

# America

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## God and the Candidates

THE FAITH LIVES OF HILLARY CLINTON AND DONALD J. TRUMP

MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN

In every election cycle some politician tells voters that “this is the most important election in a generation.” Yet it’s rarely true. Most elections are not that dramatically consequential. More often than not, our national elections do not produce lasting political realignments or tectonic shifts in the nation’s strategic priorities. There are exceptions, of course: 1932 and 1980 come to mind.

This year could also prove to be an exception to the rule. It should be clear by now that the two major-party presidential nominees have dramatically different visions for this country. Depending on whom America chooses, then, 2016 could prove to be a turning point. At the very least, it will prove to be an important election for the generation Mr. Trump and Mrs. Clinton represent.

If Bill Clinton was the first baby boomer to occupy the oval office, either Mrs. Clinton or Mr. Trump may very well be the last. So the faith profiles we offer in these pages (Mrs. Clinton’s appears in this issue; Mr. Trump’s will appear in a future issue) have to be read in light of the peculiar religious experiences of the postwar generation. “The kinds of religion that the baby boomers got was not like the religions of their parents or grandparents,” writes Kenneth L. Woodward in *Getting Religion: Faith, Culture, and Politics From the Age of Eisenhower to the Era of Obama*. During the boomers’ formative years, “Americans witnessed an unexpected exfoliation of religious belief, behavior and belonging” that paralleled “the cultural and political upheavals that convulsed American society as a whole.”

Mrs. Clinton’s journey, however, was different. At a time when many of her peers were abandoning the religious commitments they had inherited, Mrs. Clinton’s devotion to her Methodist faith only deepened. As Michael O’Loughlin reports, Mrs. Clinton’s church is “integral to how she lives her

life and the decisions she makes.” That sets her apart, not only from her own generation but from the generation coming of age today. “Institutional religion is experiencing a long overdue winnowing effect,” writes Woodward. “American ‘belongers-but-not-believers’ and the vague ‘believers-but-not-belongers’ are properly identifying as Nones,” folks who have no institutional affiliation at all. For a new generation, “religion has become progressively less relevant to their own self-identity.”

By his own account, Mr. Trump has enjoyed “a good relationship with the [Presbyterian] church over the years. I think religion is a wonderful thing,” he’s said. At the same time, Mr. Trump’s faith commitments, like those of most of his generational peers, are still evolving. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, said in June that Mr. Trump had recently accepted a personal “relationship with Christ,” one that is more characteristic of evangelicalism. “I believe he really made a commitment, but he’s a baby Christian,” Mr. Dobson said.

No one, of course, should vote for either of these candidates simply because they are this or that sort of Christian. We have no religious tests for public office. Still, the faith lives of both of them offer clues to their general temperament and character. It’s also true that if we want to know where the next generation is headed, then we need to look whence they came. “Every new generation,” writes Woodward, “inhabits social structures created by their elders. If the young no longer understand themselves in relation to these inherited social institutions, neither do these institutions support, in the ways they once did, basic social needs.” The question then is what will take the place of the institutions and commitments largely abandoned by the boomers? How we answer that question could indeed make this the most important election in a generation.

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James Martin, S.J., spoke with the head of **Georgetown's working group on slavery**. Plus, a new microsite dedicated to the church's newest saint, **Mother Teresa of Calcutta**. More digital highlights on page 17 and at [americamagazine.org/webfeatures](http://americamagazine.org/webfeatures).



### Meet the Press

The first of three presidential debates this fall is scheduled for Sept. 26, which is 40 years and three days after Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford established a tradition that no major party candidate has since dared to skip. The debates are more important than ever, as political candidates increasingly avoid tough questions from journalists. As of the end of August, Hillary Clinton has not held a single formal press conference this year. Chats with the genial hosts of late-night comedy programs are hardly a substitute. Mrs. Clinton's aversion to unplanned questions does not inspire confidence that she would highly value the public's right to know what its government is doing.

As for Donald J. Trump, he has proven that talking off the top of one's head is not a reassuring habit in a national leader. Mr. Trump likes to give press conferences (17 this year through August, according to his campaign), but he is shockingly unprepared for them, making what FactCheck.com has called "false and misleading statements." In one instance he criticized Democratic vice-presidential nominee Tim Kaine's record as governor of New Jersey. Mr. Kaine was the governor of Virginia.

The presidential debates are about the only occasions left in which the major party nominees face sustained questioning about how they would govern. Sometimes they include frivolous topics or attempts at "gotcha" moments, but it is not unreasonable to expect someone who proposes to lead the free world to handle such situations diplomatically. This year especially, we are anxious to find out whether the candidates can engage in the give-and-take with journalists that is essential in a functioning democracy.

### Step Up on Syrian Refugees

On Aug. 29, the Obama administration welcomed the 10,000th Syrian refugee into the United States, hitting a self-imposed target for 2016. Many will note that the number of Syrian refugees accepted for resettlement remains exceedingly small. Indeed the United States can and should do more.

But realizing this first commitment remains an achievement for the administration. It suggests that the United States, recognizing the enormity of the crisis in the region, is willing to do its part. The program also managed to proceed against significant political headwinds as opposition to Syrian resettlement became a rhetorical go-to this election cycle. Millions of people are leaving Syria because of a brutal civil war and the rampages of the Islamic State. As August ended, thousands of refugees

were pulled from the Mediterranean, evidence that little progress has been made in reducing the desperate flight, discouraging the cruelty of human traffickers or establishing safe avenues of escape for the people engulfed by the violence.

