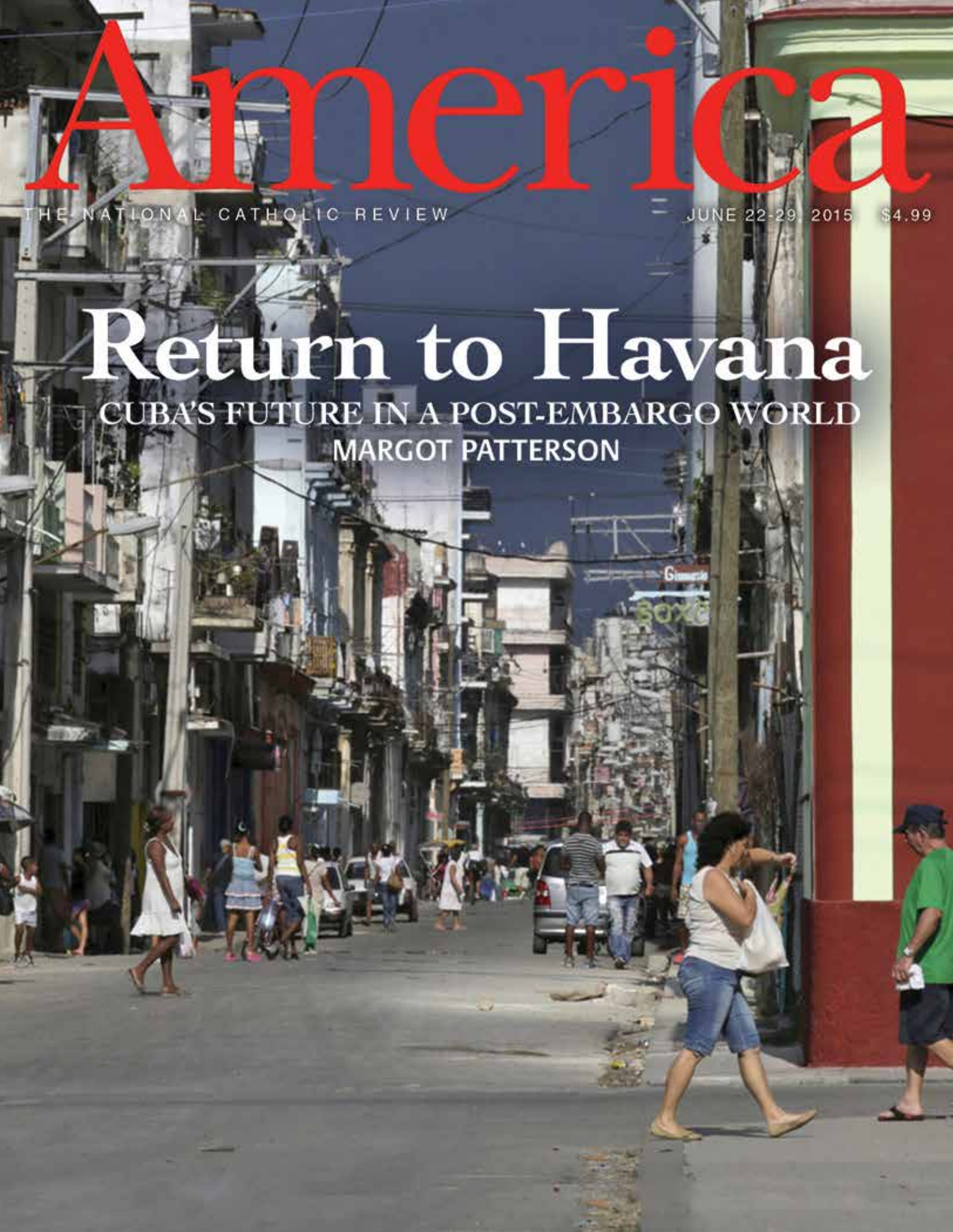
America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

JUNE 22-29, 2015 $4.99



# Return to Havana

## CUBA'S FUTURE IN A POST-EMBARGO WORLD

MARGOT PATTERSON

# OF MANY THINGS

On April 4, 1968, just hours before Martin Luther King Jr. was killed in Memphis, Tenn., Robert F. Kennedy's presidential campaign made a stop in Muncie, Ind. He wanted to talk to the 9,000 students who had assembled in the gymnasium at Ball State University about the meaning of life. "What really is our purpose in life?" Kennedy asked them before recounting the suffering of children starving in Mississippi. "In the last analysis, the only excuse, really, for our existence must be that we are to perform some act, do something on behalf of those who are less well off.... And I think that you should take this on as a burden."

Politicians did not usually talk like this. Most campaign stump speeches were (and still are) designed to appease voters and not challenge them, let alone demand that they take up a selfless cause. Yet the students connected with Kennedy. Perhaps it was his idealism, which seemed to mirror their own. But Kennedy's ideals were not young, and they were certainly not the product of a fanciful naïveté.

It is a cliché among Robert Kennedy's biographers that he changed dramatically after the assassination of his brother. Following that gruesome day in November 1963, Robert Kennedy became a man in touch with the world's pains. In confronting them, he found inspiration and consolation in his Catholic faith. He was always the most devout child in his famously Catholic family; but in his mourning, his faith had taken on greater urgency. In the brief 85 days of his presidential campaign, Kennedy's Catholicism and his politics converged, making him what Catholics today might call "a faithful citizen."

Kennedy rarely spoke directly about his faith, but it was evident in his actions, including his opposition to the Vietnam War and the death penalty and in his hesitation to liberalize the nation's abortion laws. It was obvious in his trip to Delano, Calif., where he attended a Mass with Cesar Chavez that ended the labor leader's long fast for workers' rights. Above all, it was present in speeches like the one at Ball State, in which he would begin with a plea for his audience to recognize the inherent dignity of the human person. Our suffering fellow citizens, he said, "are not statistics; they are human beings...condemned to suffer by our inaction."

The dignity of the person, in Kennedy's mind, was both America's mandate for change and the governing principle of that change. He was a critic of Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty, believing that it violated the principle of subsidiarity, the idea that the dignity of the individual requires that decisions be made by those most closely affected by them. "We can do this," he told the students at Ball State, "not by delegating power to a bureaucracy, not by sending more money and passing new laws, but by challenging the concern of our individual citizens—you and me."

His calls for radical change worried conservatives; his belief in private enterprise made liberals squirm. But Kennedy believed that the only way forward was to create a new political order built on a common moral imperative and practical reason.

Robert Kennedy was undoubtedly a flawed man. Prior to 1963, much of his life was an exercise of power politics. By the time of his death in June 1968, much of that had changed, but some of it had not. It is not clear how successfully Kennedy's politics would have translated into governing or how he would have responded to some of the major challenges of the 1970s. He was, after all, a politician. Yet in the more than 45 years since his death, while other Catholic politicians have embraced the church's concern for the poor and its consistent ethic of life, few have come as close as Robert Kennedy did in his last campaign to appreciating the truly radical nature of our Christian call in the modern world.

**MATT MALONE**

*An earlier version of this essay appeared in the issue of May 26, 2008.*

America | Media
A Jesuit Ministry

106 West 56th Street
New York, NY 10019-3803
Ph: (212) 581-4640; Fax: (212) 399-3596
Subscriptions: (800) 627-9533
www.americamedia.org
facebook.com/americamag
twitter.com/americamag



*Cover:* Havana, Cuba in April. CNS photo/Enrique de la Osa, Reuters

# Contents

www.americamagazine.org VOL. 212 NO. 20, WHOLE NO. 5093 JUNE 22-29, 2015




## ARTICLES



## COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS



## BOOKS & CULTURE



## ON THE WEB

**Gustavo Gutiérrez, O.P.**, right, talks with America Films about the beatification of **Blessed Óscar Romero**, and **Jim McDermott, S.J.**, evaluates **biblical dramas** on screen. Full digital highlights on page 24 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.

## L.A. Wage Wars

The Catholic Church and organized labor have long been strong proponents of providing all workers with a just wage. So why are Homeboy Industries, a nonprofit run by a Jesuit priest, Gregory Boyle, and the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor both seeking exemptions from the recently passed $15 minimum wage ordinance in Los Angeles?

Homeboy Industries, which provides training, counseling and jobs for former gang members and ex-convicts, wants a temporary pass for those workers who spend no more than 18 months in its transitional employment program. The group's executives warn that with the higher wage they would likely have to cut 60 of their 170 trainee positions. Rusty Hicks, head of the Federation of Labor and a leader in the minimum wage campaign, opposes granting such an exemption to Homeboy and similar nonprofits. On the other hand, he argues (some would say hypocritically) that the wage ordinance should not apply to unionized workplaces, where employees might agree to lower pay through collective bargaining.

For over 25 years, Homeboy Industries has given a second chance to men and women whom others considered unemployable. Because the wage clients receive there is only a small part of a larger package of services and support, there is a strong case for granting the group and comparable social enterprises a time-limited exemption. The argument for exempting union workers, however, is a bit more cynical. Such a move could push businesses to let employees unionize in order to avoid the $15 minimum. That might help an employer's bottom line and bring in more dues to the union, but it will do little to advance the law's true aim: lifting workers and their families out of poverty.

## Let Our Prisoners Go

In February Gov. Bruce Rauner of Illinois proposed reducing the state's prison population by 25 percent within 10 years. The same week the MacArthur Foundation announced a $75 million challenge to reduce over-incarceration. Meanwhile, Pope Francis has repeatedly called for broad prison reform and shorter jail time. But, as Marc Mauer and David Cole wrote recently in The New York Times (5/24), nearly everyone knows the criminal justice system needs fixing, but few have provided solutions.

The authors have answers. Longer sentences, they say, do not have greater deterrent effect and could be cut in half. Sentences in the United States are two to 10 times longer than those for the same crimes committed by the British, Dutch or French. One in every nine Americans in prison is serving a life sentence, and the older they get, the less risk they represent. Today 250,000 inmates are over 50; many should be considered for parole. Two-thirds of released prisoners are rearrested within three years, but many of these arrests are for parole violations that do not harm others. Instead, the writers suggest, fine them for the violation. Local drug courts can reduce substance abuse without incarceration.

New York, New Jersey and California have already achieved the 25 percent goal set by Illinois. Many opponents of reform are politicians and contractors who reap economic gains from the construction and operation of prisons, as well as candidates who campaign on "getting tough on crime." It is time for the church and the media to spread the word that prisoners are people and that the public good is not served well when large numbers of people (2,220,300 in 2013) are incarcerated.

## Pro-Family Policies

After a few attempts and some last minute rewriting, the House of Representatives passed the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act on May 13, which bans abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. Only four Democrats signed on to the bill, and President Obama has vowed to veto the measure if it passes the Senate, which seems unlikely. Like the Senate's immigration reform bill, the House's measure is likely to languish in limbo, a casualty of Washington's political divisions.

Some observers have portrayed the House's move as a sop to the party's conservative base. Yet banning abortions after 20 weeks is not as radical as pro-choice advocates would have you believe. Many European nations ban abortions after 13 weeks. According to polls, a majority of U.S. women, including Democrats and millennials, support a 20-week ban. The same month the House bill passed, an article in The New York Times documented the survival of premature babies at 22 weeks. The viability marker dictated by Roe v. Wade—24 weeks—is now clearly exposed as arbitrary.

The group Democrats for Life has offered one way forward. Kristen Day, the executive director, has proposed that Congress pass both the Unborn Child Protection Act and a law providing paid maternity leave, a measure embraced by many Democrats. The more we can do to assist mothers, to show them that they will receive support from society to raise their children, the fewer abortions there will be. Neither party can claim to be pro-family if it fails to protect both young mothers and their unborn children.

EDITORIAL

# Nuclear Dud

The conference on nuclear disarmament at the United Nations ended on May 22 not with a bang but a whimper. After weeks of wrangling, the review conference on the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which convenes every five years, had at its tepid close little to show in the way of accomplishment—again. It did not succeed in establishing new goals for weapons reduction or new strategies for curtailing the proliferation of nuclear weapons-grade materials. In fact, participants were unable even to agree on a joint final statement, bogged down as they were in renewed discord over a proposed regional conference to negotiate a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East.

This discouraging outcome suggests five more years of geopolitical drift instead of progress on the reduction of nuclear weapons, five years during which 59 nations with access to fissile materials—highly enriched uranium and plutonium that can be used in the production of nuclear weapons—may be tempted to take steps toward joining the nine declared nuclear-armed states. To describe this as a "missed opportunity" deeply diminishes the nature of the threat the treaty signatories have neglected for another half decade. Drew Christiansen, S.J., distinguished professor of ethics and global development at Georgetown University and former editor in chief of **America**, warns that after two review failures in a row, the treaty's "binding power is weakening."

That is a prospect that should be setting off alarms but seems to have inspired only pro forma notes of regret. The world has made welcome progress in recent decades in reducing stockpiles of nuclear weapons and fissile materials, but that progress has been stalled for years even as new tensions between nuclear-armed powers have emerged.

Those escalating tensions, while they make negotiations more difficult, are dramatic evidence of the pressing need for progress toward disarmament. Some 16,000 nuclear warheads are still in service in potential theaters of conflict around the world; 1,800 of them are on high alert status, ready to be launched within 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, the continued production and maintenance of nuclear weapons pose an inestimable threat to workers, host communities, military staff and the environment; and fissile material remains vulnerable to terrorist acquisition. The United States and Russia, instead of working together to reboot the joint progress on disarmament made in the near past, are preparing what may turn out to be a new arms race. Modernization programs on both sides will divert billions of dollars from the needs of vulnerable people around the world to the service of "improving" and reproducing weapons whose potential use and upkeep are already a moral scandal and a budgetary drain.

It is essential, of course, to restore credibility and effectiveness to the N.P.T. process, but the rest of the world should not sit idly by as leaders of nuclear-armed states sideline themselves from the discussion. A growing civic-society effort to outlaw nuclear weapons, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, promises to shame nuclear powers into action.

The Vatican and the U.S. bishops have in recent months given reinvigorated attention to this existential global threat. Statements by the Holy See have challenged the moral legitimacy of the policy of deterrence, and the bishops in April urged renewed U.S. attention to disarmament. The church has reiterated its longstanding belief that complete nuclear disarmament is the world's only moral option. The Vatican should keep this matter before the eyes of the international public even as it ratchets up the pressure on geopolitical leaders. The church can be a powerful ally to anti-nuke campaigners, providing spiritual sustenance to the movement as well as a credible and comprehensive analysis of the practical ethics of disarmament.

Meanwhile, the United States should reconsider its recurring role as protector of Israel's nuclear ambiguity and urge this undeclared nuclear power to come clean on its capacity and the potential hazards created by its nuclear weapons program. That could provide a welcome boost to the legitimacy and credibility of the treaty enterprise itself.

Geopolitical leaders need to take responsibility for recent N.P.T. failures and seek new ways to prevent nuclear harm. If the N.P.T. process is indeed hopelessly stalled, progress must be sought by other avenues. Cooperative threat reduction has been a victim of the recent deterioration in relations between the United States and the Russian Federation. That essential effort secures and neutralizes nuclear materials scattered around the former Soviet Union. Reviving it, despite tensions over the crisis in Ukraine, could help restore the cooperative ethos now draining from the N.P.T. process. That may be enough to get it back on track toward its long-term goal of a nuclear weapons-free world.

