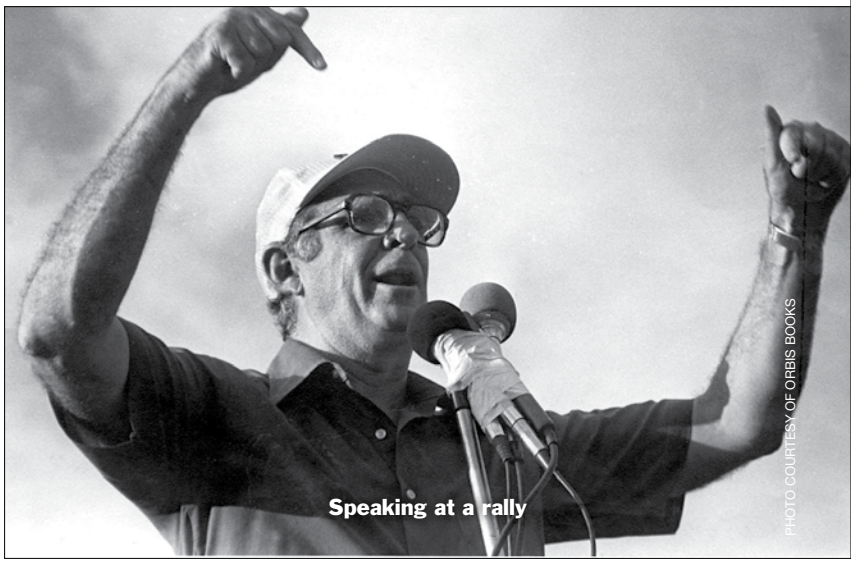
It is frustrating, then, that our options for advancing the common good are so limited in the current political environment. Neither party advocates the entirety of our Christian ethic. But our response must be practical, pursued through a party or candidate with whom, from our perspective, we can attain much of what is at stake for the common good. It is also necessary to transcend partisan limitations and join in common cause. In so doing, we pursue that path, enlightened by the Gospel, which recognizes the inherent value of each human person and renders to that person the life and dignity to which he or she is entitled as a child of God.

The Key to Everything

How contact with the poor shaped a Jesuit's vocation

BY FERNANDO CARDENAL

Fernando Cardenal, S.J., served in the Sandinista government of Nicaragua, first as coordinator of a national literacy campaign and then as minister of education. Because canon law forbids a priest to hold governmental office and, conscientiously objecting, he refused to resign, he was dismissed from the Society of Jesus in 1984. He continued to live according to his vows and, after resigning from his government post in 1990, was readmitted to the Society of Jesus in 1997.



Speaking at a rally

PHOTO COURTESY OF ORBIS BOOKS

My formation was similar to that of many other Jesuits in Latin America. We led a fairly quiet monastic life devoting all of our energy to spiritual reflection and studies.... We all knew of the continent's poverty and had studied the reports and the statistics, but we didn't have many opportunities to interact with the poor. The information stayed in our heads without touching our hearts or our lives. We lived in large, secluded monasteries far away from the cities with very little contact with the outside world. Although we lived in largely indigenous countries such as Ecuador, Peru and Mexico, we had few opportunities to engage with the people. The philosophy school in Quito was at the foot of the Pichincha mountain, and on our weekly excursions we would step out of the kitchen to begin our hikes up the mountain, where indigenous people appeared etched in the scenery. We would greet them and continue on our way. I never once had a conversation with one of them.

When I finished my academic formation as a Jesuit, I still needed to take one more course. The course is known as the tertianship, nine months of intense spiritual formation to delve into the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola. Our founder feared that the long years of study might have cooled the personal relationship with God that is the foundation of our religious life, and thus he appended this formation period at the end.

...

[At this time] I felt a restlessness, a gnawing feeling that did not leave me in peace; undoubtedly it came from God. I wanted to experience some close contact with the poor, something I had missed during my long Jesuit formation. I decided to ask the father superior of the Jesuits in Central America for permission to go to Colombia for the formation course. Previously, the course had been conducted near the city of La Ceja in a three-story building, surrounded by beautiful green pastures framed on all sides by spectacular mountains. Three years earlier Miguel Elizondo, S.J., had been appointed tertianship instructor in Colombia. He was an ascetic, a selfless person who, even as a young man, had the reputation of being a saint. At the same time, he was the most open person I had ever known, with a Gospel freedom that made him wide open to change. Father Elizondo was a leader to many Jesuits in Latin America during their formation in religious life. He had been my novice master in El Salvador; and now, as he coordinated the tertianship in the city of Medellín, he decided to move the course to a very poor neighborhood. This was exactly what I was looking for.... It was a life-altering decision.

In 1968 His Holiness Pope Paul VI was to visit Medellín after his visit to Bogotá. The government decided to move the people living in squatter settlements surrounding the city to the Bermejal area—named for its red soil. That is how the neighborhood Paul VI was founded. When I arrived, the streets were pure mud, but that was not a problem if you had a good pair of boots. The real problem came during the dry season when the mud became dust and got

FERNANDO CARDENAL, S.J., *a Nicaraguan Jesuit and liberation theologian, died on February 20, 2016. This text is a slightly edited excerpt from the first chapter of his book* Faith and Joy: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Priest, *translated and edited by Kathy McBride and Mark Lester (Orbis Books, 2015).*

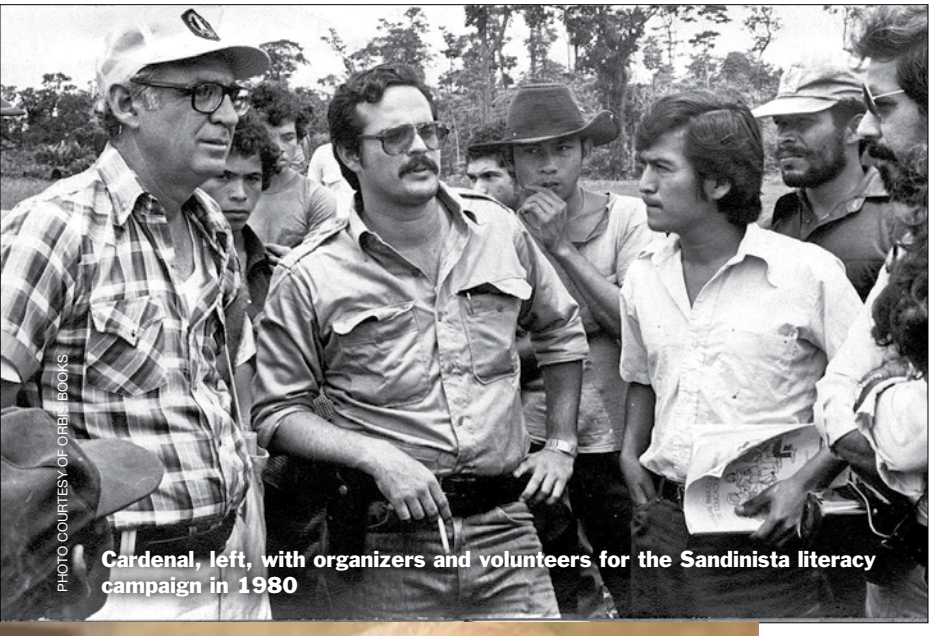
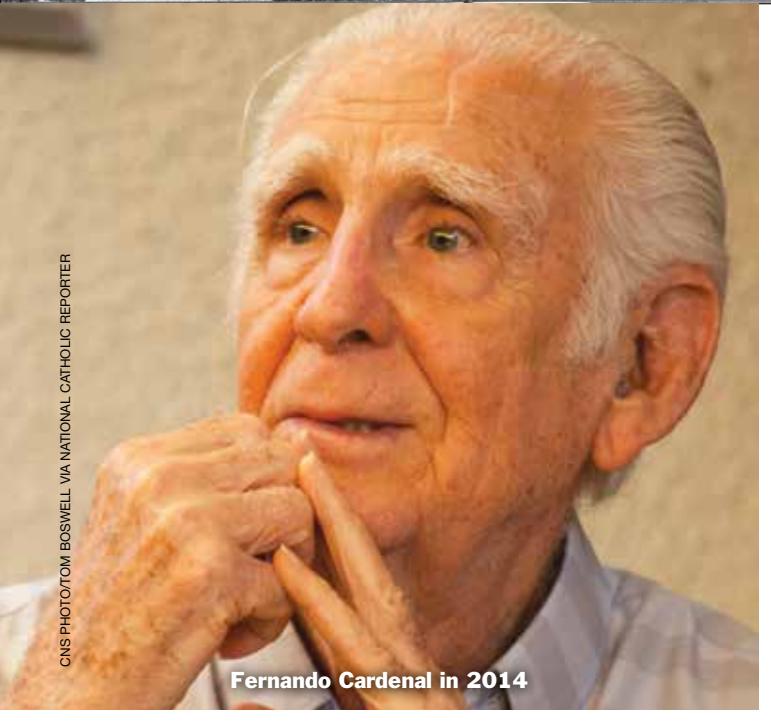


PHOTO COURTESY OF ORBIS BOOKS

Cardenal, left, with organizers and volunteers for the Sandinista literacy campaign in 1980



CNS PHOTO/TOM BOSWELL VIA NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER

Fernando Cardenal in 2014

into everything, including the food. The homes were made of brick. Though they were very small, they were new and much better than the previous cardboard shacks. The problem was that most of the people of the neighborhood were unemployed, and this had a profound impact on their lives.