Larger numbers of Syrian refugees will have to be resettled going forward. That will take political mettle as critics of the effort continue to promote the erroneous view that welcoming Syrian refugees puts American lives at risk. No program is foolproof, but few immigrants to the United States will be as thoroughly vetted as these Syrians seeking asylum. In fact, the vetting process for immigrants is far tougher than most of its critics know. It remains a Christian duty to call on U.S. leaders to join other powers in responding as generously as possible to this ongoing humanitarian catastrophe.

### Planning for Bigger Families

American women are having fewer children than at any other time on record, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in August. Since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2007, the fertility rate in the United States has decreased by more than 10 percent to a new low of 59.8 per 1,000 women, or about 1.8 children per woman. Yet according to a 2013 Gallup poll, what Americans consider to be the ideal number of children has remained stable at around 2.6 since the 1970s.

A new poll from *The Economist* shows Americans are not alone in undershooting their ideal family size. In 11 of the 19 countries polled—at various levels of development—parents wanted more children than they expected to have. Financial pressures were the most common explanation given for the mismatch. The survey also found that those who had more children than their ideal seldom cited lack of access to birth control as the reason for overshooting—and most were just as happy or even happier with their "extra" kids.

Regrettably, family planning in the context of foreign aid has long been synonymous with contraception. It operates under the assumption that mothers in poor countries must limit their family size in order to reap the rewards of the globalized economy. Yet the experience in the United States, as well as demographic and economic "success stories" like China and Mexico, suggests that market demands may be setting those limits more than the desires of couples. This is exactly backward. Helping families prosper means helping them feel secure in their ability to have, not just avoid, children.

# ‘Tough on Crime’ Doesn’t Pay

Crime is an easy target for outrage; it has no defenders. But all too often, the easiest way to signal opposition to crime is to call for ever harsher and less effective measures against criminals. Especially in a campaign season, politicians are only too ready to succumb to this temptation. The rhetorical exploitation of fear for political gain, often against better empirical evidence, is currently blocking action on criminal justice reform despite significant bipartisan consensus that it is necessary, possible and critically important.

Encouraging the belief that the primary way for a society to combat crime is to punish criminals more severely leads to bad policy and sometimes to even more crime. It abandons our collective moral responsibility on many levels, both for the criminals it fails to rehabilitate and reconcile with society and for the communities and families left scarred by their absence. For Christians, treating criminals principally as enemies fails to heed the words of the one who said, “I was in prison and you visited me.”

“Tough on crime” rhetoric became prominent in the 1960s, exploited by politicians and cheered by voters, often with thinly veiled racial or other social slurs. Along with the war on drugs, it resulted in mandatory sentencing, zero tolerance and “three strikes” policies that swelled the prison population. At the same time court systems were swamped with cases, increasing the incentive for plea bargains and with that the disproportionate power of prosecutors. Budgets were exhausted by the cost of incarceration, often leading to cuts in programs for the rehabilitation and education of prisoners.

Through the years, saner voices have pointed out the inconsistencies, the inequities and the raw injustice of some of these policies. A number of states are presently working to reform their criminal justice systems. In a blog post for *America* last year (9/23/15), Robert David Sullivan noted that in 2014 “at least 30 states enacted reforms to reduce sentences or provide alternatives to prison. These changes are not entirely altruistic. Taxpayers stand to save millions of dollars when fewer people become wards of the state and when fewer ex-convicts engage in behavior that sends them back to prison.”

Despite the moral and budgetary logic behind criminal justice reform, politicians eager to demonstrate their seriousness about crime are prone to overreaction, often exaggerating tragic incidents and localized patterns to convince voters that widespread fear is justified. Donald J. Trump, for example, has stated: “You can go to war zones in

countries that we are fighting and it is safer than living in some of our inner cities that are run by the Democrats.... We’ll get rid of crime. You’ll be able to walk down the street without getting shot.



Now you walk down the street, you get shot.” While it is true that cities like Baltimore and Chicago have real problems with gun violence and that preliminary data for 2015 show a one-year increase in the violent crime rate, the overall trend is that the United States has become considerably safer over time. Data for 2014, the last year for which the Federal Bureau of Investigation has complete statistics, showed a 6.9 percent decrease in violent crime since 2010 and a 16.2 percent decrease since 2005.

The fact that rhetoric encouraging fear works so well is all the more reason that it must be resisted and called out. Even when crime is on the upswing—as it is in some cities—the conclusion that more aggressive law enforcement is the best or only answer is unwarranted. Focusing on getting illegal guns off the street and reducing their availability would probably do more to prevent violence, at a smaller financial and moral cost, than increasing prosecution and incarceration.

While there are some hopeful signs of movement toward criminal justice reform, like the Department of Justice phasing out the use of private prisons and voters beginning to withhold support from overly aggressive prosecutors, the larger trend in Washington is not as hopeful. The Sentencing and Corrections Reform Act, which enjoyed wide support from both Democrats and Republicans, including House Speaker Paul Ryan, died in the Senate in May. Senator Tom Cotton, who helped kill the bill, said that while victims of crime deserved empathy, “As for the claim that we should have more empathy for criminals, I won’t even try to conceal my contempt for the idea.” He did, however, admit that encouraging redemption and rehabilitation of criminals could be in “our interest as a society.”