# REPLY ALL

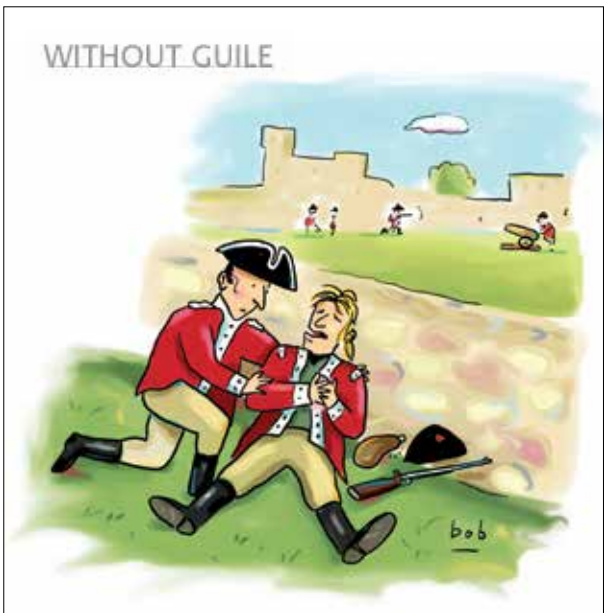
## Deepening Dialogue

I welcome the suggestion in "Coping With Polarity" (Editorial, 5/25) that "after naming the wounds, we can begin to heal by toning down fiery words and divisive stances, by admitting differences with our friends and colleagues without alienating them or blaming them."

Let us learn also from the wise women of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious who wrote about the recently concluded doctrinal assessment by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: "We brought this desire for deep listening and respectful dialogue to our work with the C.D.F. officials and found they held a similar desire.... Our hope is that the positive outcome of the assessment and mandate will lead to the creation of additional spaces within the Catholic Church where the church leadership and membership can speak together regularly about the critical matters before all of us."

I am currently dealing with differences on personal, religious, economic, political and social issues within my extended family and social networks. I will use these wise teachings to maintain positive relationships whenever possible, while acknowledging our differences and our right and responsibility to make up our own minds on issues important to us.

NANCY WALTON-HOUSE
*Online Comment*




*"Tell my wife I love her and that I promise no more of these goofy weekend battle re-enactments."*

CARTOON: BOB ECKSTEIN

## Notes From Down Under

Re "The Buck Stops Here" (Current Comment, 5/25): In Australia we have had a number of women on our banknotes. Women achieved the federation vote (suffrage) here in 1902. My favorite dollar lady is Caroline Chisholm (1806–77). She left a lasting legacy in social reform, particularly for migrant women. She became a Catholic (her husband was one), and oddly enough she is listed among the saints in the Church of England but is not yet on the Roman calendar. She will get there one day. But in the meantime, the $5 note is a good start!

PATRICK KIRKWOOD
*Online Comment*

## Pro-Planet, Pro-Life

Re "A Call to Virtue," by Jeffery D. Sachs (5/18): What an odd article from Mr. Sachs. Whoever wrote it is quite conversant in authentic Catholic anthropology and some of its philosophical basis in Aquinas. He is also aware of the church's critique of libertarianism and its radical focus on the individual. That a strong defense of environmental responsibility is available from this tradition is clear, which is why the church has for some time made these arguments.

Yet almost everything else Mr. Sachs argues for in his public intellectual life is an affront to this same tradition and the polar opposite of how the church understands our social responsibility to one another. His consistent promotion of population control, coupled with his refusal to deal seriously with its more coercive manifestations (see China, India), is gravely offensive to Catholic virtue ethics. His view that abortion is in certain circumstances "more economically responsible" than birth is utterly incompatible with the case made under his name in this article for a defense of the most vulnerable.

Pope Francis will remind the world that an environmentalism that ignores human ecology is anti-human and causes rather than reduces human suffering. The pope will demonstrate a sincere desire that the poor not be overrun by the greedy and that the world's ecosystem not be ruined in a quest for profit; just as he will remind Sachs and Co. that those who would destroy human life by contraception and abortion will not find approval in the church and its social and moral doctrine.

STEVE PHELAN
*Online Comment*

## College Costs

Re "The Student Debt Crisis" (Editorial, 5/11): Americans seem almost afraid to discuss one of the major causes of the student debt mess: the reckless rise in non-teaching costs of higher education, much of it clearly encouraged by the ease with which tuition and other fees can be raised year after year. Yes, as the editors point out, banks and others are reaping the dividends of the bizarre way we finance higher education. But critics and commentators seldom point to the massive salaries of far too many college and university administrators, the crazy amounts of money spent on institutional advertising and all the other expenses—paid for, in effect, by student loans—that contribute little

to the quality of education being purchased.

JOHN STEWART
*Newton, Mass.*

### Bad Influence

In "Proto-Pundit" (5/11), a review of a biography of the 20th-century public intellectual Walter Lippman, Lance Compa writes, "Lippman was at home as a commentator on events, not an actor shaping them." I would argue that Mr. Lippman did shape events as the leading advocate of imprisoning Americans of Japanese descent in concentration camps during World War II.

MICHAEL BALAND
*Online Comment*

### 'The Saint in All of Us'

Re "Called to Be Saints," Robert Ellsberg (5/4): "We are all called to be saints," Dorothy Day wrote, "…and we might as well get over our bourgeois fear of the name. We might also get used to recognizing the fact that there is some of the saint in all of us." She didn't want to be canonized, but the church, that is, the people, need it. We need it to remember to speak truth to power—ecclesial or political. We need it to remember to persevere in the face of great odds, without government grants or wealthy patrons, without covert agendas. We need it to invite the next generation of the poor and sick into those centers of hospitality named after this great saint who herself was poor, and sick (and tired). There's a little St. Dorothy in all of us. Celebrate it!

DAN BRACCIO
*Online Comment*

### A New Rite

Bravo to Michael A. Marshal for his excellent article, "Confirmation Bias" (4/27). Confirmation should be celebrated as a sacrament of initiation even for those baptized as infants, sometime before the celebration of first Eucharist around the age of 7. Just as the epiclesis invokes the Holy Spirit shortly before the consecration in the eucharistic prayer, the sealing with the Holy Spirit at confirmation should precede the first reception of first holy Communion.

What is needed in the Catholic Church is a ceremonial rite of reaffirmation and commitment to discipleship in adolescence and youth akin to the *quinceañera* celebrated in the Hispanic community. There a girl celebrating her 15th birthday may reaffirm her baptismal vows and profess her commitment to love and follow Jesus in the church.

Let's create a new rite for both girls and boys in which they may be formed in Catholic teaching and trained to be youthful missionary disciples.

D. BRUCE NIELI, C.S.P.
*Austin, Tex.*

### Reading History

Re "A Man in Full," by Maurice Timothy Reidy (4/13): Mr. Reidy provides a fascinating review of "Wolf Hall." I haven't watched the series yet, but I've read both of Hilary Mantel's Cromwell books and look forward to the third.

I am a historian, though not of Tudor England, and I see from the press that some eminent historians of the period are sharpening their knives against Ms. Mantel and her views of history.

But a couple of points are worth remembering. First, she is not a historian. She is a novelist—a very good one indeed—and novelists play by different rules than historians. Second, even if we dismiss the questions of historical accuracy and stay in the realm of the literary, we must remember that everything is seen through the eyes of Thomas Cromwell—not through the eyes of his underlings, or of Thomas More, Henry VIII or anyone else. What particular axes does Cromwell have to grind as he tells us his story? Is he a reliable narrator?

Most of us don't depend on Shakespeare to give us historically accurate portraits of Henry IV or poor old Richard III. But none of us (I hope) use that to denigrate Shakespeare. Still, films and novels are usually easier to absorb than the historian's history (just look at the recent flap over whether Lyndon Johnson was mistreated in "Selma"). And that's one of the reasons to read using what literary critics call the hermeneutics of suspicion, or just plain common sense.

NICHOLAS CLIFFORD
*Online Comment*

### STATUS UPDATE

*Readers respond to "Relying on Each Other," by Rachel Espinoza and Tawny Horner (5/18).*

Natural family planning is tough. I would be the first to admit it, and my husband and I used it throughout our marriage. We were blessed with seven children, and then my husband died of heart disease. Our oldest was in his second year of college and the youngest was in kindergarten at the time. I worked part-time as a teacher (promptly moved to full time), and we embarked on the new phase of our lives. Next week my children and I will attend the college graduation of the sixth child (the previous five are also college graduates and have good jobs). "Trust in the Lord with all your heart."

DEBRA OLIVA

This article does a really good job discussing the struggles of using natural family planning. But I'm not sure a full-scale change in church teaching on contraception and sex is the solution. I do agree that a better pastoral approach to these real struggles is necessary and that a fuller understanding and nuanced teaching on human sexuality in regard to faith would be helpful. We really do not have a great spirituality of sex or marriage that takes into account the practical issues or helps apply church teaching to the practical issues.

JEN CROUCH

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

## Pope Francis, 'Messenger of Peace,' Comes to Sarajevo

From the beginning of his pontificate the Argentine pope has given particular attention to "the peripheries" of the world. Bosnia-Herzegovina, with its capital city Sarajevo, is one of them. Life is hard there. The economy is weak, unemployment is high and ethnic tensions are never far from the surface in this country of around 3.8 million people, sandwiched between Serbia and Croatia.

Pope Francis arrived in Sarajevo on June 6, as "a messenger of peace." In a video-message on the eve of his 11-hour visit he extended greetings to "all" the inhabitants of the city and of Bosnia-Herzegovina and said he is coming "to confirm the faith of Catholics, to support ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and especially to encourage peaceful coexistence in your country."

Francis is keenly aware of the threat to peace and social harmony because of the unstable situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the fact that reconciliation has never really been achieved since the end of the war between the members of its different ethnic-religious communities. That conflict, inflamed by nationalist politics that exploited ethnic and religious bonds, caused the deaths of 100,000 people and spawned ethnic cleansing which forced two million people to leave their homes. During that terrible conflict, the number of Catholics in Sarajevo decreased from 530,000 to 125,000, while throughout Bosnia-Hercegovina 450,000 Catholics were forced to flee; many never returned.

Sixty-five thousand people applauded with passion in Sarajevo's Kosevo Stadium when Pope Francis declared, "War never again!" It was the most powerfully emotional moment during the Mass celebrated in the stadium by Papa Franjo—as the people call him here—under a blazing sun and surrounded by green hills.

Francis faces problems with disarming directness and extraordinary humility. That was evident in his homily. Speaking from the heart in language everyone could understand, he talked of war and peace, yesterday in Sarajevo and today in many other parts of the world. And he delivered a strong message of encouragement and hope.

"Peace is God's dream, his plan for humanity, for history, for all creation," he told his attentive audience and the much larger audience of Muslims and Christians that were following the celebration by live television in this country where over 40 percent of the population are Muslim, 31 percent Orthodox and less than 15 percent Catholic.

Peace is also "a plan which always meets opposition from men and from the evil one," Francis stated. "Even in our time," he noted, "the desire for peace and the commitment to build peace collide against the reality of many armed conflicts presently affecting our world. They are a kind of third world war being fought piecemeal, and in the context of global communication, we sense an atmosphere of war."

Pope Francis highlighted the fact that "some wish to incite and foment this atmosphere deliberately, mainly those who want conflict between different cultures and societies, and those who speculate on wars for the purpose of selling arms."

**MOBILE POPE.** Francis comes to Sarajevo for a one-day visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

He recalled that "war means children, women and the elderly in refugee camps; it means forced displacement of peoples; it means destroyed houses, streets and factories; it means, above all, countless shattered lives."

Looking out at the vast crowd from the lectern from which he was speaking, he added, "You know this well, having experienced it here: how much suffering, how much destruction, how much pain!"

**GERARD O'CONNELL**

ST. PAUL-MINNEAPOLIS

## Archdiocese Charged

Criminal charges were filed on June 5 against the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis stemming from its handling of Curtis Wehmeyer, a troubled priest who was


eventually convicted of child abuse in 2013 and defrocked in March 2015. Ramsey County prosecutors charged the archdiocese as a corporation with six gross misdemeanor counts, alleging that it failed to protect children. A civil petition issued at the same time seeks court supervision of the archdiocese related to the protection of children.

The Ramsey County attorney, John Choi, said in a statement, "It is not only Curtis Wehmeyer who is criminally responsible for the harm caused, but it is the archdiocese as well." He said the archdiocese "time and time again turned a blind eye" to what was going on with Wehmeyer. Many of the complaints and troubling events related to the Wehmeyer case occurred long after the 2002 commitments made in the Dallas Charter for containing the problem of the sexual abuse of minors. Though the county's allegations track a worrisome history dating back to Archbishop John Nienstedt's two predecessors, the charges have become just the latest challenges to the authority and judgment of the embattled archbishop.

"Today, we are alleging a disturbing institutional and systemic pattern of behavior committed by the highest levels of leadership of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis over the course of decades," Mr. Choi said. "The archdiocese's failures have caused great suffering by the victims and their family and betrayed our entire community—from the many courageous clergy and laypeople whose legitimate concerns about Wehmeyer's behavior were ignored or minimized to those Catholics and non-Catholics alike who were falsely led to believe that the archdiocese had effective measures in place to protect children.

"The facts that we have gathered cannot be ignored; they cannot be dismissed and are frankly appalling," Choi told local media at a press conference announcing the filing of the criminal complaint.

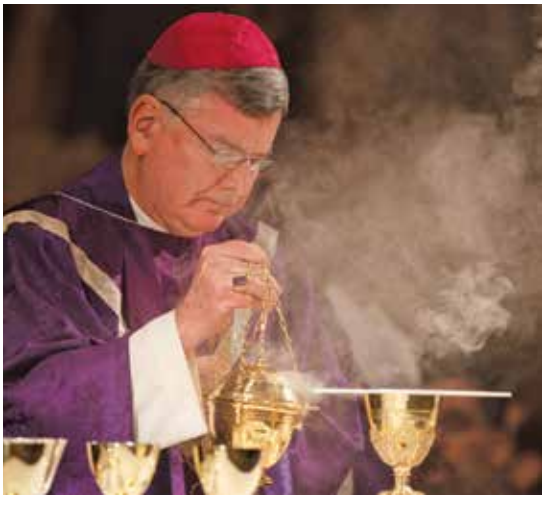
Regarding the possibility of criminal charges being filed against individuals associated with the archdiocese, the county attorney's Public Information Officer Dennis Gerhardstein said, "At this time, no, but the case is ongoing."

He said that the county attorney's office felt that it had enough evidence now to begin building a case against the archdiocese as a corporate entity that had demonstrated a long-term "pattern of behavior" that put children at risk of harm.

"We're still looking at the evidence; this is not the end of our investigation." He added, "This is where we are starting."

The criminal complaint and civil petition represent the results of a 20-month investigation, Gerhardstein told **America**. Much of Wehmeyer's particularly sordid story has already been recounted by the local media in Minnesota, but the complaint's often-shocking narrative represents the first time that the county attorney's office attempted a comprehensive overview of the case, including various abuses and reports of abuse by Wehmeyer, and the archdiocese's at times inexplicable responses to those reports.

Wehmeyer, currently serving five years in prison in Minnesota for child abuse and facing more allegations in Wisconsin, appears in the county's complaint to have been troubled as far back as his seminary days. He was repeatedly reported to archdiocesan officials over years for an accelerating number of incidents, often drug- and alcohol-fueled, culminating in a series of assaults on children. The Wehmeyer



**MORE BAD NEWS IN ST. PAUL/MINNEAPOLIS. The archdiocese declared bankruptcy in January and now faces criminal charges. Archbishop John Neinstedt is pictured here celebrating Mass in Rome in 2012.**

story, Gerhardstein said, will be the center of the case the county plans to build against the archdiocese.

Reading the criminal complaint is not for the faint of heart. It depicts years of what to parents will no doubt appear inexplicable decisions at the highest level of the archdiocese as disturbing allegations against Wehmeyer and reports of his erratic behavior piled up.

In a statement released after hours after the court filing, Auxiliary Bishop Andrew Cozzens of the diocese said, "We deeply regret the abuse that was suffered by the victims of Curtis Wehmeyer and are grieved for all victims of sexual abuse.

"We will continue to cooperate with the Ramsey County Attorney's office. We all share the same goal: To provide safe environments for all children in our churches and in our communities."

**KEVIN CLARKE**

## Truth-Telling

A Canadian government investigation used the term "cultural genocide" to describe the experience of aboriginal people, advising that reconciliation within the country "is going to take hard work." Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on June 2 called for changes at all levels of society and government. Aboriginal schools were established and paid for by the Canadian government in the late 1800s but were administered by church organizations of several religions, including the Catholic Church, which ran about 60 percent of them. "States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next." According to the report, "In its dealing with aboriginal people, Canada did all these things."