Seeing the anguish of family members or friends without work, feverishly seeking any job to support their families—this was my introduction to the neighborhood. I began to understand the depth of their anguish. The majority of people would spend months and even years without a job. I came to understand the desperate feelings of profound and continual sadness in their battle for survival. They had no hope for solutions.

Social services were nearly nonexistent, but the most striking lack was the absence of any health center or access to medical attention. There was no school and no electricity. We got by with oil lamps in the bedroom and kerosene lanterns for the dining room and kitchen. The climate in Medellín was cool, and even cooler for those of us who lived on the top of the mountains. Very often, the food of the people in the neighborhood consisted of *arepas*, roasted cornmeal bread and a cup of hot water sweetened with *panela*, a brick of brown sugar that they scraped with a knife over the cup of hot water. The people's diet and their suffering made a huge impact on me. I lived in the neighborhood for nine full months witnessing the suffering of neighbors whom I grew to love deeply. Their suffering became enormously difficult for me to bear. It is true that "what the eye does not see, the heart does not feel." I was seeing the suffering of people whom I loved, and my heart ached.

...

Although we always looked for ways to participate in the lives of the people, we could not come close to sharing their experience of insecurity. I knew that if I faced a serious health problem, the priests of the Saint Ignatius School would take me to a reputable clinic in the city. The poor had no one. They were alone and abandoned. No one watched over them. No one would come and save them in an emergency. The people in the neighborhood were permanent victims.

Across the street from our house lived the Jaramillo family, who had eight children. I grew to love these children dearly. If I went to say Mass, one of the children would carry the candles, another would carry the stole, another the missal, another the chalice and another the wine. They accompanied me everywhere I went. These little bodyguards, as I called them, had worked their way into my heart. One day, after dinner, I opened the door of our community and found my little friends, the Jaramillo children, eating out of the garbage of our community house. I felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. The impact was overwhelming.

Each of us had chores in the community, and among other things I was chosen to buy the bread. Because there was no bakery in our neighborhood, I had to go down the hill to another neighborhood. When I walked back up the street with the big bag of bread in my hands, children with hungry faces began to ask me for a piece of bread. I could not tell them, "Look, this bread is for the Jesuit fathers who are pursuing very important studies." I did the obvious. I gave out pieces of bread to each one of the children. When I got back to our community I had no more bread. I told my fel-

low Jesuits, "You have to make a decision, either you appoint someone else to buy bread or we decide not to eat bread, but I cannot walk with bread in the midst of hungry children." We decided not to eat bread.

One of the young women in the community, with whom I had become a good friends, came to bid me farewell one afternoon. I asked her where she was going, and she said she was leaving to work downtown. She said, "I am going to become a prostitute." This was another blow. I told her that she was going to fall into a deep hole, and she said that it didn't matter as long as she got out of the hole she was living in. I talked to her about trampling on her dignity as a woman, but it was clear I was making no inroads. For someone born in the mire of misery, the concept of dignity was almost unfathomable. We said goodbye, and I embraced her with love and sadness. I had been a witness to her dreams and ideals, and now she was abandoning these to live as a prostitute. It was a huge blow. I never saw her again.

The suffering became so great that there were times when I did not want to leave the house. The neighborhood was a sea of pain, and I felt as if I were drowning in its waves. The people were submerged in sadness, suffering, sickness and hopelessness. My heart kept breaking.

I had entered the novitiate in 1952, at the beginning of my last year of high school, after a powerful experience that God was calling me to collaborate in the mission of saving humankind. I entered the novitiate with dreams of dedicating my life to serving God by freeing souls from eternal damnation and in this process saving my own soul. At the time this is how I saw it. Sin and the fear of eternal damnation had been central themes in my spiritual life from the time of my First Communion. I believed in a harsh and ruthless God who was a faraway being.

Through my experiences in Medellín, I began to have a new understanding. The danger of people losing their lives in hell had already begun for millions of Latin Americans; they were already living the hell of destitution and extreme poverty on earth. Without changing the fundamental orientation of my life, I began to think about salvation more holistically; salvation meant freedom from sin but also freedom from destitution. Five years later, the synthesis of "the service of faith and the promotion of justice" was officially embraced by the Society of Jesus as the mandatory standard for all our apostolates. No Jesuit should be working only on the propagation of the faith without also working for the defense of justice, and similarly, no one should be working only for the promotion of justice without also working for the propagation of the faith. *Faith and justice: always together.*

…

My reflections during those months led me to rediscover the God revealed in Jesus—the God who heard the cry of the oppressed and who freed the Hebrew slaves from bondage in Egypt. That is how God appears in the Book of Exodus. I began to understand more clearly that this same God continued listening to the cry of the oppressed and that Jesus had come to reveal that same God to us: *a God who is not neutral in the face of destitution and injustice, but who has taken the side of the poor, of the least, the weakest, the most marginalized and all those excluded from society*. In reflecting on the reality of my neighborhood, I was greatly inspired by the recently published document from the Latin American bishops, whose Second General Conference had occurred the previous year in the same city of Medellín. The bishops said: "There are many studies about the situation of the Latin American people. The misery and abject poverty that besets large masses of human beings in all of our countries is described in studies and expresses itself as injustice, which cries to the heavens." I found that these words captured my feelings and my experience. The bishops' theological analysis was also very illu-

minating and new to me. They wrote, "When speaking of injustice, we refer to those realities that constitute a situation of sin." *Previously, my concept of sin was something exclusively personal. I had never seen the concept of sin applied to a social and economic situation as in this text.*

…

The words of Pope Paul VI in Bogotá, spoken at the same time as the meeting of the Latin American bishops, also enlightened me. Speaking to the peasants of Latin America, the pope commented on the misery that overwhelmed them: "Today, the problem has worsened because you have become more aware of your needs and suffering, and you cannot tolerate the persistence of these conditions without applying a careful remedy." He was very clear: "*you cannot tolerate*." It was at this same time that I came to understand more acutely that the situation of the poor in Latin America was intolerable, it had to be changed, that it required "a careful remedy."

…

My friends in the neighborhood wanted me to continue living with them, and they begged me to stay. We had shared nine months of friendship and had grown to love one another, but I had to return to Central America by order of the regional provincial. My tertianship was over and so I said to my friends: "I am leaving, but I leave you an oath. Before God, I promise you that, wherever I am sent in the future, I am going to work for justice, for the building of a new society, for the liberation of the poor in Latin America, for all of those marginalized and excluded of the continent. I will do this in any country where I am asked to live, in any task that my religious superiors ask of me."

These words—my promise—explain the fundamental decisions that I made in the years that followed.

[Father Cardenal concludes this opening chapter of his memoirs with an account of how he was assigned to work at the Jesuit university in Managua, Nicaragua.]

Portraits of Love

A deeper look at 'Amoris Laetitia'

"The Joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church." So begins Pope Francis' long-awaited apostolic exhortation "The Joy of Love" ("Amoris Laetitia"). The statement draws on the conclusions of the Synod of Bishops, which gathered over the course of two years to discuss challenges to the family. ***America*** *asked several experts to respond to this historic document, which was published on April 8. The full texts of their responses, along with additional commentary, can be found at americamagazine.org/joy-love.*

The Mysticism of Pope Francis

In the now famous interview with Antonio Spadaro, S.J., (**America**, 9/30/13), Pope Francis was asked which of the figures among the early Jesuits he found most appealing. He replied, "Ignatius Loyola" (no surprise there!). But then he mentioned another, less known personage: Peter Faber, one of the first companions of Ignatius.

He said in the interview, "Faber was a mystic." As such Francis puts Faber in the company of Ignatius himself, who, the pope insists, is "a mystic, not an ascetic." And then Francis confessed: "I am rather close to the mystical movement" in the history of the Society of Jesus. Reading "The Joy of Love" in this light offers a somewhat different perspective upon the pope's intent and hope. Francis seeks to probe deeper into the mystery of Christian marriage: beyond mere moralism to its mystical heart. He is more the mystagogue than the moralist.

Much of the commentary—both by those who see the document as an "opening" to further modifications not only of pastoral practice, but of church teaching itself, and by those who fear precisely this outcome—may have overlooked what is, in fact, Francis' consuming evangelical commitment. Egregiously absent from so much of the commentary to date has been any sustained attention to the compelling Christocentrism of the exhortation—a neglect that sadly mirrors our contemporary catechetical and pastoral plight. In this respect it is crucial to read this document in tandem with Francis' earlier exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel ("Evangelii Gaudium").