While Senator Cotton is right that rehabilitation is in society’s best interest, he is badly wrong to imagine that it can be achieved without more empathy for criminals or that such empathy undermines justice instead of tempering it with mercy. Political rhetoric that rejects attempts to improve our criminal justice system in order to maintain the false security of appearing “tough on crime” betrays us all.

## REPLY ALL

### The Class System

Re “Commending Phoebe” (Editorial, 8/29): While I am in strong favor of women’s ordination to the diaconate, I fear this will only lead to expanding the “class system” that already seems to exist in the diaconate office. Already we have a distinctive separation in the diaconate. Deacons are classified as either “transitional” or “permanent” in order to distinguish clearly those deacons preparing for ordination to the priesthood. This distinction has inevitably led to “transitional” deacons being treated quite differently in parish assignments and viewed by the church faithful as superior to “permanent” deacons. We certainly do not need women as a third class of deacons.

What the church needs is a broader assessment of the diaconate that will clearly distinguish the role as a unique office of the church, not as a stepping stone to anything. That might mitigate the theological concern about the priesthood question for women. One step at a time!

(DEACON) BARTHOLOMEW J. MERELLA  
*Bowie, Md.*

### Commission Misses the Point

The whole idea, controversy and now a commission on women deacons always seem to miss the point. Women have always served the church in a million ways. A look at any Catholic parish will show women doing the majority of service, with the exception of the priesthood itself. Women already do much of what the male deacons do. The problem is not service; the problem is power and authority. The male hierarchy is deathly afraid of women in power. This is a very ancient idea and goes back to the days when women, being weaker physically and burdened

with childbearing, could not handle other responsibilities or were refused education because they supposedly didn’t need it. It seems that our big and strong men are just afraid of women and their power.

If we go back to the source, we never see Jesus rejecting any woman, and we know that many of his earliest and best followers were women. Neither he nor Paul was afraid of women.

LUCY FUCHS  
*Brandon, Fl.*

### What’s Being Chosen?

Re “Defend the Hyde Amendment” (Editorial, 8/15): The Democratic Party says it favors a woman’s right to choose, but it rarely finishes the sentence. So, what is being chosen? Science clearly tells us that a human life is inside the uterus during pregnancy. The Democratic Party likes to use science, to wag its finger at Republicans over global warming, but it sticks that finger in its pocket when it comes to abortion. I am extremely disappointed in the vice presidential nominee, Senator Tim Kaine. And as a pro-life Democrat, I am brokenhearted over my party, which will help you out only after you’re born. Before you’re born, it’s the hunger games.

ALAN MICELI  
*Online Comment*

### Isolation and Hearing Loss

Thanks to Matt Malone, S.J., for his reflection in *Of Many Things* (8/15). I, too, have hearing loss. I was not so young as Father Malone when he experienced a dramatic loss of hearing; it did not become a problem until I was 61, and it has continued to get worse, seriously affecting my daily life.

I had never thought I would miss hearing and understanding homilies, but it turns out I did! I mentioned this

to our priest one day, and he told me that the parish had devices to help. I hadn’t known. Hearing loss is not visible, so it is often overlooked. If parishes do not provide assistive listening devices, they should. With the aging of baby boomers, the need for these devices will continue to grow.

Few people understand the impact of hearing loss until experiencing it themselves. I was under the delusion shared by many that hearing aids would provide “normal” hearing, just as glasses usually provide normal visual acuity. Sadly, this is not the case, in spite of the cost of hearing aids (ranging from \$3,000 to \$6,000 a pair and not usually covered by insurance; Medicare also does not cover hearing aids).

Like Father Malone, I have experienced impatience and rudeness. My hearing loss eventually forced me to stop working. I was of “retirement age,” but I enjoyed my work and miss it. The isolation that comes from hearing loss has been very difficult for me, perhaps one reason I began engaging in online discussions.

ANNE CHAPMAN  
*Online Comment*

### Little Chance for Success

In regard to “A Healthy Experiment” (Current Comment, 8/15): The editors’ viewpoint is right on target. As recently as 2011, Vermont passed a single-payer health care law. Unfortunately, it was abandoned in 2014, apparently because of the tax effect on small business. Other states, including Colorado, should use the Vermont experience to develop a more workable and acceptable single-payer health care system. Even after six years of operation, Obamacare is opposed by the majority of people by a margin of 10 percent, according to the Real Clear Politics average of all polling. Beyond that, any effort to improve or modify Obamacare at the federal level seems to have little chance for success. If we are to have a national health plan,

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the burden for development will be at the state level.

KEN BALASKOVITS  
*Park Ridge, Ill.*

### The Scientific Case

Re “Proof of Progress” (Reply All, 8/1): When a new issue of **America** arrives at the door, as it has for years, my family often reads first the reviews and the letters. So it was enjoyable to find first a review by David Collins, S.J., of my book on the 17th-century Jesuit astronomer Giovanni Battista Riccioli, *Setting Aside All Authority* (“How Far the Stars?” 5/16), and then James Foley’s letter in response.