## 'Informal' Workers

The black market or informal economy threatens workers' rights, security and protection worldwide, and more must be done to strengthen minimum wages, safety standards and maternity benefits, said Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, who heads the Holy See's Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations in Geneva. Tomasi also underlined the ongoing need to eradicate child labor, which remains "widespread in some regions." While statistics indicate the number of child workers worldwide has decreased in the past five years, to 168 million from 246 million, "additional efforts" are needed to redress the issue, "especially if we consider that 22,000 boys and girls every year lose their lives in work accidents," he said in his address to the U.N. International Labor Conference on June 4. The informal economy is largest in developing countries, but it is growing even in industrialized countries, he noted, adding that people enter this economy "not by choice" but due to "a lack of opportunities" in the formal sector.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

## NEWS BRIEFS

**Soldiers carry the casket of Beau Biden.**

At St. Anthony of Padua Church in Wilmington, Del., on June 6, President Obama delivered the eulogy for **Beau Biden**, the son of Vice President Joe Biden. ✦ Pope Francis sent "heartfelt condolences" to the citizens of Ghana after at least 150 people were killed in an **explosion at a gas station** in the country's capital, Accra on June 4. ✦ More than a year after establishing special structures to oversee the Vatican's finances, Pope Francis on June 5 named **Libero Milone**, an Italian accountant and expert in corporate risk management, as the Vatican's auditor general. ✦ On May 23 Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit announced the convocation of an **archdiocesan synod in the fall of 2016** to refocus on evangelization and "to encounter Christ anew" as a missionary church. ✦ **Edith Avila Olea,** 22, a parish outreach worker for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Joliet, Ill., was scheduled to be honored on June 10 at the U.S. bishops' spring general assembly in St. Louis with the 2015 Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award. ✦ **Right-to-die legislation** was approved by the California state Senate on June 4 and will now head to the state house.

DISPATCH | BEIJING

# Christian Demolition in China?

Since becoming general secretary of the Communist Party of China in 2012, Xi Jinping has been consistent on three major themes: the party would actively root out corruption and reduce public spending; China would vigorously enforce its borders and territorial claims; and the party would seek to reduce foreign influence over Chinese culture and society.

Strong examples of all three of these were provided earlier this spring. Charges of bribery, abuse of power and the intentional disclosure of state secrets were filed against Zhou Yongkang, formerly the minister of public security. In the South China Sea, despite loud and regular protests from the United States and Southeast Asian nations, including Vietnam, reclamation work and the construction of airstrips and lighthouses on disputed islands continue unabated. And on May 20, Xi called upon the United Front, a gathering of political and civic groups directed by the party, "to incorporate religions in socialist society," adding, "We must manage religious affairs in accordance with the law and adhere to the principle of independence to run religious groups on our own accord."

The C.C.P. also in May reminded its 86 million members of its official atheism in a newsletter released by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the country's emboldened and empowered anticorruption organization. "The fact that a small number of party members have forsaken the party's worldview of dialectical materialism and have turned to religion is now attracting serious concern, to the extent that it now falls within the purview of disciplinary work," the C.C.D.I. article warned.

Clearly Pope Francis got the message. During his general audience on May 20, he said, "Ask Mary to help Catholics in China to be ever more credible witnesses of this merciful love in the midst of their people and to live spiritually united to the rock of Peter on which the church is built."

The Communist Party reminded its 86 million members of its official atheism.

On a local level, one of the sharpest points of Chinese resistance to religious influence may be in a campaign that has targeted crosses atop churches and in some cases the churches themselves, known officially as "Three Rectifications, One Demolish." In Mandarin Chinese, it's also catchy; the words for "rectification" and "demolish" rhyme.

The desired "rectification" is officially part of a nationwide effort to modernize Chinese cities, as the government also seeks to urbanize larger swaths of the population in order to make basic services like health care and public transportation both more available and more affordable. The three "rectifications" are "strengthening, planning and management" of building construction, "uphold administration according to the law" and "strict supervision and inspection." The "demolish" is obvious.

The character for "demolish" (chai) is a familiar and perhaps unpopular one for many urbanites: it is painted on condemned buildings and other structures, in some cases the first notification that residents receive that they will be moving, like it or not. Churches seem to have been targeted specifically, with few other historic buildings reportedly touched in the same way.

Although the removals and demolitions have led to violent confrontations between parishioners and work crews, public statements from church officials, many of whom are themselves government officials or government-appointed, have been limited. When the Zhejiang provincial government called for public comment on a draft law, however, some church leaders took advantage of what might be their only opportunity for feedback.

The Hangzhou City Committee of the Tang Chong Yi Christian Church, a large Protestant church in Zhejiang, described the draft law as "inconsistent with the content of some of the provisions and spirit of the national law," suggesting those provisions in the draft "should be deleted." The committee cited the tradition of placing crosses on the external structure of churches and complained of inconsistencies with existing building codes; the administration of historic buildings and the vagueness of language used in the draft law. It was a rare note of resistance during what appears to be the beginning of a difficult period for China's Christians as pressure grows on the party's ideological rivals.

**STEVEN SCHWANKERT**

**STEVEN SCHWANKERT**, *author of* Poseidon: China's Secret Salvage of Britain's Lost Submarine *(Hong Kong University Press), is* ***America****'s Beijing correspondent. Twitter: @ greatwriteshark.*

HELEN ALVARÉ

# Man and Woman Together

Pope Francis is onto something in his recent linking of the crisis of faith to the crisis in the alliance of the man and the woman and the radical task this link implies. This insight is as old as Genesis; but, as usual, Francis brings old truths to life in new and straightforward ways.

A few weeks ago at a papal audience, employing the classically Catholic method of "faith illuminating reason," Pope Francis meditated on Gn 1:27: "God created man in his own image...male and female he created them." Francis opined: "I wonder if the crisis of collective trust in God...is not also connected to the crisis of the alliance between man and woman. In fact, the biblical account...tells us that the communion with God is reflected in the communion of the human couple and the loss of trust in the heavenly Father generates division and conflict between man and woman."

He then assigned to the church, and "all believers, and first of all believing families...to rediscover the beauty of the creative design that also inscribes the image of God in the alliance between man and woman."

Pope Francis issued a similar call to representatives of more than 14 faith traditions: at a Vatican conference last November on the complementarity of man and woman in marriage: "Commit yourselves, so that our youth do not give themselves over to the poisonous environment of the temporary, but rather be revolutionaries with the courage to seek true and lasting love, going against the common pattern."

We know that in the United States a declining number of Americans tell pollsters that they practice their Catholic faith. Rates of marriage are declining generally in the population as well as within the Catholic Church. Sociological literature also reveals a significant amount of "gender distrust" between men and women, a greater willingness to use cohabitation to "test" relationships and high numbers of single-parent families.

This generation also has a front row seat to the ceaselessly repeated claims that there is nothing uniquely important or special about the alliance of the man and the woman; nothing special about their lovemaking overflowing into the creation of new life; and nothing special about that new son or daughter retaining a connection with his or her mother and father. These claims, of course, are the very foundation of arguments on behalf of divorce laws deaf to the existence of minor children, a lively U.S. marketplace for eggs, sperm and wombs and same-sex marriage.

The alliance between the man and the woman images God in an irreplaceable way.

In the past, the notion that both male and female image God has been put to use mostly in service of women's equality. It has been a great foundation—one of the most solid—for the advancement of the human rights of women.

Currently, however, Francis is stressing how the alliance between the man and the woman images God in an irreplaceable way, such that this must inspire efforts to strengthen this same alliance. This is a radical "ask," considering that the intrinsic and unique values of this alliance have probably never been cast in more doubt by genuinely powerful public and private institutions. In fact, it is a moment when governments might act to impede or even punish churches' and individuals' religious witness to the unique good of the alliance between men and women.

For a long time, I have been wondering what it would take to get Catholics to think more concretely about how to act out our conviction that marriage provides a glimpse of God and his way of love. Our teaching proposes this dynamic repeatedly, but what does it look like? Francis suggested an answer (in the same audience referred to above): more listening between men and women, more understanding and more love—all open to God's action, and assisted, not undermined, by intellectual firepower.

Each element of Francis' solution is briefly stated. Yet each is a giant "ask." I'm just thrilled that Francis has set the table and hopeful it will inspire a generation of couples and scholars.

Maybe we had to be driven to the point where the value of marriage between man and woman was discounted or denied and our right to support it jeopardized before we came to grips with this basic but also deeply spiritual commission. No matter why, the moment is upon us.

**HELEN ALVARÉ** *is a professor of law at George Mason University, where she teaches law and religion and family law. She is also a consultor to the Pontifical Council for the Laity.*

# The St. Peter's Square Nativity

Officially licensed by the Vatican Observatory Foundation

It Lights Up!

*The Angel above the Crèche is faithfully crafted in the Baroque style that was fostered by the Catholic Church in the 1600s.*

***A handcrafted, hand-painted sculptural masterpiece inspired by the world famous Nativity displays in Rome.***

Figurines range in size up to 5.5" high
Crèche measures 17" L x 8" D x 13.5" H
Fine collectible. Not intended for children under 14.

In 1982, Blessed Pope John Paul II began a tradition that would become a source of inspiration and joy for the faithful the world over ... displaying the Nativity scene in St. Peter's Square starting on Christmas Eve.

Now, inspired by these famous Nativities displayed only in Rome, you can bring their classical beauty and reverence to your home & family at Christmas with the *St. Peter's Square Nativity Collection*! The fully-sculpted figurines in this one-of-a-kind edition have been painstakingly crafted and painted to be faithful replicas of the life-size figures used in Nativity scenes at St. Peter's Square.

**An Incredible Collection at an amazing value!**

Your collection begins with "The Holy Family" sculpture that can be yours for $49.98* payable in three easy payments of $16.66, the first billed before shipment. Subsequent sculptures—including the illuminated Crèche and the St. Peter's Cathedral backdrop—will be sent about every other month at the same attractive price. Shipment Two is the "2 Kings & Ox" sculptures. Our best-in-the-business 365-Day guarantee assures your satisfaction and you may cancel at any time.

**Not available in any store. Act now!**

Strong demand is expected so don't wait to order. Send no money now. Just return the coupon today.

www.bradfordexchange.com/StPeters



**Best-in-the-Business 365-day Guarantee and Certificate of Authenticity**

THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE
HAWTHORNE VILLAGE DIVISION

9210 N. Maryland Street,
Niles, IL 60714-1322

**Limited-time Offer—Please Respond Promptly**

**Yes!** Please enter my order for the *St. Peter's Square Nativity Collection*, beginning with "The Holy Family" as described in this announcement. **SEND NO MONEY NOW.**

Signature _____

Mrs. Mr. Ms. _____
Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

917770-E16102

*Plus $8.99 shipping and service. All sales are subject to acceptance and product availability. Order now to enjoy in time for the Holidays.

# Return to Havana

## Pondering Cuba's future in a post-embargo world

**BY MARGOT PATTERSON**

The booksellers outside in the Plaza de Armas sell some fine old leather-bound volumes along with other used hardcovers and paperbacks. There are numerous biographies of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro on the racks, including plenty of copies in English of Fidel's speech "History Will Absolve Me," which he delivered on Oct. 16, 1953, when he was on trial for attacking the military barracks at Moncada. Sixty-two years later, Fidel and his revolution are still standing, though for how much longer, one wonders.

The Plaza de Armas stands near the sea, at one end of Habana Vieja, or Old Havana. Laid out in 1519, it is a beautiful square, the oldest and most important in Havana. In the middle stands a statue of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, the hero of the Ten Years' War against the Spanish that began in 1868. From the Plaza de Armas, it is an easy walk to the other squares the Cuban government has restored: Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza Vieja, Plaza de San Francisco.

Much of the rest of Havana is a wreck, a display of moldering, often magnificent architecture that is falling apart, the product of years of neglect and Cuba's tropical climate. Driving along the Malecón, the seafront road lined with buildings crumbling from damage by salt spray, one could mistake Havana for a war-torn city, which in a way it is. Fifty years of punishing U.S. sanctions coupled with government mismanagement have taken a toll on the capital.

But, while dilapidated, Havana seems vibrant. If it is too much to say it is thriving, it does seem vital. And these days it seems hopeful too. The move to normalize U.S.-Cuban relations is still new and uncertain, but Cubans think change is around the corner. Just what kind of change, however, remains to be seen.

"What does the word *transition* mean to you?" Rafael Betancourt, an economist, polled a group of us meeting him at a cafe. Most among the dozen there, part of a 150-strong delegation organized by the peace group Code Pink, answered "capitalism" or "privatization." That, said Mr. Betancourt, a professor at Havana Polytechnic Institute, is the biggest hurdle to constructing a new form of socialism, a socialism for the 21st century, a third way.

Mr. Betancourt is a Cuban-American whose life journey has reversed the pattern most Cuban-Americans follow. He left Cuba as a child and grew up in the United States. In 1986 he returned to Cuba, where he has raised a family while teaching and working as a consultant on international development.

"Latin America is where solutions are being crafted," he said. "When you look at those options that are being pursued in Latin America, what's interesting is how different they are from the Eastern European model. Now those solutions may not work, but nobody else has any ideas about how to deal with the problems capitalist economies are facing."

### Inequality Makes a Landfall

The common problem these economies face is growing income inequality. Many countries assumed the neoliberal model of development would solve all problems, that if countries reduced the size of government, lowered taxes and promoted privatization, they would create the basis for unlimited growth that would trickle down to all. But as the French economist and writer Thomas Piketty documented in his book *Capital in the 21st Century*, income inequality is growing in capitalist societies, and wealth is becoming more and more concentrated in fewer hands. The income disparity in many countries, rich as well as poor, is growing at a rate that exceeds rates before World War I.

Mr. Betancourt believes Cuba has a chance to avoid that fate, to become once again a model for the world in a way that it has not been for decades. "We're in a race against time," he said. "There are those who think we can have a socialist solidarity economy that includes our public economy, that includes our state and private enterprises and that includes our social and private economy—the cooperatives, the small businesses, the family businesses in the informal sector." He envisions a mixed economy that does not turn its back on social responsibility and a government that neither protects only the privileges of the rich nor defends only the interests of the poor.

It sounds grandiose, particularly in a country where, he acknowledges, people are struggling just to survive, with most people working two jobs to buy shoes for their children and put food on the table. Even with government-supplied food rations, he says, Cubans spend 80 percent to 90 percent

**MARGOT PATTERSON,** *a columnist for* ***America*** *and the author of* Islam Considered: A Christian Perspective, *visited Cuba in February.*

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ LAZYLLAMA

**A CITY NEAR REVIVAL OR RUIN. Central Havana, Cuba**

of their disposable income on food. Though Cuba is undergoing what Mr. Betancourt calls a third agrarian reform, one that reverses the effects of the second, which concentrated farmland into large inefficient state farms, the island still does not feed itself and imports 60 percent of its food. The government has been trying to change that, offering citizens leases of land in usufruct to encourage private farming.

Over the last 10 years, Mr. Betancourt notes that agricultural output and calorie consumption in Cuba have risen after the desperate days of the Special Period, Fidel Castro's euphemistic term for the lean years that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the abrupt end of the Soviet subsidies on which Cuba had depended. During some of the worst days of the Special Period, from 1991 to 1994, Cuba was gripped by famine and the average Cuban lost 20 pounds. Foreign trade dropped by more than 70 percent, and the economy shrank 35 percent. The United States tightened the screws during this time, extending the embargo to apply to foreign companies that trade with Cuba, barring U.S. bank loans to them and denying entry to the United States to anyone who did business with Cuba.

Few Americans realize the severity of the embargo. The Cuban government considers it a blockade and the chief source of the country's economic woes, though Cuba has made its share of mistakes along the way, which Mr. Betancourt readily admits.