Both exhortations urgently stress the need to return to the church's foundational kerygma as the wellspring of all teaching and pastoral discernment. Only by fixing one's contemplative gaze upon the living Christ, only by "looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12:2), does the Christian life finds its sure foundation. Only centered in the paschal mystery of Christ does Christian marriage take on its distinctive meaning, purpose and fulfillment.

An approach to marriage and family life that underscores the mystical more than the moral is not less challenging, but more. Authentic loving relations are infinitely more demanding than rules. The latter can be adhered to lifelessly; the former require ongoing interior transformation. To this transformation husband and wife solemnly and sacramentally pledge themselves in Christian marriage.

Living out "the fraternal and communal demands of family life" entails, of course, a joyful adherence to the Ten Words that God gave to Moses to seal the covenant with his people. Torah is not superseded in Christ, but brought to incarnational fulfillment.

With such a Christ-centered vision, at once contemplative and concrete, constant and ever new, it is little wonder that Pope Francis' first and last word to the people of God, the members of the body of Christ, is joy—*laetitia*, *gaudium*, the joy of love, the joy of the Gospel. In truth, these two joys are but one.

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The Progress of Souls

In his attention to the desire for moral and spiritual growth, Francis follows the Jesuit founder, St. Ignatius, who urged the early Jesuits to seek always "the progress of souls," frequently defined as love of God, charity to the neighbor and the growth in other virtues. Pope Francis' special turn on this approach to pastoral care is to insist, with strong support from Thomas Aquinas, on the blend of failure and aspiration in most human lives.

In traditional moral and spiritual theology, there was a conviction that one had to turn one's back on a life of sin and only then to make progress in the Christian life. Even St. Ignatius made this assumption, presenting in the Spiritual Exercises two sets of rules, one for those "going from mortal sin to mortal sin" and another for those advancing in the Christian life.

Francis believes, however, that realism in pastoral care and the pastoral example Jesus has given suggest that spiritual aspiration is at work in those who might be regarded as sinners: "Following this divine pedagogy, the Church turns with love

to those who participate in her life in an imperfect manner: she seeks the grace of conversion for them; she encourages them to do good, to take loving care of each other and to serve the community in which they live and work" (No. 78).

Appealing to Aquinas, the Second Vatican Council, the assemblies of the Synod of Bishops in 2014 and 2015 and standard moral theology to substantiate his arguments, Pope Francis believes men and women can fall short of the moral "ideals" (that is what he seems to prefer to call them), and still bear within them seeds of a Gospel life. These seeds may be found in natural marriage, in the marital practices of other religious traditions and cultures and in imperfect marital situations.

REUTERS/ALESSANDRO BIANCHI

TAKE THESE GIFTS. A family brings forward the offerings at a Mass for the Family at St. Peter's Basilica in December 2015.

Pastors, the pope teaches, "are not only responsible for promoting Christian marriage, but also the 'pastoral discernment of the situations of a great many who no longer live this reality'" (No. 293). In dialogue with parishioners they must discern in marriages and family life "elements that can foster evangelization and human and spiritual growth."

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Francis, Family and Feminism

In "Amoris Laetitia" Pope Francis clearly states the important contribution of feminism to the world and church. He sharply condemns any view that would blame "women's emancipation" for the many ways in which women's bodies are reduced to objects, including surrogacy, commercialization and sexualization in the media. The pope maintains these attitudes are the result of male chauvinism. The commodification of the female body, then, is the result of sexism. In his reaffirmation of the church's stance against all forms of abuse against women, the pope writes, "we must…see in the women's movement the working of the Spirit for a clearer recognition of the dignity and rights of women" (No. 54).

Further, he seems to take the teeth out of the idea of complementarity. Some forms of secular feminism see gender roles as socially constructed and distinct from biological sex. Francis rejects this view, maintaining the perspective that biological sex and gender are not the same but are deeply related. Still, when he discusses masculinity and femininity, he is critical of gender stereotypes that would limit a person's way of being in the world. He explains that "masculinity and femininity are not rigid categories" (No. 286). Women have the capacity for leadership, and men have to take on tasks in the family in order to "accommodate the wife's work schedule." Here he seems to be breaking down gender roles that place women in the home and men in the world that gender complementarity would seem to support.

These small tonal shifts offer a subtle development in the way the church relates to feminism. In "The Joy of Love," the pope offers hope and belonging to many women who feel pain about belonging in the church, or who may have one foot out the door.

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The Listening Pope

'Amoris Laetitia" reflects Pope Francis' Jesuit spirituality in its call for a more listening and discerning church. While he only references the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola three times, Ignatian spirituality is deeply present as he proposes a pastoral response to challenges facing the family. Chapter 8, for example, in-

vites the church to adopt a "process of accompaniment and discernment," which would include assisting families in "an examination of conscience" (No. 300).

Francis also includes dozens of references to documents produced by Vatican offices, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine. For me, however, the most surprising references in the text are to non-Catholic sources. In No. 129 he references a scene from the "film Babette's Feast, when the generous cook receives a grateful hug" as an example of the need to cultivate and share love. In No. 149, Francis refers to the "teachings of some Eastern masters who urge us to expand our consciousness." Several times, he draws from the work of poets and writers from the last century, including Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges, O.P., Gabriel Marcel and Mario Benedetti.

But it is perhaps his inclusion of two Protestant figures that will surprise and inspire many. In his reflection on the meaning of love, Francis offers an extensive and powerful quote from Martin Luther King Jr., whom the pope describes as meeting "every kind of trial and tribulation with fraternal love" (No. 188). Later, in Chapter 9, Francis quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer in laying out a deeper spirituality of "exclusive and free love."

By engaging the experiences and wisdom of sources beyond the traditional reference points of Scripture, popes and saints, Francis models in "The Joy of Love" the type of listening and discerning church that he believes can address many of the problems facing the family today.

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Look to the Margins

In "The Joy of Love" Pope Francis is attentive to the pressures and struggles of families living in poverty, but he also highlights another group on the margins: victims of domestic violence. According to the World Health Organization, "One in three (35 percent) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime."

Christianity, according to Francis, has no place for views of marriage in which women are subjugated. In a particularly honest and critical treatment of St. Paul, he rejects any interpretation of Ephesians that subjugates women or legitimizes sexual submission (No. 156). Subjugation and manipulation lead to violence, which frequently escalates; according to the World Health Organization, "Globally, as many as 38 percent of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner."

Questions of domestic violence also affect the larger society. Pope Francis' condemnation of the logic of the market (No. 201) is reminiscent of "The Joy of the Gospel," in which he argued that inequality spawns violence. This violence infects society, but often begins at home (No. 59-60, 51). As brothers and sisters, we must accompany and stand with survivors of domestic violence and child abuse. We need greater support and pastoral training for priests, lay ministers and community members to recognize and respond to these situations of violence.

Pope Francis also upholds the dignity of survivors, recognizing that "in some cases, respect for one's own dignity and the good of the children requires not giving in to excessive demands or preventing a grave injustice, violence, or chronic ill-treatment" (No. 241). This separation may not just be "inevitable," but "morally necessary." Pope Francis is clear that it is not acceptable to sacrifice women subjected to violence in the name of "traditional" and "indissoluble" marriage. The substance on this subject is not new, but the prominence and strength of the pope's statements are important. Embracing the full dignity of women and girls begins in the home. In "The Joy of Love" Pope Francis reminds us that violence against women is a family issue.

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Beijing Breakthrough

Are the Holy See and China close to reaching an agreement on the nomination of bishops? That is the question many are asking, both on the mainland and outside it, as they see the two sides continue their dialogue.

Rome and Beijing are talking, and sources say the key issue at the heart of their conversations is the nomination of bishops in China.

We know that since Francis became pope on March 13, 2013, delegations from Beijing and the Vatican have met on at least three occasions, and presumably there are ongoing contacts. The first meeting took place in the Vatican on June 27-28, 2014. The second was held in Beijing on Oct. 11 to 16, 2015. The most recent one was hosted in the Vatican on Jan. 25-26 of this year. These talks, conducted by midlevel officials, are shrouded in secrecy. It is worth noting, however, that the closeness of the last two meetings, plus the meeting by a lower-level working group in late April, suggests a speed-up in the process and could reflect a mutual desire to move forward without more delay. This thesis would be confirmed if another Sino-Vatican meeting were to take place before the summer holidays.

It's important to see the question of the nomination of bishops within the wider framework of the situation of the church in China today. According to the latest statistics from the Holy Spirit Study Center in Hong Kong, the most authoritative research center on the Catholic Church in China, there are between nine and 10.5 million Catholics on the mainland today. (Beijing claims over five million are members of the open or officially recognized church.)

At the end of 2015, there were 112 Catholic bishops in China (99 in active ministry, 13 not). Seventy belong to the open church and are recognized by the government, while 29 are underground and not so recognized. (Most of the 112 bishops are recognized by Rome.) Beijing redrew the ecclesiastical borders and recognizes only 97 dioceses to the Vatican's 138.