The scientific case Riccioli built against Copernicus was technical, not easily condensed for a review or this letter. But Riccioli wrote that science taken alone, with all authority set aside, argued against Copernicus. His case was strong and invoked simplicity and elegance, and also observations and tests for phenomena expected to result from Earth’s motion. Modern readers, knowing Copernicus was right, will find this difficult to imagine. But upon greater familiarity with both the possibilities and limitations of the science of Riccioli’s time, they will be convinced. As Father Collins noted, science can be a messy venture. What seems inevitable in hindsight was a true puzzle in its time.

Thus, Mr. Foley mischaracterizes Jesuit astronomers as being “used” to battle the inevitable. Their writings suggest that, at least into the 1660s, they made the scientific case against Copernicus readily and forcefully.

C. M. GRANNEY  
*Louisville, Ky.*

### Sacrifice and Mass

I was impressed by the balanced approach in “Longing for Communion,” by Timothy P. O’Malley (7/18). Mr. O’Malley does a fine job of being fair to both sides’ past with the realization that we need to talk things over again in the

family. The section that I was a little disappointed with dealt with the relationship between sacrifice and the Mass. He writes, “The Mass, for Luther, was still a ‘sacrifice,’ but not one in which Christ himself was offered but ‘the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise.’” The medieval and Reformation-era theologians were operating out of an experience where most Masses had no communicants other than the priest, so this artificial distinction made sense to them.

Both the ancient and modern worlds have a different experience. As Xavier Léon Dufour, S.J., remarked about this issue, “The Mass...symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, but it does so by way of the supper.” And as we so often proclaim in the memorial acclamation: “When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, O Lord, until you come again.” I submit that this approach might be a way through the dead-ends of the past.

MICHAEL H. MARCHAL  
*Online Comment*

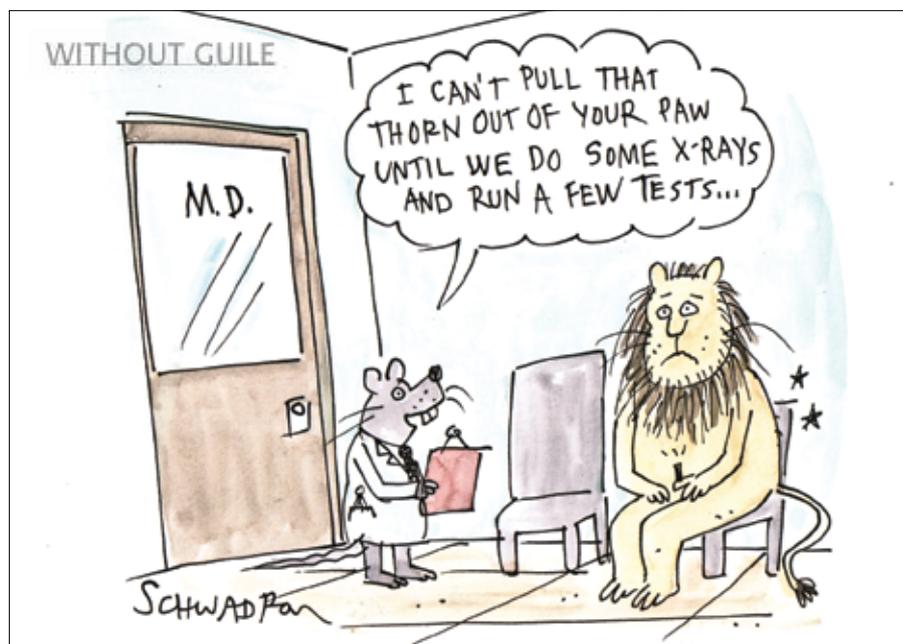
### Where Truth Leads

Re “Bishop McElroy Calls for a Practical ‘Apology’ to L.G.B.T. Catholics” (7/18): My heart breaks as I read the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report of August 2016 entitled “Sexual

Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grade 9-12—United States and Selected Sites, 2015.” The section on behaviors that contribute to violence contains a litany of every parent’s nightmares: “Threatened or injured with a weapon on school property,” “Did not go to school because of safety concerns,” “Forced to have sexual intercourse,” “Felt sad or hopeless.” I am particularly troubled by the statistically large number of victims who are lesbian, gay and bisexual. As a lifelong Catholic who attended Catholic school K-12 and who sent my two children through Catholic school K-12, I must ask: What role do my church’s teachings on homosexuality play in this violence?

I pray that **America** and other Catholic news outlets will investigate this question and follow the truth where it leads. I also pray our church will take additional healing measures beyond the important first step of encouraging Christians to apologize to gay people. But most of all, I pray for the young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students who, in their moments of despair, believe that their church has abandoned them for being who they are.

PAMELA MURRAY  
*Crownsville, Md.*



MOTHER TERESA

## As Thousands Cheer, an Icon Of Mercy Is Canonized in Rome

**A** mighty cheer went up from the 100,000 pilgrims and Romans in St. Peter's Square on Sept. 4 when Pope Francis declared Mother Teresa of Calcutta a saint of the universal church and a model of Christian life for believers in the 21st century.

Afterward, in an inspiring homily praising her life and work, Pope Francis drew warm applause when he remarked, "I think, perhaps, we may have some difficulty in calling her 'Saint Teresa'; her holiness is so near to us, so tender and so fruitful that we continue to spontaneously call her 'Mother Teresa.'"