"We got mired in this statist economy," he said. "We fell into this huge crisis for 20 years, where our economy dropped more than in the Great Depression." The Special Period spurred economic change: self-employment became legal, foreign investment was allowed, tourism and small-scale agriculture were encouraged along with urban community gardens called *organopónicos* that, by necessity, grew produce without the pesticides and fertilizers that the country had once imported. Cuba, which had previously used more fertilizer than the United States, embraced environmentalism. More than many nations, it still does.

The mix of privatization and innovation has put Cuba on a path to sustainable development that is rare in the world. In an environmental report in 2006, the World Wildlife Fund voted Cuba the only country in the world with an acceptable ecological footprint. The assessment was based on a human welfare index that measured life expectancy, literacy and gross domestic product as well as the amount of

resources used to fulfill a person's food and energy needs. Unlike most Western countries, Cuba has not overconsumed; unlike many poor countries in Africa and Asia, it possesses excellent literacy rates, education and health care.

## Raúl the Refomer

Since Fidel Castro handed power to his brother Raúl in 2006, Cuba has instituted new reforms, the most sweeping since the early years of the revolution. Seeking to resuscitate the failing economy, Raúl Castro has imposed deep structural changes, diversifying the economy and encouraging individual initiative in place of paternalism by the state. "We have to permanently erase the notion that Cuba is the only country in the world where people can live without working," he declared in 2010.

A year later a grassroots movement of economic reform began at the government's behest. Each neighborhood held debates on what kind of change people wanted to see. The result was legislation that opened up a real estate market, enabling Cubans to buy and sell their homes and cars. Another change: Cubans no longer needed an exit visa to leave the island. And private enterprise was encouraged, with 450 state enterprises becoming cooperatives owned and run by workers and 250,000 people joining the private sector in 2011 and 2012. The government plans to cut another half million people from the state payroll.

These sound like positive changes, but they have had another, less desirable effect: increasing inequality. Cuba's dual currency is itself a major source of inequity. Created in 1993 to manage tourist revenue and foreign trade, the convertible peso is tied to the dollar and is worth far more than the local peso most Cubans use and in which they are paid. A waiter who receives tips from tourists can make as much money in a day as a professional can make in a month on the average Cuban salary of $20.

Remittances from Cuban-Americans in the states to family members on the island have also fueled a growing income gap, one that leaves black Cubans at a disadvantage. Most of the Cuban population that emigrated to the United States was white; so are the families on the island to whom they send money. The ability to sell one's home is expected to further widen the divide between the island's haves and have-nots. "The fear is that these capitalistic reforms will erode what's been built here since the revolution," said Conner Gorry, an American journalist who has lived in Cuba since 2002.

I had come to Cuba because I wanted to see it while the Castro brothers still ran it, before it inevitably became, so I thought before I arrived, Americanized. One night in Havana, I sat outside with several Cubans and an American trying to decide which was worse: poverty or inequality. It has been a long time since I have heard a similar discussion in the United States. But Cubans talk—and some clearly worry—about the social tensions that economic inequality breeds. Some I spoke to say they want better economic prospects yet also want to preserve the benefits of the revolution: the social safety net and strong ethos of solidarity, the emphasis on human capital. Among some there is recognition that greater inequality is inevitable if Cuba is to stanch the emigration of educated young people leaving the island to seek better prospects.

**One could mistake Havana for a war-torn city, which in a way it is. Fifty years of punishing U.S. sanctions coupled with government mismanagement have taken a toll on the capital.**

"Cuba has developed a tremendous capacity to train people, but not to employ them," said the architect Miguel Coyula. He notes that in 1959 there were just three universities in Cuba. Today there are 65.

Ms. Gorry said young people are leaving because of the economy, not because of the lack of free speech or human rights. While Cuba is often criticized for denying these rights, for the average Cuban inadequate salaries and lack of opportunity loom larger among their complaints.

One Code Pink delegate said conversations with Cubans on the street highlighted the frustration many of them feel with the current system. "The level of constraint on the lives of people who have the intelligence and drive and passion to make something of their lives was just palpable," said Vicki Robin, a writer whose most recent book is *Blessing the Hands That Feed Us*. "The only way you see people prospering if they're not in the tourist industry or higher up in the government is that they're trading on the black market."

Lifting the embargo will improve Cubans' prospects, but it will require Congressional approval. Now, as in the past, Cuba remains a hostage to U.S. domestic politics. A younger generation of Cuban-Americans is less opposed to lifting the embargo than their parents are, but some in the Cuban-

# **Prophet and Mystic of Creation:** On Retreat with Thomas Merton

Professsor of Religious Studies Sr. Kathleen Noone Deignan, C.N.D., Ph.D.
Iona College

Let the **prophetic voice** of Thomas Merton summon you toward the recovery of paradise in this **unique retreat** experience.

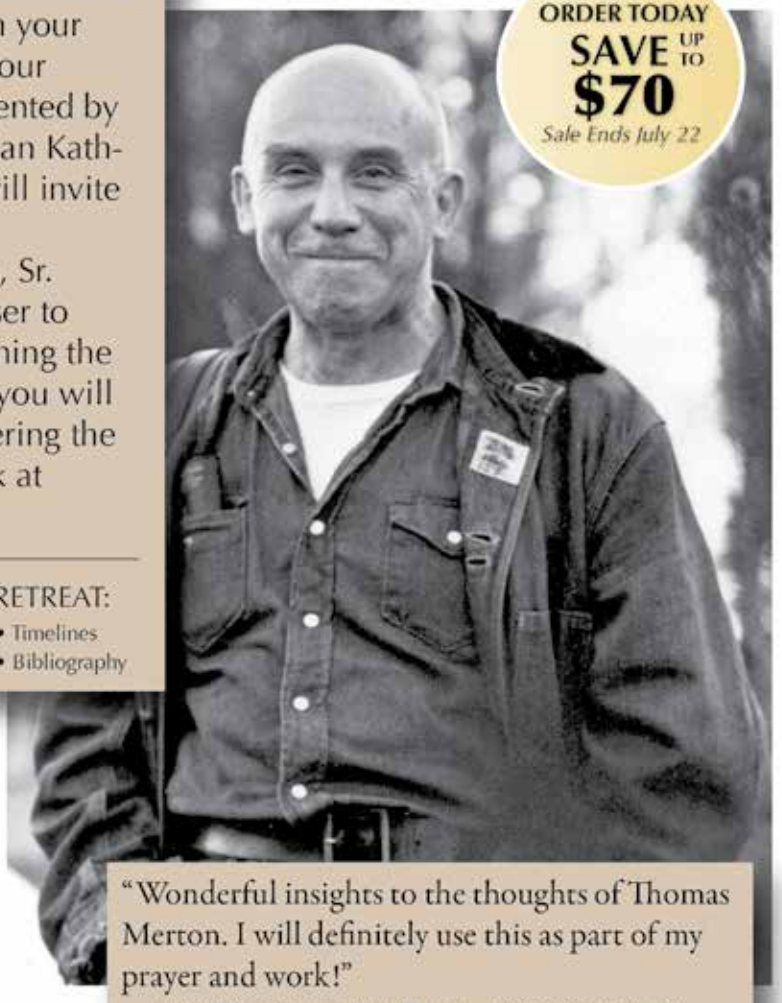
**Prophet and Mystic of Creation: On Retreat with Thomas Merton** will transform your spiritual imagination and deepen your contemplative consciousness. Presented by gifted professor, author, and musician Kathleen Deignan, these conferences will invite you to spiritual awakening.

Weaving together word and song, Sr. Deignan will lead you steadily closer to Merton's horizon of insight. In learning the practice of natural contemplation, you will come to sense the beauty of recovering the paradise of creation. This fresh look at Merton will empower you.

FREE STUDY GUIDE INCLUDED WITH RETREAT:

- Retreat synopses
- Book excerpts
- Photos & illustrations
- Review questions
- Timelines
- Bibliography

ORDER TODAY
SAVE UP TO **$70**
*Sale Ends July 22*



"Wonderful insights to the thoughts of Thomas Merton. I will definitely use this as part of my prayer and work!"
—MARY PENDERGAST, R.S.M., PAWTUCKET, RI

**6 Conferences**

1. Pieces of the Paradise Isle
2. Learning to Read the Book of Creation
3. Love for the Paradise Mystery
4. Remembering Paradise
5. The Wisdom of Paradise
6. The Prophet of Paradise

Now You KNOW MEDIA

SALE ENDS 7/22/2015

**1-800-955-3904**
www.NowYouKnowMedia.com/Retreat

Now You Know Media, Inc.
12115 Parklawn Dr., Unit B • Rockville, MD 20852

PROPHET AND MYSTIC OF CREATION:
ON RETREAT WITH THOMAS MERTON
6 CONFERENCES (25 MINUTES/CONFERENCE)
+ electronic study guide

Video DVD ~~$99.95~~ **NOW $29.95**
Audio CD ~~$65.95~~ **NOW $19.95**

*+ $3.95 Shipping & Handling*
*100% Satisfaction Guarantee*
**Coupon Code: A1865**

American lobby remain intransigent, as do their representatives. "Much depends on the American public," said Ricardo Alarcón, a diplomat and former minister of foreign affairs.

## The Art of Coexistence

There is not much Cuba can offer in exchange for the unilateral actions it wants the United States to take—in addition to ending the blockade, removing Cuba from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism and returning Guantánamo Bay, which Cuba regards as occupied territory.

"Profound differences remain," said Yuri Gala, vice-president of the North American division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, about U.S.-Cuban relations. "We have to learn the art of coexistence in a civilized manner."

Civilized coexistence with Cuba has not been the American way. But the United States has been trapped for decades by its own irrelevant policy, and Cuba is not the country it was 50 years ago. There is less state control and more personal freedom. The religious discrimination that Catholics suffered in the 1970s and '80s when they were prohibited from joining the Communist Party is gone. So is official atheism.

Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba in 1998 helped mend the fissure between the regime and the Catholic Church that opened during the revolution. The church now plays a significant role in Cuban civil society and is probably its strongest independent voice. In 2010 Cardinal Jaime Ortega of Havana met with Raúl Castro in talks that Ortega praised as marking a step forward in church-state relations and that resulted in the release of 53 political prisoners by the regime.

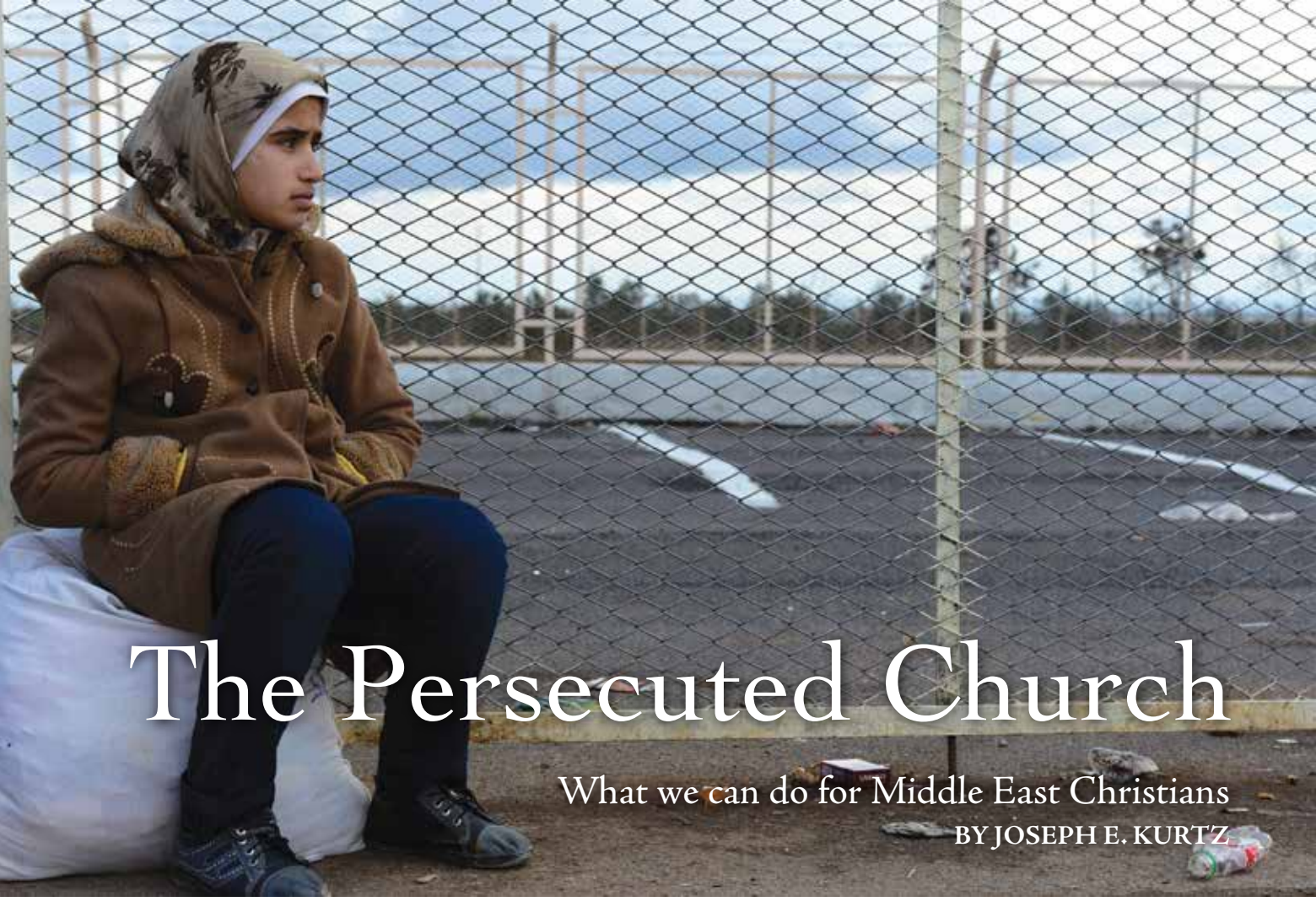
Cardinal Ortega also played a role in the recent U.S.-Cuban rapprochement, which began with a private letter from Pope Francis urging Presidents Obama and President Castro to resolve the impasse between their two countries. Though Mr. Obama had ignored a previous offer from Mr. Castro to negotiate differences, the letter and increasing pressure from other Latin American leaders on the United States to end its isolation of Cuba pushed matters forward.

Détente does not mean an end to the struggle over who controls Cuba, as statements from the two sides demonstrate. Cuba regards normalization to mean that the United States has the same kind of diplomatic relations with Cuba as it has with other countries. The U.S. government describes détente as a change in strategy, not in goals, with the desired outcome democracy and the end of one-party rule in Cuba, an attitude that strikes officials in Havana as meddling and imperialistic.

In his book *Cuban Revelations*, the journalist Marc Frank, a resident of Cuba for 20 years, notes that everyone is a dissident in Cuba, but not in the way Washington imagines. "Discontent runs deep in Cuba, where no one has made a living wage for two decades, but most Cubans are seeking change through reform and evolution of the system, not in open alliance with Washington and Miami's political establishment, which seeks regime change," he writes.

Cubans do not consider the revolution a finite event but an ongoing project, one now 56 years old. A billboard close to the airport trumpets the revolution "of the humble, by the humble, for the humble," a quote from Fidel that can sound as much Catholic as Communist. Will the revolution come to an end or continue, and if the latter, what shape will it take?

I left Cuba less certain about its future than when I arrived. The American presumptions I had brought with me had been formed without regard to Cubans' egalitarian ideals or their strong sense of nationalism and history. The old state-centered socialism is dead, done in by the Castros themselves. Will the new generation of leaders who succeed them embrace American-style capitalism, a Chinese model of market socialism or the third way Mr. Betancourt spoke of? It is a complex and pregnant moment in Cuba, and nobody can know what will happen next.