The Holy See is under no illusion when it comes to the vexed question of the nomination of bishops. It knows that Beijing holds the upper hand, the knife in the hand, so to speak, because there are now some 40 dioceses without a pastor. If the two sides fail to reach an agreement on this central question, Beijing could, and probably would, ordain 10 to 20 bishops without papal approval. Such a move could mean that in addition to the eight illegitimate bishops already in China, there would then be 20 to 30 more. This would in fact be a schismatic church. Rome wants to avoid such a scenario and is investing much effort in the dialogue.

Right now, Rome and Beijing are divided on many issues, but informed sources say it is necessary first of all to reach agreement on the nomination of bishops; only after that will it be possible to address the other questions, some of which are easier to resolve than others. One of the easier questions involves agreement on the number of dioceses. The difficult issues include Beijing's recognition of the underground bishops and communities, Rome's response to the eight illegitimate bishops, the normalization of the situation of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin of Shanghai, the release from prison of Bishop James Su Zhimin and the question of Taiwan.

Francis has made clear from the beginning of his pontificate, and on several occasions since, that he ardently desires to normalize relations with China not only for the good of the church, but also for peace in the world. He is prepared to go the extra mile to reach this goal, and wants to meet President Xi Jinping. He assigned the lead role in the quest for this normalization to Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the secretary of state, who in 2009 came close to brokering a Sino-Vatican agreement.

> Francis desires to normalize relations with China for peace in the world.

Not everyone is happy with this approach. According to UCA News, Cardinal Joseph Zen told a symposium in Hong Kong in mid-April that some Vatican officials believe negotiation and compromise with the Chinese government will ease the sufferings of the church in China. But he argued, "This is a mistake. Catholics in China are not afraid of suffering, but they fear the Vatican's ambiguous attitude." Cardinal John Tong-Hon, on the other hand, believes "dialogue brings hope" and claims there is "improvement and a better atmosphere" now.

In the midst of all this **America** has learned that progress is being made in the Sino-Vatican talks, both sides are drawing closer and an accord seems possible before the year's end.

GERARD O'CONNELL

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City of Hope

Wondering how to be church in hard-hit Flint

BY RONALD LANDFAIR

"In the year 2525 if man is still alive…" went the old song. Adapting it to Michigan today, the refrain would be: "In the year 2025, if Flint is still alive...." I certainly think that Flint is going to still be around a decade from now, but the key question is: "What will it—and other similarly distressed cities—look like?"

In the life of a city, a decade can matter a lot. I was born in Detroit in February 1957, and it had a distinct look and flavor to it then, one of burgeoning middle-class prosperity and comfort.

Ten years later, newer cars were on its streets and a few white citizens had moved out, but it was a city I still recognized. Six months later, however, the riots would put an end to that familiarity.

Fast-forward another 10 years. In 1977, wholesale changes had taken place in some Detroit neighborhoods and regrettably little had changed in others, which remained mired in post-riot poverty or worse. The pace of departure from the riot's center had quickened. Many families, including my own, had moved to presumably safer, more stable areas.

When I look at the circumstances facing Flint in 2015, what's missing is the crisis-urgency of an event like the Detroit riot in 1967 or similar upheavals that transformed urban areas during that tumultuous period in American history.

Flint's experience represents something different. The changes in Flint today versus the Flint of 10 or 20 years ago have not been as dramatic. Flint has not been suddenly altered by a catastrophic event. It never endured a full-blown civic uprising like those of 40 years ago in Detroit or Chicago or a cataclysm like that in Los Angeles following the Rodney King verdicts. Nor have we seen widespread civil unrest in Flint like that in Ferguson, Mo.

Flint's experience has been one of slow, inexorable decline, less dramatic but nonetheless qualitative and quantifiable, felt as well as measured. The city's decline resembles more the effect of erosion on a river bank or the steady drip of a rivulet of water upon a stone or rock in its path.

Frequently what captures our minds and hearts is the immediate crisis—the attack on the Twin Towers in 2001, the terrorist attacks in France last year or the tsunami in Japan in 2012. Such disasters provide images and sound bites that are the stock of media coverage. But how do you convey the steady diminishment of a community's economic base, its job market, housing stock—even its water supply and delivery system? How do you create the sense of urgency necessary for a response?

Flint and other small, declining cities confront steady disintegration through decay, far less dramatic than the sort of crisis that might provoke a comprehensive response. Time will tell if the current water emergency will prove compelling enough to inspire the intervention from government and community members that Flint desperately needs.

Tyrone Chatman, left, executive director of the Michigan Veterans Foundation and Vicky L. Schultz, Catholic Charities president/ C.E.O., at the Center for Hope Warming Center/Soup Kitchen.

A Challenge for Evangelization

I am not prescient. I cannot foresee the decade ahead. If you had asked me in 2005 if I could have imagined an African-American president of

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Above: The Mission Makeover project renovates a playground at an autism center in the Flint area. Below: Brent and Laura deliver water for Flint families that was collected by LEAP, the Lansing Economic Area Partnership.

the United States or gay "marriage" or a dozen other social or cultural constructs, I might have said, "Not in my lifetime!"

But I think I can foretell the future for a community like Flint if something does not change soon. That is why efforts like Faith in Flint, which I coordinate for the Diocese of Lansing, are so important if a 10-year vision that is positive and hopeful is to be realized. Faith in Flint is an initiative connecting the whole diocesan community with the people of Flint—focused on hope, trusting in the Holy Spirit and encouraging the application of some much-needed civic elbow grease across the city and across parish borders.

The poor, the gangs, violence, drugs and crime will always be with us in 21st-century America. But by the guarantee of Christ, so too will the Holy Spirit be with us always, so hope is always with us.

Are we a people of hope, trust and faith and, most important, the Holy Spirit? Can we creatively and collaboratively reimagine our community, recognizing that there is no one answer to Flint's problems, but perhaps a multitude of them, lacking only our prayer, imagination, determination and force of will to make them a reality?

U.S. Census data indicates that Flint faces a dwindling population that is increasingly nonwhite and less educated than previous generations of residents. How will a dynamic church meet this challenge in the coming years? How will we raise up lay and religious leadership through our Catholic schools and parish faith formation activities? Who are we evangelizing, and what are we evangelizing them to?

The city's changing demographics simply mean that, as in many cities across the country, this urban faith called Catholicism must be preached, ministered and lived by, in and for persons who are different from urban communities ministered to by the church in the past. That is the true challenge of evangelization (whether it is called old or new) in 21st century America.

While some feel the decline of Flint has become irreversible, that does not have to be the case. The past is unchangeable. It is Flint's future we must concern ourselves with. Events like Back to the Bricks (the city outdoor auto show), the Crim Festival of Races (a 25-k run/walk event) and other civic celebrations put the emphasis on people gathering together in peaceful, positive contexts. Flint needs more of them.

Faith in the Future

The future is made up of the decisions we make today. Our faith calls us to hope, not despair; trust, not skepticism.

The program Faith in Flint requires just that: faith. Those who believe in the future of Flint need to make an investment in it today. Faith is born of trust.

The Book of Proverbs reminds us, "Without vision, the people perish!" (29:18). In Rom 8:25 we hear, "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." Faith is engaged because of hope. Without hope, there is no expectation that anything can improve for individuals or communities.

There must be a restored vision for the future of Flint. There must be something in which the people can place their hope, their trust, their time, their talent, their treasure and their patience.

In her autobiography, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, a doctor of the church whose "little way" continues to inspire millions, wrote, "What matters in life is not great deeds, but great love."

Join me and countless others in this Faith in Flint initiative. Let us adopt St. Thérèse as our patron. Let us be those "action heroes" that our faith calls us to be, a people not of great deeds, but of great love. A people of hope, trust and vision, who indeed do have faith in Flint.

GENERATION FAITH

Martyrs of Maspero

How could I reconcile my faith with the suffering I witnessed?

BY MARINA ELGAWLY

I grew up quietly. My mother was an unswerving volunteer at the Coptic Orthodox church, and I was a Sunday-school teacher throughout my teen years. Our parish priest was a great inspiration of mine. I believed in God and the four walls of my room and my parents and my friends. That was all I knew and that was all I needed and I was content. I learned Bible verses. I studied Coptic hymnology. I told myself I was going to become a deaconess.

Things changed after the Maspero attacks. Months after the ousting of Hosni Mubarak, then the president of Egypt, the air of the January 25 Revolution, as it is known locally, still hung thick in Cairo. It was October 2011 when the media released brutal footage of the Copt-led protests at the Maspero building, which houses the state-run Egyptian Radio and Television Union in the Egyptian capital. Proceeding past hostile Islamist crowds, a group of Copts had gathered to peacefully protest the destruction of a church in Aswan. The peace did not last long.

As a senior in high school, I watched with my fellow church volunteers as Egyptian state forces ran over peaceful Coptic protestors with military vehicles. Their crime: demonstrating against the government's failure to provide protection and against the church attacks. The massacre resulted in the death of 27 Copts. Fourteen of them were crushed by military armored vehicles.