Pope Francis had invited 1,500 poor and marginalized people—cared for by Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity across Italy—to attend the canonization. He not only gave them privileged places at the ceremony but afterward invited them to a lunch of Neapolitan pizzas in the atrium of the Paul VI audience hall.

In his homily, Pope Francis praised this great woman with whom he has so much in common. "Mother Teresa, in all aspects of her life, was a generous dispenser of divine mercy, making herself available for everyone through her welcome and defense of human life, those unborn and those abandoned and discarded," he said.

He recalled: "She was committed to defending life, ceaselessly proclaiming that 'the unborn are the weakest, the smallest, the most vulnerable.' She bowed down before those who were spent, left to die on the side of the road, seeing in them their God-given dignity; she made her voice heard before the powers of this world so that they might recognize their guilt for the crime of poverty they created."

He added, "Her mission to the urban and existential peripheries remains for us today an eloquent witness to God's closeness to the poorest of the poor."

Last December, Francis decided to hold the canonization of Mother Teresa on the Jubilee for Workers of Mercy and Volunteers, a day when those volunteers and workers from all over the world came to Rome for their part in the Jubilee Year of Mercy. The

pope sees Mother Teresa as an icon of mercy for the modern world.

"Today," he said, "I pass on this emblematic figure of womanhood and of consecrated life to the whole world of volunteers; may she be your model of holiness!"

When he finished speaking, the crowd broke into thunderous applause. Then, after prayers in different languages, Francis went on to celebrate Mass with the more than 70 cardinals, 400 archbishops and bishops and 1,700 priests present at the ceremony.

The crowd included numerous women and men religious, including many members of the Missionaries of Charity. Following the liturgical tradition, a few of them placed a blood relic of Mother Teresa near the altar immediately after the canonization.

Also attending the ceremony was the Brazilian man who was cured



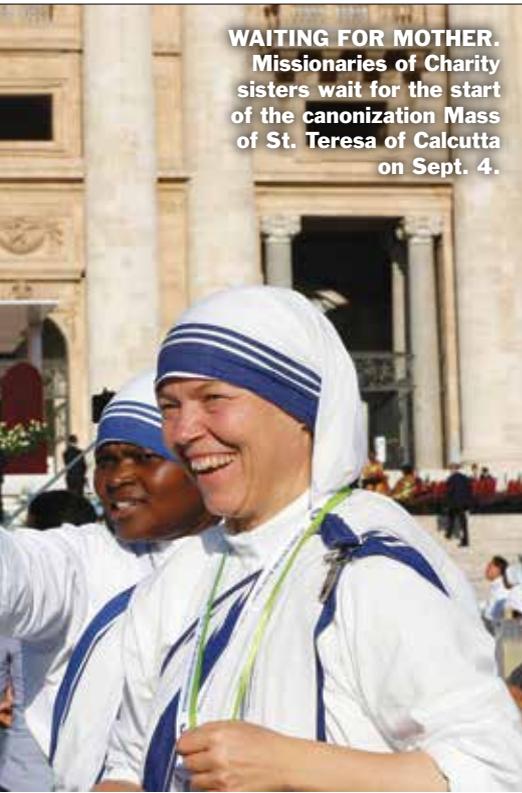
through Mother Teresa's second miracle, Marcilio Haddad Andrino, together with his wife. No fewer than 15 countries, including the United States, sent official delegations to the ceremony to honor "the saint of the slums."

The presence of these delegations, which included representatives of different faiths, was hardly surprising, given that even during her lifetime, Christians and followers of other religions—Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists and many people who do not profess a religion—considered this extraordinary woman a saint. When she died on Sept. 5, 1997, India recognized her greatness by giving her a state funeral.

Now, 19 years after her death, the Catholic Church has officially recognized her as a saint. She is the first Nobel Peace Prize winner to be so honored.

**GERARD O'CONNELL**

**WAITING FOR MOTHER.**  
Missionaries of Charity sisters wait for the start of the canonization Mass of St. Teresa of Calcutta on Sept. 4.



## REPARATIONS

# Georgetown Faces Up to Slave History

In order to come to terms with the sale of 272 slaves to two Louisiana businessmen in 1838, Georgetown University and the Jesuits of Maryland should offer a formal apology and enact a series of reforms. They include renaming buildings, offering financial aid to the descendants of those slaves and committing new academic resources to study the impact of slavery on campus and in wider society today.

Those are the recommendations of a working group appointed last year by the president of Georgetown University, John DeGioia. They were made public on Sept. 1.

“Slavery—slave labor and the slave

trade—is part of our history,” the report says. “All of us—students, alumni, faculty, staff, administration and friends—are the heirs of this history, and all of us must make ourselves its humbled trustees.

“As a university community, we need to know, to acknowledge, and to absorb that history as part of what makes Georgetown what it is,” the report continues.

The group, made up of 15 members of the university faculty, staff and students and chaired by a Jesuit priest, began its work last September after protests over the university’s decision to retain the name of a building honoring a former university president and Jesuit priest who initiated the slave sale in 1838. That transaction generated close to \$3 million in today’s dollars to help fund the struggling university.

The group recommended that the school’s president and the Jesuit superior who oversees the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus should begin by offering a formal apology, pointing to examples from St. John Paul II and former President George W. Bush, both of whom apologized on behalf of the entities they represented for past par-

ticipation in slavery.