# The Persecuted Church

## What we can do for Middle East Christians

BY JOSEPH E. KURTZ

**FAR FROM HOME. A Syrian girl in Turkey awaits a transport to a refugee camp.**

From the Middle East, the very cradle of Christianity, come daily headlines that make us want to recoil in disbelief. They accompany images of ghastly beheadings, families torn apart, innocent bystanders mercilessly gunned down and homes torched for no other reason than the faith of their residents. The bigger picture is even more disturbing. More than 7 million people of all different faiths have fled violence incited by groups like the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL. As many as 700,000 of those on the run are children. Pope Francis urges all of us to immediate action: "the blood of our Christian brothers and sisters is a testimony which cries out to make itself heard by all those who still know how to distinguish between good and evil."

News of Christians in faraway lands can feel far from our own homes, but Pope Francis reminds us they are our family. "It makes no difference whether the victims are Catholic, Copt, Orthodox or Protestant. Their blood is one and the same in their confession of Christ," he says. Let us pray the world responds and joins the church worldwide in defending the faith—our own and that of Jewish, Muslim and other believers—against any who would pervert God's good name for their own violent ends.

When members of a delegation from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services visited the Middle East in 2012, they sounded the alarm as to the estimated 550,000 people forced from their native countries. Another delegation returned at the end of 2014, reporting that the number had grown to nearly four million. Now is the time for all of us to reflect upon what more the church in the United States can and must do and what each of us can do individually. We must increase our witness, our prayer and our giving.

***Witness.*** In his farewell address as U.S.C.C.B. president, my predecessor, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, described the "Via Crucis currently being walked by so many of our Christian brothers and sisters in other parts of the world who are experiencing lethal persecution on a scale that defies belief"—a scale that has only increased since. He went on to say that if our common membership in the mystical body of Christ is

**ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH E. KURTZ** *of Louisville, Ky., is the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ PROCYK RADEK

to mean anything, then their suffering must be ours as well. To make it our own, we need to make a special effort to be informed, follow the news and learn the stories of our sisters and brothers suffering for Christ today.

Earlier this year, Bishop Oscar Cantú visited Iraq to learn and then share firsthand. He spoke emotionally about a 34-year-old policeman who set out on foot with his family of eight following attacks by ISIS. He made it to relative safety after 12 days of hiding and foraging for food in the sweltering summer and now lives in a tent with his mother, wife and children. It was spacious compared with the room available to the 11 people sharing a tent nearby.

**America's bishops are working with the Holy See and with various bishops' conferences in the Middle East to see how we can best support peace efforts.**

"Whenever I got the opportunity, I assured displaced families of the prayers, support and advocacy of the church in the United States. Time and again I promised to bring back their stories and their hopes for peace," Bishop Cantú told the U.S. Senate upon his return.

We cannot be fearful of telling their stories on the dais or at the dinner table. We must reach out to national leaders and urge them to work with the international community to intervene and protect the rights of religious minorities, address political and economic exclusion that is exploited by extremists and increase humanitarian and development assistance. We will have a special opportunity to learn, pray and act during the Fortnight for Freedom (from June 24 to July 4) that invites all to "bear witness" for religious liberty at home and abroad. During this time, the liturgical calendar celebrates a series of great martyrs who remained faithful in the face of persecution: St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, St. John the Baptist, SS. Peter and Paul and the First Martyrs of the Church of Rome. (Learn more at fortnight4freedom.org.)

***Pray.*** In March the administrative committee of the U.S.C.C.B. called upon the faithful to join in prayer. "On behalf of America's Catholic bishops, we pause to listen and invite people of all faiths to join us in prayer for those facing the stark reality of religious persecution in the Middle East and elsewhere." Let us all continue—in hope—to pray for the day when we can all share in the joy and lasting peace of

Christ's resurrection. Draw near to our precious martyrs, for they speak of the love of Jesus Christ, even in moments of merciless brutality. Their faith strengthens us as we offer a bold proclamation of God's love in the public square.

***Give.*** In September, a special collection for the Middle East was held throughout the church in the United States. The faithful responded with tremendous generosity. Parishioners gave more than seven million dollars across 111 dioceses. Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association received a vital lift in their heroic efforts to respond to the needs of survivors. We must be prepared to do even more and encourage others—governments and N.G.O.'s—to redouble their efforts as the United Nations estimates current international commitments meet only 29 percent of the rising need.

***Never tire.*** In the face of daily ghastly headlines, Pope Francis encourages us, "Do not tire of repeating: Christ is risen!" As our sisters, brothers and children face a rising tide of deadly persecution, our responsibility as a nation is clear: Stop the violence and protect the vulnerable. Protect them not only from the immediate threat but also from the long-term conditions of social and economic exclusion that offer fertile soil for extremism. Pope Francis has said, "In reaffirming that it is licit, while always respecting international law, to stop an unjust aggressor, I wish to reiterate that the problem cannot be resolved solely through a military response." Any necessary military action must be conducted within the framework of a diplomatic effort that encourages governments in countries such as Iraq and Libya to guarantee minority participation, religious or otherwise, in the full life of their nations.

America's Catholic bishops are working with the Holy See and with various bishops' conferences in the Middle East to see how we can best support peace efforts. We continue to call upon the U.S. government to intensify work with its international counterparts. The young policeman needs to know he is not alone and that his family is present in our deliberations.

To witness, pray and give offers each of us an opportunity not only to unite with the suffering of our brothers and sisters today but also, in a real way, to walk in the footsteps of all the saints who have given their lives for their faith and ultimately for us—the beneficiaries of a rich spirituality born in the poverty of suffering. It is a walk we take with the universal church. There are seven Latin and Eastern rite Catholic churches and several Orthodox churches still in the land where Jesus walked. Each faces a fight for its life. Joining together in public and private prayer, rebuilding churches and welcoming refugees, we are never alone, and we will never tire.

# A Post-Traumatic Church

## Vatican I and the 'long 19th century'

**BY JEFFREY VON ARX**

The interpretation of the Second Vatican Council has been a matter of controversy since the council ended. Should the council be interpreted in continuity with the church's traditional teaching (especially from Trent and the First Vatican Council), or does it represent a significant new departure for the church? This is an important question, to be sure, about which there has been much discussion of late. But so, too, is the question of whether Vatican I represented a departure from the church's history and practice, and this is an issue which has not received as much historical attention.

Pope Pius IX

In other words, in what sense was the Roman Catholic Church, and the papacy in particular, the same institution before and after Vatican I? Prescinding from the theological conviction that the continuity of the church over time is guaranteed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, I would argue that the church in the 19th century—and the papacy in particular—was a radically different institution in the century after the French Revolution, so different as to raise the historical question of whether the church underwent a revolution of its own.

In the course of the French Revolution, the papacy came as close to becoming extinct as it ever had in its long history. There was real doubt whether there would be a conclave to elect a new pope after the death of Pius VI, who had been deposed and was a prisoner of the French revolutionary armies. Rome was occupied by French revolutionary troops, and the number of cardinals was at a historic low. And, of course, the agenda of the most radical phase of the revolution had been to eliminate Christianity itself, replacing it with the Cult of Reason. There were even many Catholics at this time, including bishops and priests, who were resigned to the possible disappearance of the papacy, wondering whether it had outlived its usefulness. It was only Napoleon's conclusion that the papacy could be of use to him in reconciling Catholics to his regime and gaining control of the church in France that led him to recognize the election of Pius VII, who was effectively his puppet and later his prisoner. Recall the stunning image in Jacques Louis David's painting of Napoleon's coronation in the Cathedral of Notre Dame where the pope sat by as a useless spectator.

Arguably, the church received the most profound shock and injury, nearly fatal, in its entire history during the revolution, and it is not too much to say that during the church's "long 19th century," to borrow a phrase from John W. O'Malley S.J., which lasted into the 1950s, the church was suffering and manifesting the symptoms of something akin to an institutional version of post-traumatic stress disorder after such a near-death experience. The radical restructuring and reorientation of the church during the course of the 19th century toward the center, around the papacy, often termed Ultramontanism (*ultramontanus* means "beyond the mountains" i.e., to Rome), was, arguably, the greatest structural revolution in the church's history and raises the historical question of the extent to which the church, and the papacy in particular, were the same institutions before and after the French Revolution.

The threat to the Catholic Church and the papacy through the 19th century was real, and the church's reaction to that threat was understandable. Indeed, the church remained threatened on all sides. On the left, secular liberals sought to reduce or eliminate the role of the church in public life and civil society (by suppressing church schools, for example, and

**JEFFREY VON ARX, S.J.,** *president of Fairfield University, is a professor of history.*

expelling religious congregations). The more radical heirs of the revolution and the socialists and communists into whom they evolved remained committed to the church's utter destruction. But the threat was also from the nationalist right. Otto von Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* was aimed directly at the Catholic Church, imposing state supervision of Catholic schools and seminaries and government appointment of bishops with no reference to Rome.

The agenda of the Italian Risorgimento was predicated upon the destruction of the temporal power of the papacy, that is, the pope's governance of the Papal States, upon which the political independence of the papacy and its position as an international actor were presumed to rest. Even the church's supposed allies among the Catholic monarchies of Europe sought to control and domesticate it, as they had done in the previous century. Pius IX's "Syllabus of Errors," so often held up to ridicule as an absurd statement of the church's stand against the modern world and progress, is certainly comprehensible against the reality of these threats from modernity.

Vatican Council I, 1869-70

## Radical Acts

The definition of papal infallibility at Vatican I did not represent the most radical act of the council, even though that definition resolved controversies over this issue at the extreme, with the pope infallible apart from and above a council. But papal infallibility has to do with doctrine and, as we know, has been invoked only once in the history of the church since Vatican I, when Pope Pius XII defined the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1950. Rather, it was the establishment of the juridical position of the pope in "Pastor Aeternus" as "ordinary and immediate" pastor of the universal church that worked a revolution in the governance and structure of the church and represented a significant departure from earlier practice.

While previously the pope had needed to work with local churches and rulers in the appointment of bishops—often as the last stop in a process when the appointment was essentially a *fait accompli* by the time it reached him—now the pope would, for the most part and increasingly, appoint bishops directly (and he could dismiss them, too). And while the definition gave significant new juridical powers to the papacy, the veneration of the pope—in his person as well as in his office—grew up initially around Pius IX, the prisoner of the Vatican, and around every pope subsequently until it reached its apotheosis in the rock star status of St. John Paul II. This exaltation of the pope gave individual popes a moral and spiritual authority and a personal popularity and recognition unlike anything that had been seen before.

The concentration of teaching authority in the hands of the pope and the centralization of administration in the Roman Curia in his name were intelligible against the background of the mortal threats the church had faced in the revolutionary era and still believed itself to face throughout the long 19th century. Centralization would facilitate quick and decisive decision making. Concentrating juridical power in the hands of the pope as ordinary and immediate pastor meant that he could impose discipline directly on bishops throughout the world and assured that the church would speak with one voice and act with unity in the face of threats. Even democrats like Cardinal Henry Edward Manning in Great Britain thought unity and discipline within the church were of the utmost importance in protecting the church and advancing its interests in a liberal, democratic state, and so he was one of the strongest advocates of the ultramontane position.

Moreover, modern means of communication and the church's ability to use those means to organize mass movements among the faithful (like devotion to the Miraculous Medal, Lourdes and Fatima) helped to spread a more unified and uniform Catholic culture. This drive to unity and uniformity influenced and revolutionized almost every aspect of the church's life. In the first instance, it transformed

PHOTO: ARRAS.CATHOLIQUE.FR

the practice of the church's magisterium from a more diffuse and decentralized consultative process involving the universities and national churches as well as the papacy, which was thought to have a final, adjudicatory authority at the end of a process of discernment, to one in which the papacy became the initiator and definer of orthodox teaching, which it then imposed from above and frequently: witness the flood of papal encyclicals from Leo XIII onwards. The efforts to eliminate theological diversity in the anti-Modernist period were a further expression of this tendency, but it continued well into the last century and arguably still exists today.

Discipline in the church was extended, in new and significant ways, over national churches, religious orders, intellectual life and seminary training, and over the political and social engagement of the faithful in the name of Catholic Action—political movements in various countries directed by the hierarchy. All were enhanced by a dramatic expansion in the reach, authority and personnel of the Vatican congregations. Historians speak of the "devotional revolution" effected in the course of the 19th century, in which the more diverse and idiosyncratic devotional life of local churches—local shrines, saints and customs—was gradually displaced by the panoply of Roman devotions that Roman-trained bishops and priests brought home with them and imposed as normative practice: novenas, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Stations of the Cross, holy hours and the cult of saints particularly favored by the papacy, like Thérèse of Lisieux and the Curé of Ars.

The ultramontane revolution transformed the church, then, from top to bottom, from a decentralized, diverse grouping of local churches in loose communion with the pope to a highly centralized, uniform, much more monolithic organization than it had ever been. In this sense, the church mirrored and imitated the great empires and national states of the 19th century, which used new means of communication and transportation to consolidate power, enforce unity and build bureaucracies. It did so, once again, out of a great sense of urgency, driven initially by the conviction that its very survival and existence were at stake.

In one of the great ironies of history, the outcome of the church's near-death experience at the beginning of the century was the emergence of an organization at the end of the century that was incomparably stronger, more united (and more monolithic), with a more triumphalist sense of its own institutional identity than it had ever possessed. Moreover, to add to the irony, church leaders managed to convince others, and even themselves, that the institution they had created was the church as it had always been from time immemorial. But what they had created was a far more decisive departure from what had gone before than what has been claimed for Vatican II by the most radical proponents of historical discontinuity. A

# The Pope Goes Home

Pope Francis returns to South America on July 6; and, consistent with his preferential option for the poor, he has chosen to visit the three poorest countries in the region: Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay.

This is his second visit to the continent of his birth since becoming pope, but the first of his own choosing. The visit to Rio de Janeiro for World Youth Day in July 2013 had been planned before his election; he respected that commitment but did it his way, with extraordinary results.

He has often said that one sees reality better from the periphery than from the center, and this eight day visit (July 5-12) takes him exactly there, to "the peripheries of the South American periphery."

A majority of the population in each country is Catholic: 85 percent of Ecuador's 15 million people, 86 percent of Bolivia's 10 million and 70 percent of Paraguay's seven million. All three have indigenous populations and experienced dictatorial or authoritarian regimes—especially Bolivia and Paraguay—but are now democratic. Francis' visit to strengthen the faith of believers in lands where popular religion thrives and where the Jesuits have a glorious history, particularly with the Reductions in the last two countries, is sparking excitement and enthusiasm.

He will arrive soon after his encyclical on ecology appears. Many things in it have direct relevance for all three countries, where economic growth has been slow and a high percentage of the population is very poor. Furthermore, oil-rich Ecuador's biodiversity is threatened. Landlocked Bolivia, with its biodiversity and varied ecosystems, suffers the consequences of deforestation in some places and needs a corridor to the sea. Paraguay is ranked as the worst country in Latin America and second worst in the world for deforestation.

Relations between church and state vary from country to country. They are easiest in Paraguay, where a former bishop, Fernando Lugo, was president (2008–12), but somewhat problematic in Bolivia. But the first Latin American pope's visit could introduce a new warmth to those ties. He will meet with the presidents of all three countries.

> Francis' visit takes him to 'the peripheries of the South American periphery.'

He arrives in Ecuador on July 5, after a 13-hour flight from Rome, accompanied by senior Vatican officials and 70 cameramen and reporters, including **America**'s Vatican correspondent. Over a million people are expected to attend each of his two public Masses here: at Samanes Park, Guayaquil, and at Quito's Bicentennial Park. On July 6 he will have lunch with the Jesuit community at Collegio Javier, Guayaquil, and on July 7 will pray in private at Quito's famous Jesuit church, the "Iglesia de la Compañía," and meet students at the Catholic University.

On July 8 Francis will land at Bolivia's international airport at El Alto, the highest in the world at 13,325 feet. But he will spend less than three hours there on the advice of his doctors, because of La Paz's altitude, 11,975 feet. That will be just enough time to meet President Evo Morales, greet the civil authorities and pray at a site near where a Spanish Jesuit priest, Luis Espinal, was assassinated in March 1980 during the military dictatorship because of his work for social justice.

From La Paz, he will travel east to Santa Cruz, where he will stay with his friend Cardinal Julio Terrazas Sandoval, the emeritus archbishop who invited him to come immediately after his election. Over the next two days, he will celebrate Mass for two million people, participate in the second World Meeting of Popular Movements, visit a reeducation center and much else.