National news networks aired the footage until they tired of it. Each time I saw it I became angrier and angrier with God. It was God who had formed these people in their mothers' wombs. It was God who ordained that these people be born in a developing country that recognized them as sub-par citizens. It was God who allowed these people to be born under an oppressive regime. It was God who, at God's disposal, could have prevented such a thing from happening. Worst of all, 18 years of Christian education told me I had to love the men who drove the army tanks that flattened and crushed the bodies of those innocent youths.

"They are martyrs now," my priest said. "They have their reward in heaven." A fellow Sunday-school teacher said, "They should have rallied in front of the Lord instead of in front of people." My mother simply said, "This was God's plan." Their answers, however, did not do justice to the nature of this injustice. I was not at peace. Issues of heaven, free will, politics, religious pluralism and exclusivism all had a name: Maspero. The same faith that had remained so vibrant and unshaken throughout my years of Egyptian Orthodoxy showed signs of crum-

ART: MICHAEL KRAIGER

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bling in a matter of months. I began asking myself questions about every concept I knew.

Why did God allow this to happen?

Because it was God's plan.

Why was this his plan?

God's ways are mysterious.

Why?

God is divine and those his ways.

Where does it say that?

In the Bible.

Why do I believe in the Bible?

Because it's God's word.

How do I know that?

Because it says so in the Bible.

When I entered university, I took a class called Faith and Critical Reasoning. It never occurred to me until then that the believers of faiths outside of Christianity had the same reasons for believing in their faith as I did for believing in mine. I rebelled against the faith of the minuteness of my childhood and cursed my Sunday-school lessons and their Jesus stories and my priest who accepted their bloody deaths and my God who let this happen.

This past summer, before my senior year of university, I paid a visit to the Orthodox monastery of St. Antony. My mother was elated, but I just wanted to interview monks for a research paper I was writing. As I sat down to speak to Brother Mina, he asked me the last question I wanted to hear: "Do you love your Christ?" (*Bethabey rabena?* in Arabic). I wanted nothing more than to bleat out a Sunday-school reply of "Yes!" and be done with it. But I could tell that the monk already knew my real answer. Without warning I collapsed and cried in front of him and told him I knew nothing. It was there in the middle of a desert in California that everything came undone.

Under tired eyes, the old Egyptian monk looked at me and said, "My daughter, faith can only exist in a pained world." It was like the snap of a rubber band. All these years of internal struggle, I needed to be reminded that to show doubt was not to lose faith. The simple Arabic of the Coptic monk had pushed me to regain my trust in God.

I stayed for five days at St. Antony's. Every day, Brother Mina asked me if I wanted to attend a liturgy service in the morning, and every morning I kindly declined. It was my last day in the desert when I finally knocked on the brother's door and told him I wanted to pray. We walked together to the church and he began the Twelfth Hour prayer of the *Agpeya*, the Coptic Book of Hours:

> With my voice to the Lord I cried; with my voice to the Lord I made supplication. I will pour out before him my supplication. My affliction I will pour out before him, when my spirit was fainting within me, and You knew my paths.

It was the first time I had prayed in almost four years. A

TELEVISION | JIM McDERMOTT

LOST IN A DARK WOOD

Finding a path through life in a cult

Michelle Monaghan and the cast of "The Path"

PHOTO: FACEBOOK/HULU.COM/THEPATH

Recently in Los Angeles unusual billboards have popped up all over town. "To my loved one in Scientology," they read, "Call me."

The work of two former Scientologists, these advertisements push back against the intense pressure Scientology, which is headquartered in Hollywood, puts on its members to permanently dissociate themselves from family members and friends who are not fully supportive of the organization. As much as recent documentaries, tell-all books and gossip columnists have tried, it remains difficult to fully understand what it is like inside organizations like Scientology, let alone to grow up or raise a family within their confines.

What keeps people there? Is there any possibility of real fulfillment within such a suffocating structure? And if not, as most suspect, what is it like to try and get out?

In Hulu's new show **The Path**, we meet Eddie and Sarah Lane (Aaron Paul and Michelle Monaghan), members of the Scientology-like Meyerist Movement who live with their two children in the group's upstate New York compound. Sarah, who works as a counselor in the organization, has been a member since birth. Eddie, like many members, found the organization at a difficult time in his life.

And until recently, he has never had any doubts about that choice—which is a far cry from what viewers will feel while watching. We first meet our main characters at a Sunday meal of Sarah's extended family; holding hands for grace, it might look like we're in store for something akin to "Parenthood" or "Brothers and Sisters," some nostalgic embodiment of our dreams of family.

But their words are not some simple prayer of thanksgiving, but a sort of "New Age meets Gospel of Success" doxology about "ascending the ladder of enlightenment, so that some day we may be free of these earthly forms and live as light together in the garden." And just like that, it's clear that this is not TV's typical idealized family, but something stranger and maybe a little scary.

That initial moment encapsulates both the possibility and the problem of "The Path." On the one hand, the show takes life in this community seriously. It spends real time trying to get to know and understand these characters and the way they think about their lives. As Sarah walks around wearing a device to measure the movements of her energy, or Cal (Hugh Dancy), the group's de facto leader, talks about the coming end of the world, there's no winking at the audience, no "can you believe these guys"? Much like HBO's "Big Love" did with polygamist Mormons, "The Path" fights to be true to these people and their choices.

The Panoptic's Progress

The problem is a show about people

who have convinced themselves to live under the conditions Meyerism imposes is very difficult to watch. Many of the scenarios are the same as any "normal" family: the Lane's son, Hawk, gets in a fight at school; Eddie and Sarah have marital issues. But every moment of the show is fraught with menacing subtext. To deviate in any way from the set scripts of their community—happy family member, unquestioning Meyerist—is to feel those around you stepping back, looking upon you and evaluating whether you can be trusted. It's not a coincidence that every Meyerist building has an enormous wood carving of an eye hung in a prominent place. The compound is Foucault's Panopticon as suburban community.

Consequently every scene in "The Path" comes highly pressurized. Sarah loves her husband, but when she thinks he's cheating on her, she has no trouble turning him in to Cal and their whack-adoo treatment program. Hawk feels so bad when a fellow student pressures him into trying meat that he vomits as soon as he gets home.

Television dramas depend on great characters, but we also like an interesting world. People came to "Mad Men" in part for the advertising, "Breaking Bad" for the science, "Downton Abbey" for its upstairs/downstairs community.

In the case of "The Path," though, that world is so monolithically burdened by its internal psychosis that watching it can be claustrophobic. The second episode briefly introduces a local FBI agent and just being with him and away from the Meyerists for a few moments is a great relief. What I wouldn't give for someone with a sense of humor, a Maggie Smith to offer the occasional wry and devastating quip.

It's interesting that Netflix's "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt," whose second season began on April 15, traverses the similar terrain of an earnest young woman freed from an apocalyptic cult after a decade in captivity to produce not a drama but a comedy. (As wrong as that concept sounds, the show is actually wonderful.)

"The Path" is a great idea, with a strong cast and a fine pedigree. The show's creator, Jessica Goldberg, was a writer on "Parenthood," and "Parenthood" and "Friday Nights Lights" creator Jason Katims is an executive producer. "The Path" also raises interesting questions for believers. Our own church, which to some seems populated with its own share of crazy ideas (like worshipping a crucified man or dining on the flesh of God), has gone through periods of unthinking obedience, suppressing ideas and voices asking essential questions, and with terrible consequences. What keeps us from becoming the smiling nightmare hellscape of a cult?

"The Path" seems to suggest that it may be less about having the right rules or leaders—though both are obviously essential—and more about our individual and communal willingness to be in an ongoing, personal relationship with God.

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., *a screenwriter, is* ***America****'s Los Angeles correspondent. Twitter: @PopCulturPriest.*

Bearing Witness

I'm tempted to call the woman, say I did not see her car accident,
but will listen to her version, find out why she needs a witness.

Three telephone poles, three hand-scrawled signs
plead for someone who saw the silver Lexus hit her Honda.

Her signs remain a week. I imagine she vents to family, friends, insurance
reps—the hit and run she'll replay for years. We all have stories

we can't part with. Something reminds us, and we spool
them out—like a whiskered mudcat you struggle

to reel in, only to release, follow
its flash through sun-stroked river, its lunge

under roots wedged against a moldered log.

KAREN GEORGE

KAREN GEORGE *received her M.F.A. from Spalding University. Her books include* The Seed of Me *(2015) and* The Fire Circle *(2016). Her work has been published in Adirondack Review and Louisville Review. She is co-founder of the journal Waypoints.*

LIFE AFTER BIRTH

One day after our first child was due to arrive but two days before he actually did, my husband and I had run out of ways to prepare. We had packed the hospital bag and set up the crib, purchased a boppy and a breast pump. But we did not yet have the baby. So, in an effort to encourage our little one along, we decided to watch "Lucy Goes to the Hospital," the episode of "I Love Lucy" in which Lucy gives birth to Little Ricky. The episode is the conclusion of a story arc that begins with one of the show's more controversial episodes: "Lucy is *Enceinte*." This famous episode manages to tell the story of how Lucy informs her husband, Ricky, that she is pregnant without using the word pregnant, which was deemed scandalous for television by CBS.