“The university, despite the many ways that it has invested resources over the last half century to healing the wounds of racial injustice, has not made such an apology,” the report says. But, the group said, an apology is only a first step in a years-long process to understand the university’s history with slavery and to begin to reconcile with those who still suffer because of it.

The group recommended renaming campus buildings that had previously honored two Jesuits and college administrators who were instrumental in the sale of the slaves, Thomas Mulledy, S.J., and William McSherry, S.J. The group suggested the buildings be renamed Isaac Hall, honoring the first slave named in the sales agreement, and Anne Marie Becraft Hall, named after an 18th-century African-American Catholic religious sister with roots in the Georgetown neighborhood.

The group also recommended that the university reach out to descendants of the people included in the sale, listening to their needs and assisting with genealogy research, and consider offering descendants admission and financial aid to the university. “While



**Deja Lindsey, 20, a junior at Georgetown University, in front of Healy Hall on the campus on Sept. 1.**

we acknowledge that the moral debt of slaveholding and the sale of the enslaved people can never be repaid," the report says, "we are convinced that reparative justice requires a meaningful financial commitment from the university."

Part of the reconciliation process must include making sure that students of color who attend Georgetown feel welcome and part of the community, which, the report says, is not always the case today.

Finally, the report recommends that the university invest in staff to help make the school's archives on slavery, which includes sacramental records of the sold slaves, available for research and establish a center to study the ongoing effects of slavery in society. "We believe that Georgetown's efforts to engage the task of reconciliation must be institutionalized, and personalized, for the long haul," the report says.

"We are, after all, slavery's beneficiaries still today. There can be neither justice nor reconciliation until we grasp that truth," the report concludes.

**MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN**

## Stop the 'Cancer' Of ISIS

The Chaldean Catholic patriarch, Louis Sako of Baghdad, called for a united and strong stance—by Muslims and non-Muslims alike—to stop the spread of the "cancer" of the Islamic State and other terrorist groups. In a statement released on Aug. 27, the patriarch said it is time "for Muslims and non-Muslim people of goodwill around the world to deal seriously" with the situation, "especially, when we know that the majority of Muslims are neutral/unbiased, open-minded and willing to work hard for the benefit of their countries and their fellow citizens." The patriarch called for Muslims to "show the real face of Islam" and confirm that extremism is

## NEWS BRIEFS

A judge in California ruled on Aug. 26 that a group of doctors could **continue a court challenge** to the state's new assisted-suicide law but that the law would not be put on hold while they did so. • While hailing a peace agreement that ended 50 years of civil conflict in Colombia, Pope Francis on Aug. 31 **declined an invitation** to name a Vatican representative to choose judges for "peace tribunals" that will help implement it. • Oguzhan Akdin, imprisoned for killing an Italian priest in 2006, was among **thousands of inmates released** from Turkish prisons to make room for those arrested in connection with the coup attempt in July. • Continuing his dialogue with technology leaders, Pope Francis met with the founder and C.E.O. of Facebook, **Mark Zuckerberg**, on Aug. 29. • Following the beheading of a teenage hostage on Aug. 24, Bishop Martin Jumoad of Isabela City in the Province of Basilan, Philippines, **backed a strong military response**, arguing that Abu Sayyaf militants "must be destroyed." • Allowing people to drink unsafe water or have no access to dependable water sources is an international shame, **Cardinal Peter Turkson** told religious leaders at an interfaith meeting on Aug. 29 in Stockholm.



**Wounded soldiers in southern Philippines**

contrary to their beliefs. The patriarch said Christians are waiting for governments and religious authorities to work together to "confront and dismantle terrorism and extremism." Steps to achieve this include reforms in the curricula in schools, which he said are the major source for teaching extremism.

## New Office for Integral Development

To promote Catholic social teaching and ensure appropriate assistance to vulnerable people—especially victims of war, refugees and the sick—Pope Francis has established a new Vatican office. In a letter initiated by him and published by the Vatican on Aug. 31, the pope said the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human

Development will merge the pontifical councils for Justice and Peace, Cor Unum, Migrants and Travelers, and Health Care Ministry. The pope named Cardinal Peter Turkson, current president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, to serve as prefect of the new office. In his letter, signed on Aug. 17, the pope said, "This dicastery will be competent particularly in issues regarding migrants, those in need, the sick, the excluded and marginalized, the imprisoned and the unemployed, as well as victims of armed conflict, natural disasters, and all forms of slavery and torture." While Cardinal Turkson will lead the new office, a section dedicated to refugees and migrants will be led directly by the pope.

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

## Fighting for South Africa's Soul?

Just when we thought that the Hawks (the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation) had finally got their claws out of South Africa's Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, they're back! Conveniently waiting until after the local elections, they have once again subpoenaed Gordhan regarding alleged irregularities while he was head of the South African Revenue Service (SARS). Rumors are circulating that the finance chief will soon be arrested.

Their first attempt at "having a go" at Gordhan ended with egg on the faces of Hawk investigators and the newspapers that supported their efforts. Allegations that the finance minister was illegally running a secret intelligence unit were revealed to have been nonsense—misinformation leaked to a gullible press (some of it owned or partly owned by President Jacob Zuma's cronies). The Hawks are now also investigating whether Gordhan approved the early retirement and subsequent rehiring on a fixed-term contract of a SARS deputy director, Ivan Pillay. The latter happened, in effect meaning that Pillay would receive his pension but still work for SARS, may strike many observers as odd, but it is often done in South Africa as part of affirmative action retirements. (A government employee, usually white, would retire early but would work on a part-time contract, often mentoring his or her successor.) There is nothing illegal in that.