On July 10 he is scheduled to fly to Asunción, the capital of Paraguay. He visited there twice during the military dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner (1954–89) for a meeting of Jesuit provincials (1973) and of novice masters (1980). He knows the Paraguay-Guarani people well because many of them live in the shanty towns of Buenos Aires he frequented as archbishop.

On July 11 he will visit a children's hospital and celebrate Mass at the Marian shrine of Caacupé. On his last day there, July 12, he will travel to Bañado Norte, the marshlands where many impoverished people live, and later celebrate Mass for three million people in the Jesuit field at Ñu Guazú Park. That afternoon, after attending a young people's rally on the Costanera River bank, he will fly back to Rome.

He is the second pope to come here: John Paul II visited Ecuador (January 1985), Bolivia and Paraguay (May 1988).

**GERARD O'CONNELL**

---

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

# Punctuating Our Days

## The Liturgy of the Hours recalls God's abiding presence.

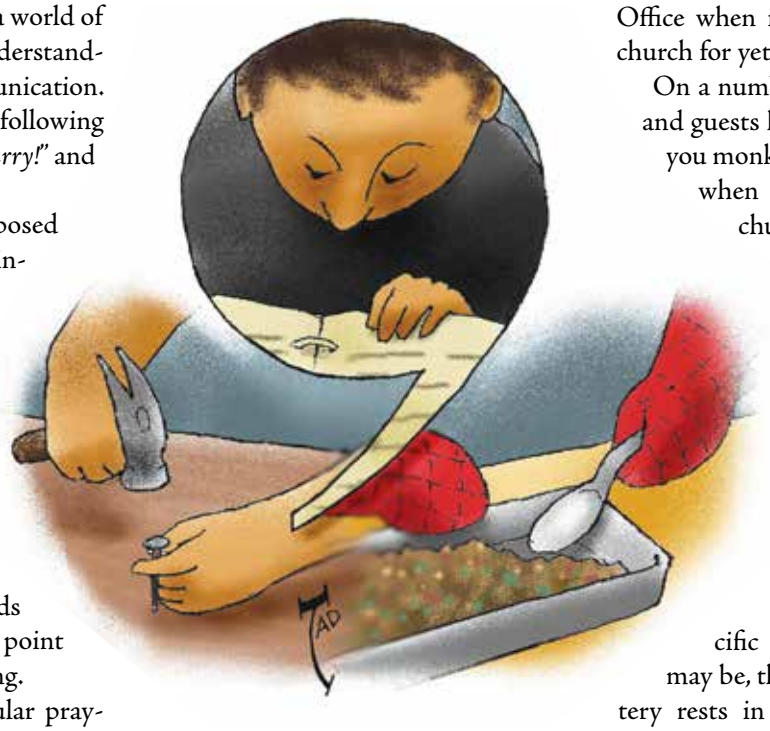
**BY FRANCIS WAGNER**

Punctuation can make a world of difference in our understanding of written communication. Consider, for example, the following sentences: "*Let's eat, Uncle Larry!*" and "*Let's eat Uncle Larry!*"

Each sentence is composed of the same words. But a single punctuation mark—in this case, a comma—dramatically changes the meaning (with much less catastrophic consequences for Uncle Larry). Punctuation, then, supplies necessary structure and meaning by interrupting the flow of words in a sentence. Such pauses point the way toward understanding.

In a similar way, the regular praying of the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours is a grace-filled gift to keep us centered and headed in the right direction. The Divine Office literally punctuates—or interrupts—the flow of the hours of the day to supply them with the structure and meaning that otherwise risk being lost amid our other activities and concerns.

The Liturgy of the Hours, like a well-placed comma, helps us to pause and recall God's abiding presence in every facet of our lives. As St. Benedict writes in *The Rule* of *Saint Benedict*, "We believe that the divine presence is everywhere.... But beyond the least doubt we should believe this to be especially true when we celebrate the divine office" (*Rule* 19:1, 2).



With this in mind, we monks at Saint Meinrad Archabbey come together five times a day for the Divine Office and Mass—and, of course, we are joined in spirit with other monks, sisters, priests, religious and laypeople throughout the world who regularly pray the Liturgy of the Hours and celebrate the Eucharist. At Saint Meinrad, we monks spend at least two hours every day in church—and more on Sundays and feast days. Sometimes, it seems as though we have just finished praying one of the hours of the Divine Office when it is time to go back to church for yet another!

On a number of occasions, visitors and guests have asked me: "How do you monks ever get anything done when you have to be back in church every few hours?" Well, I will not tell you it's easy, because it's not. Those living outside the monastery can also identify with the substantial effort required to juggle the daily demands of work, home and family life.

But whatever our specific vocation as Christians may be, the key to living this mystery rests in constantly asking ourselves, "Where is God in all this?" If we seek the Author of Life, whose Word has come among us in Spirit and truth, then we will find him not only in the composition as a whole, but in all its parts—chapters, paragraphs, sentences, phrases, words, syllables and letters, as it were.

None of this makes any sense, or is even possible, without the abiding presence of Christ, who tells his disciples: "Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). To enter into this abiding presence, Jesus encourages us to *pray always* (Lk 18:1). Additionally, he urges us to *pray with one another*: "Where two or three are gathered, there I am among them" (Mt 18:20). We know

ART: TAD A. DUNNE

**FRANCIS WAGNER, O.S.B.,** *a Benedictine monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey and a spiritual director, is the author of* Grace in the Wilderness: Reflections on God's Sustaining Word Along Life's Journey *(Abbey Press). He blogs at www.pathoflifeblog.blogspot.com.*

from several New Testament passages that the early disciples were faithful to regular communal prayer. For example: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Over time, this practice developed into what we now call the Liturgy of the Hours, which has been adopted as the prayer of the Christian church. And what were the early Christians praying when they came together? Principally, they prayed the psalms—the ancient Hebrew songs of praise, petition, thanksgiving and lament.

As a faithful Jew, Jesus prayed the psalms regularly. He quotes them often in the Gospels, and points to himself as the fulfillment of all that is expressed by the psalms—and the rest of the Old Testament (Lk 24:44). This is why, when we pray the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours (either alone or in a group), we do so not merely for ourselves but as the body of Christ interceding for the entire world (*General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*, No. 108). In the psalms, we enter into conversation not only with Christ, but *as Christ* with God the Father through the Holy Spirit. As St. Augustine wrote, in the psalms we find the voice of Christ, who "prays for us and in us and who is prayed to by us.... Let us recognize our voice in him and his voice in us."

In this way, the Word becomes flesh in a very distinct and mysterious way. God is truly present. So, it may be said that Christ's presence in the Divine Office periodically punctuates—or interrupts—the flow of the day to provide our lives with the divine understanding, direction and meaning that might otherwise be overlooked.

Praying the psalms pulls us back to the center of our being, makes us pause and remember that God is God—and we are not. And while it may be difficult to find time to pray amid our other daily concerns, or to pull ourselves away from them, it is also true that all these seemingly disparate and unrelenting activities are given their true meaning and direction through regular prayer. As far as living in a monastery goes, we monks are able to accomplish whatever we do not in spite of the daily "interruptions" of the Divine Office but because of them.

Every chapter of our lives—every paragraph, sentence and word—flows from the breath of the Author of Life, "in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). So, when we seek God above all things, all the rest finds its proper order and rhythm, just like in a well-crafted sentence—no matter how fragmented things may appear at any particular moment.

And when we prefer nothing to the Work of God (as St. Benedict termed it, *Rule* 43:3) by praying the psalms, it is God *who works on us*, sanctifying our days, writing straight on crooked lines and guiding us toward the exclamation point of eternal life.

CORPORAL WORK. The actor and producer Eduardo Verastegui prepares for a scene in his new film, "Little Boy."

CNS PHOTO/COURTESY METANOIA FILMS

FILM | JIM McDERMOTT

# SAVED BY MERCY

*The grown-up message of 'Little Boy'*

If you asked 100 people to name the biggest Christian movie or television show in the last year, many would probably name "A.D.", NBC's miniseries about the birth of Christianity after the Passion. Others might mention "St. Vincent," last fall's Bill Murray vehicle about a misanthrope with a kind heart, or "Heaven Is for Real," the 2014 film based on the bestselling book of the same name about a little boy who has a near-death experience. Undoubtedly some would point to one of the many horror films of the year—the supernatural being chocolate to Christianity's peanut butter as far as Hollywood is concerned. (Add Anthony Hopkins and you can have a genuine Hollywood s'more.)

Almost no one, I suspect, will mention the late spring release **Little Boy.** In fact, if I were a betting man I would say the hurricane that is "Avengers: Age of Ultron" has drawn so much oxygen and energy to itself that most people probably will never hear of "Little Boy," ever. And that's a crying shame, because this World War II pic about a little boy desperate to find a way to bring his father home is the Catholic film we all should see. Even knowing that Oscar season will bring Martin Scorsese's biopic "Silence" about the Catholic martyrs in Japan, I would still wager that "Little Boy" is going to be the best religious film of the year.

Pepper Busbee is an unusually tiny child with an outsized imagination. Feeding on his "Ben Eagle the Magician" comic books, Pepper has wonderful fantasies about his father and himself partnering on various adventures, always saving one another from otherwise certain doom.

When Pepper's father is drafted and becomes a prisoner of war in the Philippines, a conversation with Father Oliver, a local Catholic priest (played by the wonderful Tom Wilkinson), leads Pepper to believe that if he performs all seven corporal works of mercy (plus one), his tiny mustard seed of faith will grow to the size where he can move mountains and save his father.

I say the seven corporal works "plus one." In fact the central work of mercy of the film is not any of the standard seven, but an eighth added by the writer/director Alejandro Monteverde—to befriend the persecuted. The Japanese-American Mr. Hashimoto returns home after years in internment to find himself universally reviled. One man wants him murdered as revenge for the death of his son at Pearl Harbor. Pepper's brother repeatedly

tries to drive him out. No one supports him except Father Oliver, who insists that Pepper's journey to a mighty faith can begin only after a change of heart toward Hashimoto.

It is an interesting addition to the classic corporal works, this idea of befriending not only the sick or the imprisoned but those society chooses to persecute and oppress. Indeed, as we follow Pepper on his journey, it becomes evident that Monteverde is on to something. Whatever its justification, prejudice is a blight on human society, a cause of catastrophic horrors in our world. One cannot be merciful and show no concern for the many against whom that world discriminates.

Of course, no amount of merciful acts is likely to actually move a mountain. As Father Oliver tries to explain to Pepper, such possibilities are entirely in God's hands, not our own. And it is for Pepper to discover just how painfully mysterious God can be.

But in the film, having such wide-eyed, full-hearted faith is not naïve but powerful in its ability to change people's hearts. Through a strange coincidence, Pepper begins to believe that his work has actually given him magical powers. We see him spending days desperately trying to exercise those abilities, each effort so fierce it is painful to watch. And little by little, the people of the town, who until this point have looked upon Pepper largely with derision, are caught up in his witness—as are we.

Ninety-nine percent of religious films founder between the Scylla and Charybdis of cheesy and preachy. Either the characters are whitewashed "Leave It to Beaver" clean, or the film is just a moral in (semi-) human clothing. The very designation of many films as "religious" or "Christian" often indicates they will be dumbed down, antirational or stubbornly (if not offensively) naïve.

"Little Boy" is that rare exception that avoids the pitfalls to tell a story that is sweet, gut-wrenching and deeply spiritual. The film invites us into a wonderful contemplation of that blessed kingdom of mercy to which Jesus is calling us. It is a film to see and to savor. Perhaps it even has a mountain to move of its own: Might Pope Francis, as we move toward the Jubilee Year of Mercy, consider adding "befriending the persecuted" or "championing the oppressed" as a corporal work for the world today?

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

# Ballade of the Botanist

*For Sister Rosemary Johnson, R.S.M.*

*And a river went out of the place of pleasure to water paradise.—Gn 2:10*

*Adam…could not have inferred from the fluidity and transparency of water that it would suffocate him….—Hume*

The botany that blessed Mendel's pisum—
Has petals come to thorns, and bliss, regret—
Our parents feet found Heraclitian streams
In Eden's river, but their seeded rot
Despoiled its promised acres—this, despite
A course of graces flowing to present
Our arid minds a thought to irrigate:
We walked in gardens once—and that's the point.
Perhaps our view at large accords with Hume's—
No seed effects its fruit except to set
Starvation's stage—the blossoming of dooms
Which man must brave alone, an oak offset
Against a desert's thirst no rain could whet,
And only slick sidewinders' tongues anoint
While whispering mankind's weed-choked kismet:
"You walked in gardens once—isn't that the point?"
But bury deep such philosophic dreams
And keep in mind that we were once well met
By sacred nomenclature's nobler blooms—
Salvation's scent replaced by Adam's sweat
And thorns supplanting beauty's own rosette—
We bled the color out of Eden, bent
Its stems and broke its limbs—and all for what?
We walked in gardens once. Is that the point?
O Prince of patch and plot, who can delete
The damage done? The everything we can't
Repair, your greener thumb lets cultivate.
You walked in gardens once—and that's the point.

**JOSEPH O'BRIEN**

**Joseph O'Brien,** *a staff writer with The Catholic Times, the newspaper of the Diocese of La Crosse in Wisconsin, and a short story editor for Tuscany Press, is a member of the writing Kollektiv at Korrektivpress.com.*

# NEVER JUSTIFIABLE

Since the sentencing of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev to death at the end of the federal trial against him for his role in the Boston Marathon bombing of 2013, I have been thinking a lot about the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. I think it needs to be updated.

After expressing on social media my shock and disappointment at the jury's decision—a response shared by most residents of Boston, according to a Boston Globe poll in April 2015, which showed that 66 percent of residents favored a life sentence—I was appalled at the negative reaction I received on account of my solidarity with Pope Francis, the U.S. bishops and even many of the victims of the bombing who were against the death penalty.

Amid the predictable nonsensical or tasteless remarks common in social media were some more reasoned but nonetheless troubling comments defending the jury's decision and the government's "right" to kill a convicted terrorist. Several in favor of the death penalty pointed to the catechism to justify their opinion. The least nuanced views present the absence of an absolute prohibition of the death penalty as somehow guaranteeing the right to pursue capital punishment. More thoughtful proponents argue that it is perfectly legitimate to support capital punishment, at least in the case of Tsarnaev.

But neither argument takes into consideration the careful way in which the catechism, citing St. John Paul II, outlines the nearly inconceivable case in which the death penalty might be permissible. The catechism, which is primarily a summary instruction manual of church teaching for catechists, states that "the traditional teaching of the church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor" (No. 2267). The text continues, "Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm—without definitely taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself—the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity 'are very rare, if not practically nonexistent.'"

Church leaders should give a black-and-white answer on the death penalty.

The truth is that in many places around the world, including the United States, there are effective means to protect citizens from "unjust aggressors" like Tsarnaev. Secured in a supermax federal prison, an inmate sentenced to life without parole poses no actual threat; therefore the death penalty is, according to church teaching, completely off the table. Yet those seeking vengeance demand retribution instead of restorative justice and seem indefatigable in their clamoring for state-sanctioned killing, claiming justification from the catechism because it leaves open the smallest possibility for a justifiable circumstance.

My proposal is that church leaders give these people exactly what they want: a black-and-white answer to whether or not the death penalty is acceptable. The catechism should be updated to clearly state, in light of the criteria already established, that capital punishment today is *never* justifiable. This would not only bring the catechism more in line with the teaching of recent popes, including Pope Francis, who earlier this year said, "the death penalty is an affront to the sanctity of life and to the dignity of the human person; it contradicts God's plan for humankind and society and God's merciful justice," but it would also bring the catechism in line with itself.