Nearly 65 years later, it is safe to say that the mere mention of pregnancy is far less taboo than in Lucy's day. Still, our culture has yet to become fully comfortable with the realities of pregnancy and childbirth. The Hollywood version of childbirth often involves a woman clutching her stomach and definitively declaring, "It's time!" This often is followed by an idealized birthing scene in which a woman, barely glistening with sweat, gives a push or two before being handed a clean, neatly swaddled baby. Meanwhile, the real-life version often includes far less comical screaming and far more bodily fluids. And there is no glamorous Hollywood version of what happens afterward.

Nearly three weeks into my own maternity leave, I admit I didn't have a full understanding of what this time would involve. When the beautiful, bloody body of our son emerged and the doctors dropped all 10 wriggling pounds of him onto my stomach, a part of me thought: *The hard part is over*. But later that night, as I lay in a hospital bed at 3 a.m. holding my hungry, hysterically crying infant son, yet unable to get him to breastfeed, I realized I had been mistaken. So it was with some sympathy, but also a significant deal of frustration, that I read the now infamous article published last month in The New York Post titled, "I want all the perks of maternity leave—without having a kid." In that article Meghann Foye, a novelist, discusses her inspiration for writing her new novel, *Meternity*, which tells the story of a woman in her early 30s who decides to fake a pregnancy in order to get maternity leave.

The Post article describes the author's own real-life efforts to find work-life balance after realizing that if she did not ever have children, she would never have maternity leave and therefore "that socially mandated time and space for self-reflection may never come." While Foyer's larger message about the need for better work-life balance is a worthy one, likening maternity leave to a sabbatical understandably rubbed many readers, including me, the wrong way. The Internet was quick to point out that during maternity leave—a time that, in fact, is not available to a large number of women—mothers must care for a newborn while at the same time recovering from vaginal tearing or a C-section, cleaning stitches or taking sitz baths, trying to tend to a bleeding, cracking, leaking, aching, sleep-deprived body.

I know that caring for my son in the first weeks of his life is an amazing and rewarding privilege. It is not something I take for granted (and I appreciate **America**'s just parental leave policy). But it is important to acknowledge that for many people this time can also be exhausting, frustrating, painful, isolating and terrifying. In my son's second week of life, he and I had a combined total of five doctor appointments plus one emergency room visit and a session with a lactation consultant.

> A 'socially mandated time and space for self-reflection' it is not.

Being on leave has given me time to grapple with all these challenges. But a "socially mandated time and space for self-reflection" it is not.

When it comes to discussing the details of these difficulties among friends or family, many people hesitate, perhaps out of embarrassment or a fear of seeming ungrateful or unloving. So many people were surprised by the candor of a recent tweet by the model Chrissy Teigen following the birth of her first child: "no one told me i would be coming home in diapers too." Her public tweet emphasized that such topics should not be confined to new moms or parenting forums. A wider, more honest conversation about the challenges of childbirth likely would help not only to dispel the myth of maternity leave as a type of vacation time; it could also help employers see it as a necessity and new parents to realize they are not alone. When it comes to open conversations about pregnancy and childbirth, we've come a long way since Lucy's days, but we've still got a long way to go.

KERRY WEBER *is* ***America****'s managing editor.*

THE REAL MAN

AUGUSTINE
Conversions to Confessions

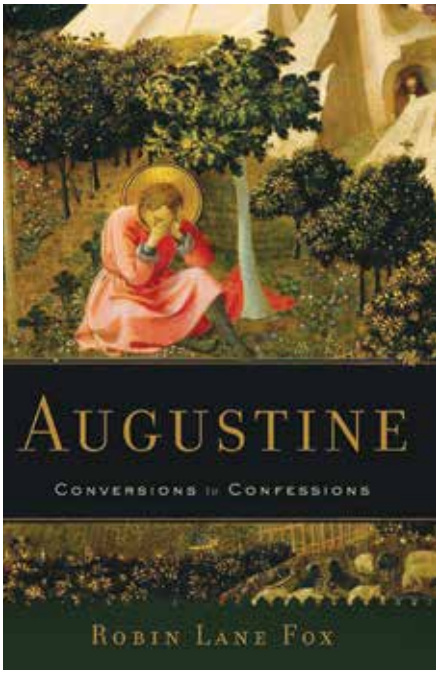
By Robin Lane Fox
Basic Books. 688p $35

Out of his vast knowledge of the ancient world, Robin Lane Fox, an emeritus fellow of New College, Oxford, has drawn a remarkable picture of Augustine—the child, the teenager, the youth, the man. His method is not unlike the contemporary quest for the historical Jesus. He situates Augustine in his time and place(s), comparing and contrasting him with well-documented lives of men his age. This is especially effective in discussing Augustine's earliest years. Fox points out that the only source for Augustine's childhood is Augustine himself in his *Confessions*, and that account is far from complete. To fill it out, he uses parallels with two figures who are roughly contemporaries of Augustine and thereby develops social, cultural, familial and religious lines of mutual concern.

Libanius, 40 years older than Augustine, was born in Antioch in Syria. He was a pagan, a lover of all things Greek with a disdain for all things Latin. Synesius, younger by about nine years, was from Cyrene in Libya, also Greek but with some regard for Latin. It is a tryptych, as Fox calls it, a device that works well to delineate the central figure, Augustine, for whom Fox clearly has a fondness and admiration, though certainly not a worship.

From his earliest years, Augustine had a primordial sense of good and evil, leaving no room for a morally indifferent or neutral explanation of the simplest human behavior—like the angry cry of an infant. No guilt is imputed where there is no will, but the action is evil nonetheless. It's no wonder he found a fascination in his late teens with Mani and his teachings as they were current to the lad Augustine 100 years after the master's death.

Fox gives a most satisfying and comprehensive accounting of Manichaeism. His purpose in doing so is to explain how much of that sect's discipline Augustine knew and accepted for years of his life—from age 18 to 30. He was a "hearer," not one of the elect, but a true believer while also considered to be a "semi-Christian" i.e., unbaptized and not yet fully catechized. He was an avid proselytizer of that sect, able to persuade some close friends and others to accept it in spite of its rigorous strictures about human sexual activity. (With a sly sense of humor, Fox reports the claim of Manichaeism that there is a redemptive value in human flatulence.)



In his *Confessions* Augustine reveals to God how sexually sinful he had been in the first part of his life; he prayed, rather famously, for the gift of chastity—but not yet. Our author, carefully and respectfully, explores this aspect of that revelation: Augustine the teenager fully employed his testosterone heterosexually in many ways. Fox has no patience for those authors who would try to minimize Augustine's lustful indulgences. While it is true that at one point Augustine decided to be exclusively faithful to his concubine, the mother of his son Adeodatus, he enjoyed her favors liberally and, Fox contends, with care to avoid another conception. Eventually, he broke with her—she is never named—when he became affianced to an underage girl of a wealthy family and high social standing when he was 30. That marriage was intended to assure him of position, preferment and sex. In the waiting period, he took another concubine.

The subtitle of this book, *Conversions to Confessions*, is in the plural because Fox maintains there were essentially three of these couplings in Augustine's life journey: first, from teenage pragmatism, i.e., study for the sake of getting a good job, to philosophy, a love of wisdom for the enrichment of the interior man; second, from a sort of half-baked semi-Christian at age 18 to become a hearer and an advocate of Manichaeism; and finally, from a disenchanted Manichaeism to a total commitment to Jesus Christ in the faith, for which his mother Monica prayed with copious tears for many years. It meant for him a total renunciation of worldly ambition and, especially, all sexual activity, living a celibate life.

Recounting this last phase of Augustine's conversion to confession, Fox's writing, profuse and thorough, was thrilling. He takes us through all the persons, books, lectures, sermons and friends who influenced Augustine to seek baptism from St. Ambrose in Milan.

The quest for meaning, the search for truth, the hunger for an ultimate love were possible of attainment at last and with them peace and freedom of mind and heart.

Blessed John Henry Newman in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* achieved the same, though from a very different perspective. Newman's aspiration was "not to sin against the light." Vowed by himself to celibacy long before his conversion to Catholicism, Newman was never credibly accused of sexual misconduct. It was a quotation from Augustine—*Securus iudicat orbis terrarum*: "the judgment of the universal church is certainly true"—that, in his word, "pulverized" Newman's *Via Media* and impelled him further to Rome.

More than a third of Fox's work is devoted to Augustine the baptized Christian, the priest, the bishop and the most prodigious writer of ancient times. There is a large corpus of extant material and, according to Fox, more is being discovered.