The issue of the secret intelligence unit is a little more complex. Gordhan has admitted that he set up an in-

vestigative network within SARS to look into tax evasion and other crimes against the treasury. South African law here is oddly phrased, but it does empower a government department to investigate matters pertaining to its work. In other words, SARS can investigate tax evasion, even covertly, except when such matters may relate to the security of the nation.

In short, it seems that an an-



### An anti-Gordhan witch hunt is on in a South-African #SarsWars.

ti-Gordhan witch hunt is on again in a campaign South-African media have dubbed #SarsWars.

President Jacob Zuma has insisted that he fully supports his minister of finance and believes him innocent. But he claims he can do nothing to stop the investigation. The legal expert Pierre de Vos believes otherwise: Under the law Zuma could have the head of the Hawks removed or suspended for a variety of reasons, including misuse of his office.

But he hasn't. Or more likely, he won't.

Why?

Fundamentally, Gordhan and his director general in finance are in a battle with Zuma and his political and economic allies over bailing out the essentially bankrupt South African Airways. The airline's collapse is widely believed to be the result of mismanagement and corruption from on high by its directors, who are Zuma appointees. It is

also widely believed that some of these appointees have been unduly influenced in their duties by the Guptas, a wealthy Indian family that has in the past profited through what many perceive as a corrupt relationship with Zuma and associates.

Behind this latest attempt to unseat Gordhan looms another potential scandal: corruption in a nuclear power station procurement process. The state has been trying to expand its electricity capacity by building new nuclear power stations.

People closely connected to the president have been wooed by the Russian energy firm Rosatom, despite opposition from environmentalists and economists. The latter charge that plans for costly new nuclear plants are potentially disastrous in an already financially strapped country. Worse, Rosatom's bids are higher than

others tendered for the work. It is rumored that in a reprise of an infamous 1999 arms deal, bribe money has already passed among the key players; and it is said that contracts have already been signed in secret.

If any of this is true, public finance management processes have been violated by deliberate interference in state affairs by outside economic interests. This state capture, as it's being called here, has been fiercely opposed by Gordhan, who is being supported by opposition parties, reform sections within the A.N.C., promoters of civil society like the Helen Suzman Foundation and veteran human rights lawyers like George Bizos.

These actors are in a battle for the soul of South Africa, for good governance and for economic stability in the face of a slide into populism, corruption and state collapse. With Gordhan removed from the fray, that fight will be harder.

**ANTHONY EGAN**



# Martyrs of Charity

**L**ike many of you, I am not embarrassed to say that I wept when I read the story of the terrible murders of two Catholic sisters who had served the poor in central Mississippi. They were stabbed to death in their house in Durant, Miss., by an intruder on Aug. 25

I know that many people suffer violent deaths throughout the world, in places like Syria and Sudan, and even in the inner cities of the United States. And I know that many people give their lives to work with the poor, both here and around the world. But somehow I found the deaths of Sister Margaret Held, a member of the School Sisters of St. Francis in Milwaukee, and Sister Paula Merrill, a member of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in Kentucky, inexpressibly sad. Both were 68 years old. What an awful, terrifying and violent way to die.

And yet, these two sisters lived their lives in complete Christian readiness. The Gospel reading for the day of their death, Aug. 25, was Jesus' parable about the thief in the night (Mt. 24:42-51). It has a deep resonance with the way their lives on earth concluded. Jesus tells us that our lives may end with that kind of suddenness, like a "thief in the night." It's one of a series of vivid, even harsh metaphors that the Gospel readings present during this time of year, when Jesus speaks about the "end times." His message is blunt: We may be called to meet God in that kind of unexpected way, and so we are called to live in a state of readiness. And so that invites us to meditate

on some important questions: How do we want to live our lives? What kind of people do we want to be? How do we want God to find us?

Like so many Catholic sisters in this country and around the world, these two women religious selflessly poured themselves out for the people of God, especially for the poor. Both worked at the Lexington Health Clinic, 10 miles from the house they shared.

Sister Paula, a native of Massachusetts, moved to rural Mississippi in 1981, serving in health care ministry for more than 30 years. "She felt a connection and a need to serve the people. She has been there ever since," said a statement on her congregation's website.

Sister Margaret first ministered in Mississippi as a social worker at a health center in Holly Springs, Miss., in 1975. She moved to Omaha, Neb., from 1981 to 1983 as a community health nurse with the Visiting Nurse Association before returning to Mississippi that year. She became a nurse practitioner in 1994, serving in Tupelo, Marks and Lexington.

When I saw the photos of the two women that accompanied the stories of their murder, I thought, "I know these women." Indeed, I learned about their deaths on the final day of an eight-day retreat, when I had been surrounded every day by women religious of their generation. Sadly, I never had the chance to meet either Sister Paula or Sister Margaret. But I know so many remarkable women religious who live simply, pray hard and serve the poor, often earning very little.

Very little, except the love of God and the love of those around them. The two sisters were deeply loved by their community. Sam Sample, a music minister at their parish, St. Thomas the Apostle Church, spoke to several media outlets after their deaths. "They would do anything for anyone," he said. "They were just the sweetest people to ever draw a breath into their bodies."