The opening of the section discussing the death penalty reads: "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end" (No. 2258). In the spirit of the "seamless garment" approach to Christian ethics popularized by the late Cardinal Joseph Bernadin, we must affirm that either all life is sacred or no life is sacred. For this reason, I propose also that the catechism do away with the qualifier "innocent" when referring to human beings. While individuals may be guilty or innocent of a crime, all human life is sacred without qualification; there is neither innocent nor guilty life.

Those who commit heinous crimes deserve a just punishment, but the death penalty is anything but just. Given our circumstances, the catechism should be updated to reflect the Catholic tradition's unequivocal defense of human life. Until then, we are still far from being pro-life.

**DANIEL P. HORAN**

**DANIEL P. HORAN, O.F.M.,** *is the author of several books, including* The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton.

# RESPONSIBLE WRITERS

**MORAL AGENTS**
**Eight Twentieth-Century American Writers**

By Edward Mendelson
New York Review Books. 224p $21.95

**THERE IS SIMPLY TOO MUCH TO THINK ABOUT**
**Collected Nonfiction**

By Saul Bellow, edited by Benjamin Taylor
Viking. 544p $35

**OUR ONLY WORLD**
**Ten Essays**

By Wendell Berry
Counterpoint. 196p $24

I find it interesting when a writer who is as eloquent, longsuffering and respected among his peers as Wendell Berry becomes almost irrelevant in public discourse. He isn't trying to sell us anything. He doesn't seem concerned about his image. He doesn't scream or get arrested or perform. And we don't even have to tune him out; his writing goes out on a frequency that is rarely even heard.

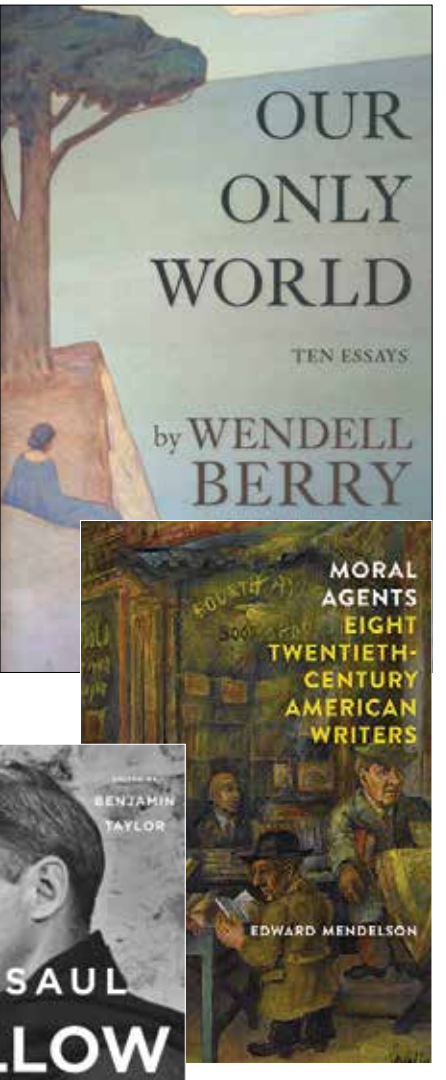
Take, for instance, what he has to say in his newest collection of essays, *Our Only World*, about the Boston Marathon bombing of 2013. After unequivocal sympathy with those who were injured or lost a loved one, he adds: "What I am less and less in sympathy with is the rhetoric and the tone of official indignation. Public officials cry out for justice against the perpetrators. I too wish them caught and punished. But I am unwilling to have my wish spoken for me in a tone of surprise and outraged innocence." And this is where, if anyone thought Berry's writing important, they would be protesting: "The event in Boston is not unique or rare or surprising or in any way new. It is only another transaction in the commerce of violence."

Just now, as I write this, there is news from the trial of the Boston bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, and even public radio's accounting of it sounds a cynical tone. Tsarnaev's Russian relatives were in Boston testifying for the defense, and his aunt wept uncontrollably in court while talking of the promising boy he'd been. She told of his childhood, when he never hurt anybody, and she remembered how he cried while watching "The Lion King." Tsarnaev cried, too, and then blew a kiss to his family from his place in the dock. Prosecutors were unhappy with this development. They need him to be a monster so they may more easily convince jurors to execute him for his crimes.

But Wendell Berry is only a writer, and gone are the days when writers influence public opinion in the way that only celebrities and politicians do today. Writers are no longer counted among those listened to on matters of moral importance. What brought about this change? Half a century ago James Baldwin, W. H. Auden, Norman Mailer, Hannah Arendt, Arthur Miller, Flannery O'Connor and Saul Bellow were on the covers of magazines, interviewed on television. *They* were celebrities, and they both wrote and spoke about issues of moral importance. I think there are a few reasons.

For one, we have seen a sanctifying and fetishizing of the private and the personal. We listen only to those who are more exposed than we are. We want to know all there is to know about where people grew up, what they wear, whom they sleep with, their gendering and sexuality, their feuds, their friends. Only when someone has submitted to this sort of scrutiny and exposure do we trust him or her. Then, what we're trusting is our own scrutiny and opinion of the scrutinized, not the person. This is why Facebook seems real and reality television shows seem normal.

All of this attention to private and personal matters comes in the wake of what used to be an assumed need for shared cultural literacy. That has vanished, but it would seem to be impossible anyway. And what's too large to grasp we easily replace with small, private, mostly



irrelevant but easily relatable details.

We also live in a time when images have replaced words as most important, accessible and appealing. This has happened quite recently. People were predicting that film would replace books a century ago, but it took technology most of that century to make film/video easily accessed, streamed, copied, created and shared to the point where images have won the day. To the victor go the spoils, and what's left behind (writing and reading) seems boring. Those who traffic in words are among the most boring.

Then there is the way in which culture has become a commodity. Was it 40 years ago now that Robert Haft, the chairman of Crown Books, shouted from a full page ad on the back of The New York Times Book Review: "Books Cost Too Much"? That was The beginning of the end of books and authors as purveyors of culture. Books became commodities just like every other form of "entertainment"—and to make them entertainment was to force them to play a game that books were sure to lose.

As a result, old ways of lionizing "the writer" disconnect with nine out of 10 people today. Even to my ear, as someone who laments all of what I have just written above, there is something indolent in how certain writers talk about creating "literature." I'm thinking, for instance, of Richard Ford in the introduction to his collected Bascombe novels (Everyman's Library, 2009). Ford admires Thoreau, who believed "a writer is a man who, having nothing to do, finds something to do," and Northrop Frye, who wrote: "Literature is a disinterested use of words. You need to have nothing riding on the outcome." Even in the quiet of my study, if I believed such romanticism, I would never say so out loud. I want writers to matter.

Fifty years ago one would never have accused Saul Bellow or Norman Mailer of indolence or disinterestedness. They aimed to do much more than entertain. But where are the writers today who influence us with their moral compass or with their grasp of what is necessary, as opposed to what is expedient?

Edward Mendelson's new book, *Moral Agents*, gets at these issues, but does not do it very well. He looks longingly back to the days when writers were "moral agents" but then he defines morality too broadly. "Morality…is a matter of the inner logic of actions and consequences, not of precepts and rules." So any action, behavior or opinion can be described as moral.

Mendelson is actually lamenting the loss of public intellectuals. On his list, all from the mid-20th century, are Lionel Trilling, Dwight Macdonald, Alfred Kazin, William Maxwell, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, W. H. Auden and Frank O'Hara. "By the early twenty-first century, the American public intellectual had largely disappeared," he opines, perhaps ignoring David MacCollough, David Brooks, Wendell Berry, Marilynne Robinson and Jonathan Franzen? And those are just the ones known first as writers.

Mendelson doesn't make his argument any easier when he is difficult to read. I thought similarly when I read *Early Auden* and *Later Auden*

years ago, books for which Mendelson was rightfully lauded. But in his books, ideas are often provoked and veiled, more than revealed and explained, like bait held just above the water's surface. For example, I'm still puzzling over "the inevitable melancholy of unfreedom."

The writers for whom I feel most sorry are the ones who go out of their way to try to influence public opinion through literature. Moral intentionality isn't enough, as one learns when reading the biography of most any of our most important novelists. Saul Bellow was no saint—or mensch—and yet the new collection of his nonfiction, *There Is Simply Too Much to Think About*, is a rewarding reminder of how novelists used to try. And be heard.

Do you remember when Jonathan Franzen refused to appear on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" to discuss his novel being picked for her famous book club? There was a serious writer refusing to be commodified. It didn't go well for him. Even literary critics like Harold Bloom of Yale and Lewis Lapham of Harper's magazine called Franzen names in print. Most of all, there was a lack of generosity and a sort of prissiness in Franzen's refusal.

Which leads me back to Wendell Berry. Has there ever been an American writer who was more generous? That also means he is unsuited to media exposure. Berry doesn't speak in sound bites. He doesn't rant. He is kind. And then there are the boots worn without irony. Which is why when he writes, "We have formed our present life, including our economic and intellectual life upon specialization, professionalism and competition"—it isn't that he is immediately called a Marxist (we would have done that 50 years ago), we just don't pay any attention at all. And we should.

---

**JON M. SWEENEY** *is a critic and author of many books including* Inventing Hell *(Jericho), and editor of the new collection,* Phyllis Tickle: The Essential Spiritual Writings *(Orbis). He lives in Vermont.*

**BOOKS** | MARTIN E. MARTY

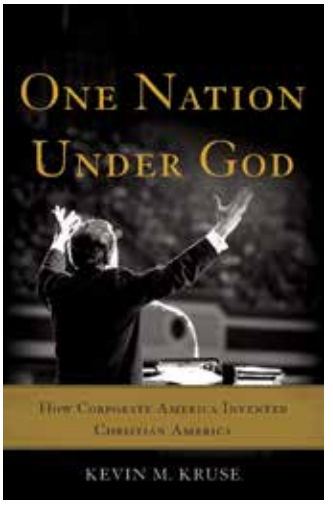
# FOR-PROFIT FAITH

## ONE NATION UNDER GOD
### How Corporate America Invented Christian America

By Kevin M. Kruse
Basic Books. 384p $29.99

If the United States Constitution is determinative in the life of the United States, to conceive of the nation as being "under God" has to be not a matter of law but of sentiment. Were it a matter of law, civil authorities would have to penalize that large minority of citizens who do not believe in God or who do not want to be measured by the formal invocations of God in public life. To say that the "under God" claim is a matter of sentiment is not to downgrade it but to locate it as extra-Constitutional.

Through the years since the Constitution was adopted, there have been many attempts to take the sentimental notion that this is a nation under God and make it a legal claim. Not winning constitutional changes, many interests and individuals have looked for ways through which they can privilege faith and even particular faiths. In a fresh and revealing re-examination of the oft-studied career of the phrase "under God," Professor Kevin M. Kruse of Princeton chooses not to concentrate on the canonical founding fathers, though they receive their due. Instead he focuses on the battles over the issue in and after the mid-20th century "Revival of Religion."




The late conservative legal scholar Walter Berns contended credibly that the founders gave no legal place to "the establishment of religion," but they did "establish commerce." Many of their successors have dealt with commerce religiously. Kruse focuses on a major episode on this subject, as his subtitle makes clear: "How Corporate America Invented Christian America." Corporate leaders—most of them Protestant—saw the advantage of promoting religion as the seal on national life and, during the Cold War, the necessary weapon against Communism. Also, in those mid-century years they celebrated "free enterprise." In many texts that Kruse cites and events that he recounts, Christian America became an object of what Paul Tillich called "ultimate concern."

Kruse does not attack the sincerity of everyone in the "under God" movements, but he does show how exploitable many religious people were in their efforts. It inspired citizens and tempted corporate leaders and sympathetic clergy to find advantage in the fusion of their religion with the enterprise system. One telling snapshot: Dwight Eisenhower, the first president to be baptized after he was elected, knew he had to join some church or other to be part of his religious America. However, he did not want to offend anyone with his choice, so he asked the Presbyterian pastor who baptized him to be discreet and vague about his commitment. The pastor could not resist publicizing the event. So? President "Ike" screamed at his press secretary, "You go and tell that goddam minister

that if he gives out one more story about my religious faith I won't join his goddam church."

A cooled-off Eisenhower later did join that congregation, to great acclaim among church-going Americans. His inauguration ceremonies were church-like. His successor, Richard Nixon, eager to be indiscreet, turned the White House into a virtual church on Sunday mornings and invited in the prominent preachers who welcomed the attention they received as they preached variations on the gospel of commerce. Kruse traces how this gospel took many forms. His stress throughout on "corporate America" is more than validated. Corporate interests—he names the huge companies and coalitions—subsidized, advertised, publicized and supported "under God" endeavors. The evangelist Billy Graham was the focal clerical figure, though he later gained some perspective and explicitly regretted his regular forays into overt political actions, including some during his embrace of Richard Nixon. Other Protestants, like Norman Vincent Peale and the less known but immensely powerful cleric James Fifield, with his Spiritual Mobilization campaign, along with lay celebrities like comedian Bob Hope, were in the advance guard.

For all his numerous devastating and delightful narratives and quotations, Kruse does not deliver a heavy ideological message. Note to critics: his line is not Marxist. He lets thoughtful and virtuous promoters of the "under God" movements state their own case. The towering critical theologian of the period was Reinhold Niebuhr, author of *The Irony of American History*. Kruse's book is a deft elaboration on the irony of the corporate involvement in the Christian America promotion: Supporters, be they of good or ill will, converged on the idea that they were producing or re-producing a nation united "under God." Frustrated in their attempts to change the Constitution, they had to settle for the insertion of "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. Yet, as the author makes clear, they were, ironically, producing a new and enduringly conflicted and polarized America.

Not long after the era of Eisenhower, the nation was to see the rise of militant religio-political fundamentalisms, the Moral Majority, the Christian anti-Communism Crusade and other causes that contended that any disagreeing fellow-citizens had to be rejected as enemies who did not belong and who were not acting "under God" but against God.

Kruse spends less time than he might have on other religious movements of the period. These were the prime years of the National Council of Churches, a liberal voice that was also often political and, in the climate of the day, polarizing. While focusing on celebrity Protestant clerics, the author pays less attention to Catholicism, which was also learning the "Christian America" theme as it was emerging into its own mainline status and, in many cases, serving and using the instruments of corporate America in new ways. We might also have welcomed more attention to Jews, who had their own religious uses of "Corporate America" but, of course, were not promoters of the "Christian Nation." In future work Kruse might pay more attention to Christian groups left behind, most notably African-American Christians, who were still largely segregated, overlooked or looked down on by the white Protestant powers. However, the author did well to get the major "Christian Nation" cohorts to pose for this literary portrait taken during the last decades in which Protestant powers "ran the show."

**MARTIN E. MARTY,** *the Fairfax M. Cone distinguished service professor emeritus at the University of Chicago, is the author of* Under God, Indivisible, 1941–1960.

DAVID WALSH

# THE VELVET REVOLUTIONARY

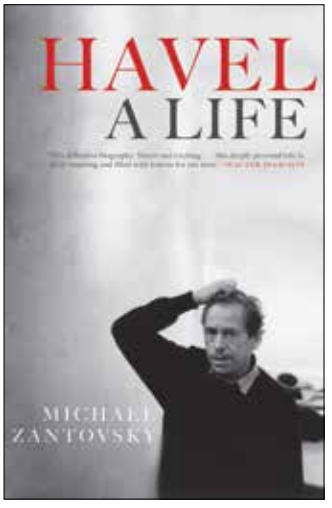
## HAVEL
### A LIFE

By Michael Zantovsky
Grove Press. 543p $30

Václav Havel, playwright, dissident and president of both Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic successively, was one of the most inspirational human beings to have walked the earth in our time. I met him once when he received a group of visiting scholars at Prague Castle, and have long been aware of the seminal role he played in the history of his own country and as a thinker who grappled with the deepest challenges of the modern world. But I had not had an opportunity to contemplate the full range of his achievements before reading Michael Zantovsky's extraordinary *Havel: A Life*. It is a book that affirms the validity of the genre of biography, for it aims not so much at compiling the details as grasping their meaning as a whole.