Augustine's thinking has had and continues to have an enormous influence on Christian life and teaching. Newman, called by one historian of religious thought the greatest intellect of the 19th century, favored Augustine over Aquinas. Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, a great theologian of our time, embraced Augustine's approach to learning, preaching and writing about the love of God. It is true, however, that in his masterful first encyclical "Deus Caritas Est," Benedict laments the noxious influence of Manichaeism (and the later Jansenism) on Catholic life and thought.

Professor Fox reveres Augustine the saint and generously pays tribute to his holiness and spiritual inspiration, remaining all the while the historical biographer and never the hagiographer. His delectable prose, laced at times with wry humor, will engage the scholar and scholarly student with copious notes and references to primary sources. Serious but casual readers, like myself, will find inspiration, rich insights and more information than is needed—but never without interest. Worthy to be chewed and swallowed, this tome could be delightfully tasted by the speedreader and the bed-and-beach readers. One telling effect I believe it can have is to promote a desire to reread the *Confessions of St. Augustine*, newly armed with up-to-date information, profound insights and holy aspirations. It's a good book.

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MICHAEL D. ROZIER

A CALL FOR REFORM

THE FINEST TRADITIONS OF MY CALLING

One Physician's Search for the Renewal of Medicine

By Abraham M. Nussbaum, M.D.
Yale University Press. 320p $28.50

It may be difficult to believe a profession that commands the salary and social status of U.S. physicians is in crisis, but there is widespread and growing discontent within this guild. While serious reform is afoot for the health care system writ large, the clinicians at its center (or at its top) are receiving scant attention.

In *The Finest Traditions of My Calling,* Abraham Nussbaum offers a plea to see that true reform of the health care system will be possible only if we also seek a renewal of the physician's practice. With compelling narratives from his own experience as a psychiatrist, Nussbaum's entreaty is easy to believe.

The author's central argument rests on the premise that none of the innovations currently being discussed can truly transform medicine. We tinker at the edges with value-based payment reform, electronic health records and population health. We obsess over quality improvement measures and evidence-based practice. We invest in programs designed to bring the humanities back into education, to wed the art with the science of medical practice.

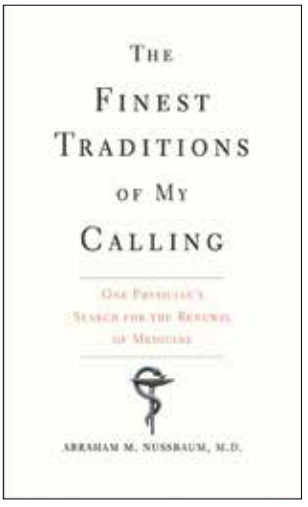
The author suggests, "The advances in knowledge in twentieth-century medicine began…when physicians began to see like scientists. And I suspect that medicine will advance once more only when physicians change their self-perception again." The sine qua non for us to realize medicine's future is this new vision—or, perhaps more correctly, it is an old vision, renewed.

Throughout the work, Nussbaum is refreshingly self-aware of both his own limitations and those of his profession. For example, he criticizes the white coat ceremony that is now standard at U.S. medical schools, acknowledging that the ceremony was initially intended to connect incoming students to their patients and foster the virtues of compassion and humility. It did not take long, however, for the ceremony to be co-opted by, rather than challenging, the profession's prevailing narrative of professional distinction. Nussbaum offers the same rigorous honesty when he reflects on his own moments of confusion and failure with patients over the years.

Hidden in the text is the author's unspoken question as to whether the call to practice medicine is a profession or a vocation. Truthfully, it seems that the author wants the benefits of both and the costs of neither. He hopes to renew a sense of vocation and service, yet never speaks of the sacrifice of autonomy that must accompany it. I suspect the work of a physician is both a profession and a vocation, but the latter cannot be reclaimed without critiquing how the former's privileges may drown out one's call.

To accompany his own narrative, Nussbaum calls upon luminaries of medicine's past. His appreciation for

the profession's history is laudable. Hildegard of Bingen and William Osler, Paul Farmer and many others do not just provide stories to lean upon but also offer the kind of physician self-perception Nussbaum is hoping to foster among his peers.



Despite the book's subtitle, there is little new information a reader with a serious interest in medicine's renewal will find in this text. The author's claim that renewal will not come in any of the system-level innovations currently being adopted is in all likelihood correct. Even more, the thesis that true renewal will come by changing disposition is also quite possibly correct. But what would a resident's on-call schedule in Nussbaum's humanistic medicine look like? How can we allow for deeper relationships with patients without extending workdays for physicians or slashing their compensation? There is too often a lack of "construction" in this attempt at constructive criticism.

To those familiar with the history of U.S. health care, it is hard to ignore the fact that the physician crisis we now face is largely one of the profession's own making. Nussbaum acknowledges this, but does so in a way that would have the readers believe physicians were passive recipients of changing culture that now bears down upon them. He briefly mentions the American Medical Association's role in defeating national health insurance in 1948, but offers little else on the role physicians played in shaping our modern health care system. Physicians are the ones who demanded fragmented payment for physician care and hospital services. Medical doctors have strategically prevented nonphysician clinicians from expanding their scope of work. The A.M.A. opposed reform not only in 1948, but in nearly every initiative from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Bill Clinton. Nussbaum certainly knows this history, but many of his colleagues may not. While the book rightly calls upon the finest traditions of medicine's past, a vision for the future must also reckon with its less admirable history.

It is easy to delight in this text. Nussbaum's narrative approach is full of heart. His critiques of the health care system and the formation of physicians are thoughtful, balanced and often deeply moving. It is not hard to imagine that this text will stand alongside the works of Atul Gawande and Abraham Verghese for its ability to draw fellow physicians and lay readers into the unresolved problems of modern health care. Unfortunately, the title and the first two chapters set the reader up for something that is ultimately not delivered.

The profession of physicians faces a crisis in the United States. Will something interrupt the march toward greater efficiency and standardized care? Few have connected the two crises, but the vocation of physicians has faced a crisis of its own. The insight Nussbaum provides is that the profession of medicine can best be saved if it reclaims its vocation.

As the Affordable Care Act continues to change the landscape of U.S. health care, we will not be in short supply of innovations. However, *The Finest Traditions of My Calling* offers one of the few that has the potential to actually work.

MICHAEL D. ROZIER, S.J., *is in doctoral studies in health management and policy at the University of Michigan.*

DENNIS LEDER

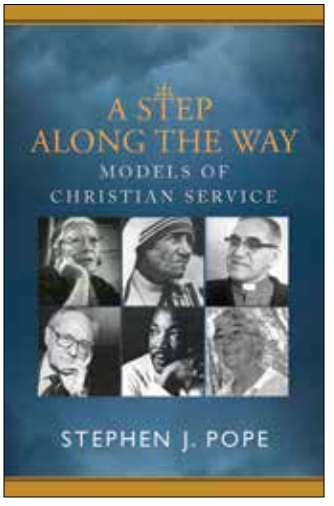
DISARMING FANATICISM

A STEP ALONG THE WAY
MODELS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

By Stephen J. Pope
Orbis Books. 224p $25

Studies in positive psychology confirm that a life of service creates a more lasting sense of well-being than the "good life" of comfort and pleasure. Given the pivotal place of service in the New Testament, contemporary Christians might wish to reflect on how their faith, their community life and their openness to the Spirit's grace can enrich human service and give new meaning to Christian life. This is the focus of Stephen Pope's fine book on models of Christian service. He identifies his intended audience as believing Christians whose faith is a motivation for responsible action. Without underestimating the selfless dedication of many nonbelievers in their service to humanity, the author contends that "something is lost if we avoid religion." He prefers to reflect on "the richness and complexity communicated in religious symbols, stories, and practices."

Pope is a professor of theology at Boston College, but his book is not a comprehensive theology of service nor a comparison with how other religious traditions address the subject. His intention is not to win converts or defend the faith, but to profile six different lives and suggest that each represents a key feature of Christian service: stewardship, hospitality, compassion, advocacy, solidarity and witness.



The majority of Pope's chosen subjects are emblematic figures of the model they represent. Dorothy Stang, of the Sisters of Notre Dame, represents stewardship, taking care of what has been entrusted to us. For nearly 40 years, she immersed herself in poor communities of rural Brazil, blending creation spirituality and liberation theology as tools for social justice and ecology. The openness and generosity of Dorothy Day represent the model of hospitality. Mother Teresa's life of service to the suffering poor represents the model of compassion. Martin Luther King Jr. represents advocacy in his tireless struggle against racism and war. Bishop Oscar Romero`s loyalty to the oppressed of El Salvador is a model of solidarity. Pierre Claverie, O.P., represents the model of witness. Born and raised in Algeria, in an isolated French-speaking community, Claverie gradually became aware of the "colonial bubble" in which he had lived. His transformation led him to the Dominican friars; later he was named bishop of Oran, Algeria. He dreamed of an inclusive society where Christians and Muslims could be friends, based on respect, openness, objectivity and truthfulness. He was convinced that dialogue could "disarm the fanaticism, both our own and that of the other."

As often happens with Christian service, models tend to intertwine. There is advocacy in stewardship, compassion in hospitality. Faith is the underpinning of all the models, a faith based on trust, discernment, attention to mind and heart and concrete action. Four of the six lives suggested by the author gave "the ultimate testimony to the power of their faith—a willingness to die rather than to abandon the truth to which they had devoted their lives." Within their particular model of service, each exemplifies what it means to be a witness.

Stephen Pope's book is impressive for its systematic organization. After defining his theme and purpose, he introduces the "six exemplars or role models of Christian service." In the biographical sketches of these lives, Pope

takes pains to avoid presenting them as heroes or saints but rather as humans, touched by some important personal experience that sent their lives in a new direction.

The second half of the book is a more detailed study of each of the six models of Christian service. The author looks at the biblical roots of each model, adds a theological reflection and ascribes a moral virtue to each model. He suggests temperance as the moral virtue linked to stewardship and generosity as a virtue linked to hospitality. He then proposes how we might grow in that virtue and outlines the temptations associated with each model. Advocacy's moral virtue is courage; misdirected advocacy can easily become fanaticism.

Before concluding his study Pope devotes a chapter to evaluating the models. While being essentially complementary, one model of service might cause conflict with another: "Solidarity within our community might be at odds with challenging the choices of some of its members." He also notes the thorny issue of interpretation of service: a Christian who defends the just war theory will find little inspiration in the nonviolent service of Dorothy Day or Martin Luther King Jr. Those who continue to accuse Bishop Oscar Romero of being the cause of El Salvador's past war and division will be hard-pressed to see him as a model of Christian solidarity. Pope recognizes that our interpretation of service "is inevitably shaped by the larger religious and political framework within which we act." He suggests that gender, politics and theology are areas of "strong impact" when thinking about service today.

Pope places compassion as the paradigmatic form of service, with love as its unifying virtue. All the models of Christian service and the virtues that support them find a personal expression in the community of faith, whose responsibility it is to clarify political decisions in terms of justice, human rights and the common good. Service, in its most excellent form as witness, mirrors God's compassion and love.

Service is an essential part of Christianity. Without it our faith is dead. The six models of Christian service that Pope presents are "a kind of inventory of values." Committed Christians will find them to be a helpful gauge in personalizing their service, incorporating new challenges and growing in faith.

DENNIS LEDER, S.J., *is director of the Central American Institute of Spirituality in Guatemala.*

Real Presence

BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (C), MAY 29, 2016

Readings: Gen 14:18-20; Ps 110:1-4; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Lk 9:11-17

"Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them" (Lk 9:16)

The solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ emerged as a feast in medieval Europe through the urging of St. Julianna of Cornillon, a Belgian mystic and prioress who had visions that directed her to strive to establish a feast in which greater devotion was focused on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Because of her own caution as to the significance of her visions, and the ecclesial and political intrigues which she suffered, it would take many decades before the feast became established throughout the church, ultimately with the guidance of the papal theologian St. Thomas Aquinas.

The feast focused from the beginning on the Eucharist as "the very sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus which he instituted to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until his return in glory. Thus he entrusted to his Church this memorial of his death and Resurrection. It is a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet, in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church,* No. 282). The real presence is the central theological dimension of this feast, but the catechism notes numerous other elements of eucharistic theology in the feast, like memorial, sign of unity, bond of charity, paschal banquet and eschatological pledge of future glory.

The biblical readings attest to each of these elements of the eucharistic feast. In the words of institution Paul hands on to us, we receive the words of Jesus, who interprets his own sacrificial death on our behalf and speaks of the real presence when he breaks the bread and says: "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And in the last phrase, Paul notes Christ's instruction to participate in the supper as a memorial, making present perpetually Christ's sacrifice, as we eat the bread and drink the wine "in remembrance." For participation in the body and blood of Christ is a remembrance of Christ's death "until he comes."

"Until he comes" alerts us to the eschatological dimension of this feast, in which we gain a foretaste of the heavenly food, the messianic banquet, already prefigured in the person of the priest Melchizedek, "king of righteousness." In Genesis 14, Melchizedek feeds Abram with the heavenly food; in Psalm 110, a messianic psalm, Melchizedek points forward to the establishment of God's kingdom by the coming messiah. By the time Jesus was born, Melchizedek was already a focus of theological speculation in Judaism, especially in the Dead Sea Scrolls, concerning his role in the messianic kingdom to come. For Christians, as seen in Chapters 7 to 9 of the Letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is the one who has fulfilled and will fulfill all the promises embedded in the figure of Melchizedek. Here we find a sense of the eschatological, of what God is still to do when Christ returns.

But in Melchizedek's feeding of Abram, God's constant care for the needs of his people is also denoted, the presence of God with us, as a sign of unity and a bond of charity. In Luke Jesus is himself present, feeding the crowd in which all ate and were filled. In this miracle, in the presence of Jesus with the people, we sense the eschatological reality of the paschal banquet yet to come and the sense of memorial presence, as Jesus instructs his disciples to carry out this same act on his behalf. Jesus guides his disciples to participate in the work with him, "You give them something to eat," making Jesus present whenever his disciples feed the people physically and spiritually.

ART: TAD DUNNE

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Be present with Jesus as he feeds the multitudes. How do you receive the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist? How else are you discerning the body of Christ? How are you making the presence of Christ known to others?

In discerning our communion with our brothers and sisters in the faith, we find Christ's real presence. In our loving communion with all those who need food, we find Christ's real presence. As we wait in hope for the heavenly banquet, we anticipate the real presence, when God will be all in all. All of these, faith, hope and love, are present when we participate in the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

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Mercy's Healing

TENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME (C), JUNE 5, 2016

Readings: 1 Kgs 17:17-24; Ps 30:2-12; Gal 1:11-19; Lk 7:11-17

"O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me" (Ps 30:2)

The account of Jesus raising from the dead the only son of a mother, a widow, recalls a similar story of the prophet Elijah healing the only son of a mother, a widow, in the First Book of Kings. The fact that the women are widowed is an important piece of information for understanding their situations, especially since they are without any children. A widow in antiquity could suffer terrible economic hardship if she did not have an extended family network or personal resources; for those without economic resources or male family members, a life of poverty could be expected. The mercy of God in these stories includes alleviating dire poverty and social marginalization, but we should not reduce mercy merely to economic suffering; God's mercy reaches out to heal the ravages of broken hearts and human suffering.

We see this mercy in Jesus' response to the funeral procession in which the widow's son is being carried out in the midst of a large crowd from Nain. While both the New American Bible and the New Revised Standard Version describe him as a "man," that word is not present in the Greek text. Jesus will call him a *neaniskos* later in the text, which can refer to a teenager or "young man"; that no wife is present indicates his youthfulness, since at this time Jewish males were usually married around age 18. Apart from the loss of her son's life, the widowed mother faces a future without grandchildren and being cared for by her family. Since the boy who dies in the Elijah narrative is also unmarried, he, too, is most likely a child; and his mother faces the same losses in the present and for the future as the widow of Nain.

This is the real, human loss, for even if these widows were women of means, they have lost their families. It is not money they mourn but the love of their children and all the joys that come with family life. This sorrow is what Jesus sees when he gazes upon this scene, for "when the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, 'Do not weep.'" The verb used here refers literally to being moved in one's bowels, like saying today that one's heart was moved. Jesus is filled with compassion and pity for her because of her great loss.

Jesus heals her great loss, demonstrating God's mercy when he speaks the words, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" and the boy is alive. When Elijah's voice is heard by God, the widow of Zarephath's son arises. Elijah brings the child down to his mother and says, "See, your son is alive." Both of these cases indicate that mercy is at the heart of God's dealings with humanity, especially with those who have the greatest human need. It ought to be at the heart of our dealings with humanity as well.

So what do these stories indicate for us? In both of these accounts God reaches into the lives of these women and their sons to demonstrate that God is the God of the living, not the dead, and to point to life eternal. God's gift of life to these only sons is a sign of God's abundant and surpassing mercy to come, of the gift of eternal life that we cannot offer ourselves, no matter how much we wish it.

Yet it is also a sign of what we can do for those who are in emotional, spiritual, psychological and physical need. All of us at one time or another face loss, stress, crisis and distress, even if we are not alone or are not suffering poverty. When we recognize our own need for compassion and how friends, family, neighbors and strangers have cared for us in those times, the actions of Elijah and Jesus point us to do what we can do. We can care and comfort people in distress, offering mercy and helping them find the aid they need. God's actions in these miraculous events is intended to demonstrate God's mercy in concrete instances, the same mercy and compassion that God has for each of us. So, too, we are called to show mercy to all in need.

JOHN W. MARTENS

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on the suffering of the widowed mothers and God's compassion for them and their sons. How has God shown compassion to you in the past? How can you show mercy to those in need? Where do you see a need for mercy and compassion most fully in your community and church?

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