Through Zantovsky's skillful presentation we gain a glimpse of what it was like to be Václav Havel. It approaches the form of "the story of a soul." We are privy to that inner unfolding by which Havel became Havel. This is no mean feat and it is possible only because Zantovsky shared so closely in the great drama. As a fellow participant in the Velvet Revolution that accomplished the transition from communism to democratic rule in Czechoslovakia, Zantovsky had a front row seat. But beyond that he was a friend of Havel and went on to serve him as spokesman, press secretary and adviser during his presidential years, and eventually as Czech ambassador to the United States and the United Kingdom. Yet the work is remarkably free of any inclination toward hagiography or score-settling. It

is a biography that presents its subject in all his laudable features and in his undeniable limitations. It is almost a work of confession, as the best such exercises must be.




A large part of the credit for that unwavering scrutiny goes to Havel himself. He submitted to scrupulous self-examination, admitting his failures and often asking forgiveness for them (as he did in the last act of his presidency). Like Augustine in the *Confessions*, Havel knew that his life stood before eternal judgment. The time for self-serving excuses is past. All that remains is the sifting of the truth or falsity of what has been done. Among his last writings is a reflection on his "preparation for the last judgment, for the highest court from which nothing can be hidden." Had he lived up to the responsibilities that had been placed upon him? The question runs through Havel's life as its guiding thread. Without becoming a secular saint and while retaining many of the character flaws to which he was prone, he nevertheless found his way to the truth of existence and staked his life upon it. This was what made Havel a beacon of authority in an environment largely deprived of it. His country exercised an outsize influence on the world scene so long as it was led by so powerful a witness to truth.

Zantovsky's narrative follows the process by which Havel came to realize that responsibility for the good was his alone. Beginning with his early years and following through his military service, it recounts how the suppression of the Prague Spring of 1968 propelled him into the role of a dissident. Without seeking confrontation and wary of the excesses of a moralistic stance, Havel gradually worked out the means by which the powerless might confront the powerful (to invoke the title of his most famous essay). The opportunity came when the Helsinki Accords made the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia signatories, along with the Western states, to a treaty that included the pledge to uphold human rights. Havel and his associates realized that they possessed a legal wedge by which to open a space for freedom. Thus was born the Charter 77 document (after the year) whose individual signatories demanded that their government uphold the guarantees to which it had recently bound itself. Leaving behind the fantasy of "Socialism with a human face" of the Prague Spring, the Chartists were inexorably pointed toward the full recognition of liberty of the person as the only

adequate basis for humane government. After multiple arrests and interrogations, Havel eventually served five years in prison. Others, including the philosopher Jan Patočka, lost their lives.

Throughout it all Havel was buoyed by his involvement with the theater, especially in its avant garde and absurdist modes. A guiding inspiration was the famous Czech novelist Franz Kafka, whose depiction of a man arrested and tried for a crime of which he is never informed seemed uncannily close to the world Havel inhabited. His response was to invoke the shade of Kafka and attempt a recovery of meaning in an absurdly constituted universe. Havel's own plays often take the irreconcilable contradictions of political and bureaucratic mandates as their principal theme. Echoes of such famous satires as *Catch-22* and *The Good Soldier Švejk* abound. The plays were only occasionally performed in his home country but met constant success abroad, thereby also alleviating an otherwise precarious economic existence. Western audiences saw them as part of the theater of the absurd with which they were already familiar in the work of Harold Pinter, Samuel Beckett and others. While his plays were more political, Havel took as his theme the situation of modern man adrift in a universe no longer transparent. In line with the presentation of the city to itself in Greek tragedy, contemporary theater seems in Havel's hands to play a similar role. The dramatist assumes a public responsibility.

But the truth that could only be presented indirectly through the clash of characters could also be meditated upon more directly. Havel followed this discursive path in a series of luminous essays and reflections that continued to the end of his life. In this genre he displayed a remarkable level of philosophical penetration. Without professional training, Havel had acquired an impressive grasp of contemporary philosophy. Echoes of Heidegger are frequent. Yet where the latter made reflection on Being primary, Havel took reflection on responsibility as his focus. Like Emmanuel Levinas, who talks about responsibility in the face of the other, Havel favored the priority of ethics over ontology. The astonishing result is that he thereby found his way back to metaphysics or an account of Being.

Without becoming a believer, Havel edged ever closer to the idea of God. He knew that his own moral resolve drew upon depths beyond his individual consciousness. He sought to communicate something of that reawakening in inviting Pope John Paul II as one of the earliest visitors during his presidency. He also developed a close rapport with the Dalai Lama, who introduced him to the notion of meditation. Havel, despite his Bohemian associations, had much in common with both of them, but it was in welcoming the pope that he uttered his most memorable confession of faith. "I strongly believe that your visit will remind us all of the genuine source of real human responsibility, the metaphysical source...of the absolute horizon to which we must refer, that mysterious memory of Being in which each of our acts is recorded and in which and through which they finally acquire their value."

Of course not all of Havel's official engagements reached that exalted level. They were also interwoven with the frustrating grind of politics and its internecine battles. Yet even there, Zantovsky demonstrates, President Havel kept his focus on the larger picture. He presided over the breakup of Czechoslovakia that was mitigated only by the acknowledgment it was less acrimonious than it might have been. He was crucial in promoting the expansion of NATO membership to include the countries of Eastern Europe, and he paved the way for their accession into membership in the European Union. Strategically these were initiatives of lasting significance for the continent. Havel understood the brief historical window that made them possible, for it would later close definitively.

His considerable moral suasion was the pivotal factor that overcame endemic political inertia. In a similar way he played a pivotal role in lending support to the American-led war on terror, including the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Whatever his shortcomings as a pragmatic politician—they became increasing evident as his popularity waned—he never lost sight of the responsibility of the leader for the ultimate good of the community. Václav Havel was a true European, who understood that the project of European union could succeed only if it stood for something larger than the pursuit of self-interest. It could not define itself in opposition to America but must embrace its responsibility for the modern world it had brought into existence. His own life had exemplified the way.

**DAVID WALSH** *is a professor of politics at The Catholic University of America.*

# No Delight in Death

**THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JUNE 28, 2015**

Readings: Wis 1:13–15, 2:23–24; Ps 30:2–13; 2 Cor 8:7–15; Mk 5:21–43

*"God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living" (Wis 1:13)*

God is for us and for life. God, after all, "did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living." Death is our enemy, and God has joined with us to battle against it. The Gospel of Mark invites us to see how God is fighting for us through the stories of a Jewish woman and a Jewish girl on the cusp of maturity.

Jairus is a leader in the synagogue and his daughter is near death. He acknowledges Jesus' power over death by falling at his feet and begging him "repeatedly" to come and heal his child. Jairus had faith that Jesus could heal his daughter and says: "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." Jesus responds to his appeals and follows him.

As he is leaving, though, a woman in the crowd waylays him. She "had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years." Like Jairus, she was desperate; and her scene now comes into the foreground, leaving Jairus and his ailing daughter in the background.

Mark uses this technique often in his Gospel. He cuts away from a scene, introduces another scene, and then completes the first scene. Biblical scholars call this a "sandwich technique," with the two stories offering clues as to how to interpret each in light of the other. The story of Jairus and his daughter is not being abandoned; indeed, the woman with a hemorrhage will help us more fully understand it.

Jesus immediately responds to the suffering woman's entreaty, for the moment she touches him she is made well, and though a crowd is pushing against Jesus, he senses the power of her faith, which elicited the healing. When Jesus asks, "Who touched me?" she acknowledges that it was she and, like Jairus, "fell down before him." Jesus says, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

As her story ends, some members of Jairus's house come to tell him to send Jesus away because another daughter, his daughter, has died. Jesus overhears the conversation, though, and tells them, "Do not fear, only believe" (5:36). The translation of the verb *pisteuo* as "believe" is misleading, though, for it has the same root as the noun for "faith," *pistis*, just used earlier with the woman with a hemorrhage. The verb should be translated "only have faith." Jesus is asking Jairus to maintain the faith he had when he fell before Jesus and begged him to help, the same faith the woman had just shown when she was healed. But Jairus' daughter is not merely bleeding, she is dead. What faith is sufficient over death?

When Jesus arrives at Jairus' home, people are understandably crying and wailing loudly at the death of the girl. Jesus appears almost to be mocking them when he asks the people why they are crying and claims, "The child is not dead but sleeping." The people laugh at him, but Jesus puts everyone except the girl's parents and three apostles out of the house. He grasps the dead girl's hand and speaks to her in Aramaic, "*Talitha cum*," which means, "Little girl, get up!" The girl, who we are now told is 12 years old, does get up and begins to walk.

The woman healed and the girl raised have some things in common: They are female; they are both called daughter; and they are linked by the number 12. The number is a sign of the restoration of the 12 tribes of Israel at the end of time, a sign of the Messiah and the eschaton. Israel is also known as the daughter or even the bride of God (Hos 2:19–21). In these healings, Jesus shows that he has come to bring daughter Israel to health and full life.

The healings that connect these daughters of Israel are signs of the spiritual wholeness and the destruction of death that the Messiah brings. And since we know that God "does not delight in the death of the living," we know that new life for the restored people of Israel was a sign of the offer extended to the whole world. Wherever death comes to destroy, faith in Christ's healing power is sufficient, even over death.

**PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE**

Reflect on this girl and this woman. How has God restored you to life?

ART: TAD A. DUNNE

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

# New Creation

**FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JULY 5, 2015**

Readings: Ez 2:2–5; Ps 123:1–4; 2 Cor 12:7–10; Mk 6:1–6

*"When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10)*

If you want to be transformed by the Messiah, the first step is to recognize the Messiah in your midst. This means being ready to encounter the Son of God wherever you are and whatever time it is. This means inclining not just your ear for God's voice, but your heart for God's presence.

During the time of the prophet Ezekiel, God spoke to him, saying, "I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day." God claimed the people were "impudent and stubborn" but that they would know that a prophet had been sent to them, if not when the call of repentance was given, then sometime in the future.

But hard hearts and crooked ways are not just something in the past. What Ezekiel found in his own day is precisely what we find today in our own hearts. Will we listen, hear and do what is necessary when God speaks?

An essential aspect to both hearing God and then doing God's will is humility, for often God is speaking to us things we do not want to hear and telling us things we would rather not do. Jesus in his own hometown faced a lack of humility, with people unwilling to open themselves up to the will of God. Mark tells us that Jesus "could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them." The reason for this was their "unbelief," which in Greek is *apistia*, "lack of faith." What Jesus explains as "lack of faith" might also be described as unwillingness to acknowledge God's will and then to cooperate with it. If we refuse to respond, there is little God can do.

The apostle Paul offers us another picture, that of a man convinced he was doing God's will when he persecuted the earliest disciples of Jesus, acting as a man of violence and anger to impose his will on a way he did not understand. But when Saul was struck by the presence of the risen Jesus, he changed his ways. As stunning as his encounter with the risen Lord was, it was still incumbent on Paul to acknowledge it was the Lord and to change radically his own ways.

And what changed most profoundly with Paul was his humility, his willingness to repent of his past persecutions and to admit to a past that shamed him. The genuineness of his humility is seen most clearly in his readiness to go from persecutor to persecuted, to suffer all things for the word of God. For in light of the crucified one, life was no longer about imposing Paul's will. It was about hearing and following the will of God, whose Son had transformed him.

Jesus told Paul in the context of one of his revelations, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." Each of these claims, however, required sacrifice on the part of Paul: to accept God's grace is to let go of our own ways and desires; to believe that power is made perfect in weakness is to accept that we are indeed weak and powerless. This means listening for God but also doing what God desires even when we would rather not follow.

What is more is that Paul heard God's call, accepted God's grace and lived out God's powerful weakness in his own life. For though Paul experienced these overwhelming revelations of God's radiant presence, of the voice of God speaking to him, he was willing to be "content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ."

We too, even today, can experience the risen Lord in our midst if we attend to him, even if our experiences are not as overwhelming as Paul's conversion or subsequent revelations. We too, still today, are called to be open to God's word and to hear it. We too must have faith no matter the circumstances in which we are called, or to which we are called, even though we might prefer an easier path. For in our humility comes our transformation to greatness in imitation of our Lord: "For whenever I am weak, then I am strong."

**JOHN W. MARTENS**

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Place yourself with Jesus on his return to his hometown. Are you willing to be transformed by Christ in your midst?

America (ISSN 000-7049) is published weekly (except for 13 combined issues: Jan. 5-12, 19-26, April 13-20, May 25-June 1, June 8-15, 22-29, July 6-13, 20-27, Aug. 3-10, 17-24, Aug. 31-Sept. 7, Dec. 7-14, 21-28) by America Press Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019. Periodical postage is paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Circulation: (800) 627-9533. Subscription: United States $69 per year; add U.S. $30 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. $69 per year for international priority airmail. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, P.O. Box 293159, Kettering, OH 45429.

# A BOLD EXPRESSION OF YOUR FAITH

HAND-CRAFTED IN SOLID STAINLESS STEEL

HAND-SET WITH A GENUINE BLACK SAPPHIRE

ION-PLATED 24K-GOLD ACCENTS

ENGRAVED ON THE REVERSE WITH THE BIBLE VERSE


A CUSTOM JEWELRY EXCLUSIVE FOR THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE

## STRENGTH IN GOD

### MEN'S CROSS PENDANT

The sacred cross has always been a source of strength for those who believe, forever reminding us of God's sacrifice and the power of His presence in our lives. Now, we offer a distinctive new jewelry creation that presents this enduring Christian symbol along with a classic wrapped cable design in the *"Strength in God" Men's Cross Pendant.*

Hand-crafted of solid stainless steel, prized for its strength and durability, the pendant features a magnificent cross in raised relief at the very center, ion-plated in 24K gold and set with a black sapphire. Bordering the pendant and accenting the bail is a classic cable design. The reverse side is engraved with the Bible verse, "I can do all things through God who gives me strength"—Philippians 4:13, and a 24" stainless steel chain completes the look.



### A Remarkable Value... Available for a Limited Time

Complete with a jewelry pouch, gift box and Certificate of Authenticity, this dramatic pendant is an exceptional value at just $79*, payable in four easy installments of $19.75. To reserve yours, backed by our unconditional 120-day guarantee, send no money now; just fill out and mail the Priority Reservation today! But hurry... this is a limited-time offer!

**www.bradfordexchange.com/19799**

**LIMITED-TIME OFFER**

*Reservations will be accepted on a **first-come, first-served basis**. Respond as soon as possible to reserve your "Strength in God" Men's Cross Pendant.*

**RESERVATION APPLICATION** **SEND NO MONEY NOW**

THE BRADFORD EXCHANGE JEWELRY

9345 Milwaukee Avenue · Niles, IL 60714-1393

**YES.** Please reserve the **"Strength in God" Men's Cross Pendant** for me as described in this announcement.

*Plus a total of $8.98 shipping and service. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery after we receive your initial deposit. All sales subject to product availability and order acceptance.

Signature

Mrs. Mr. Ms.

Name (Please Print Clearly)

Address

City State Zip

E-Mail (optional)

**01-19799-001-E39411**

# GEORGE W. HUNT, S.J., PRIZE

*For Excellence in Journalism, Arts & Letters*

The Boards of Trustees of America Media and the Saint Thomas More Chapel and Center at Yale University are pleased to announce that Dr. Philip J. Metres III is the inaugural recipient of the George W. Hunt, S.J., Prize for Excellence in Journalism, Arts & Letters. Dr. Metres will receive the $25,000 prize at a reception to be held at the Saint Thomas More Chapel and Center in September, at which Professor Metres will also deliver an original lecture that will be published as the cover story in a subsequent issue of *America.*

The Hunt Prize was established in 2014 through the generosity of Mr. Fay Vincent Jr. in memory of his long-time and cherished friend, George Hunt, S.J., the longest-tenured editor in chief of *America* magazine. The prize is awarded to writers under the age of 45 who display a Catholic imagination throughout their works.

A profile of Dr. Metres may be found at: americamedia.org.

America
THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

Saint Thomas More
The Catholic Chapel & Center at Yale University