Rosalind McChriston-Williams, a nurse who worked with them, told a local newspaper, "They were earthly angels with hearts of pure gold."

It is particularly moving to remember that these women led their lives in a world that sometimes belittles Catholic sisters, thinking them weak, silly or risible. But women religious are some of the bravest people I've ever met, frequently doing groundbreaking work in places that are by turns unglamorous and underserved. Catholic sisters are in the vanguard of the church's work on behalf of social justice, and frequently precede the rest of the church—bishops, priests, brothers, lay men and women—in caring for those on the margins. But these two women, I believe, were more than simply brave.

In the Catholic Church, a "martyr of charity" is someone who gave his or her life while performing an act of Christian charity. To me, their whole lives were an act of charity. So let us pray for the eternal rest of these two new martyrs of charity: Margaret Held, S.S.S.F., and Paula Merrill, S.C.N.

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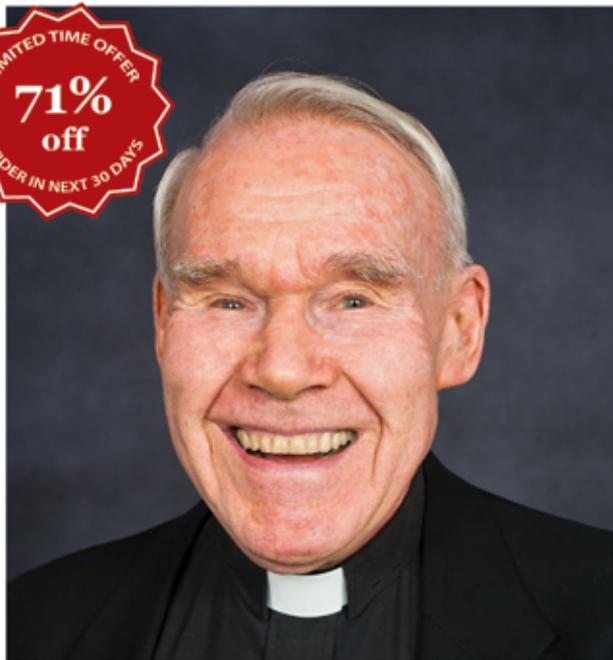
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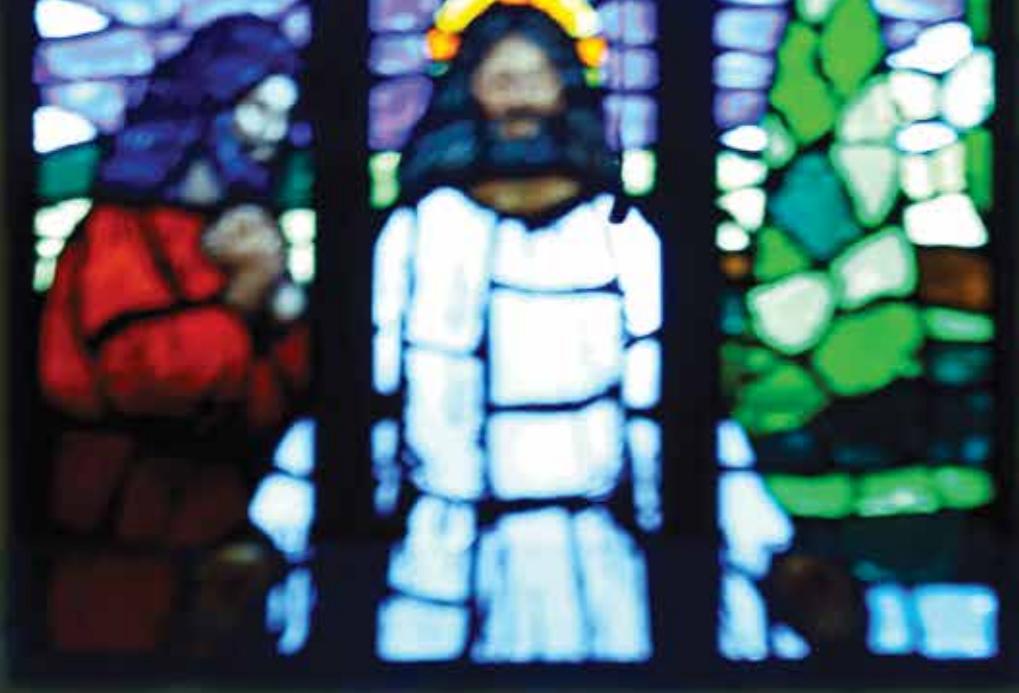
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# Hillary Clinton's Gospel

BY MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN

MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN is America's national correspondent. Twitter: @mikeoloughlin.



PHOTO: REUTERS/MIKE BLAKE

In the moments after delivering the biggest speech of her political life, when the balloons had finished falling and the upbeat music had faded out, Hillary Clinton headed backstage at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia. She had just become the first woman nominated for the presidency by a major party and the convention was about to close. But before she left the arena, she took her husband's hand and they huddled around a television monitor with her running mate, Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia, and his wife, Anne.

The group stood in silence, watching a feed from the convention platform, where the Rev. Bill Shillady was to offer the final benediction, drawing from a refrain familiar to most Methodists, including Mrs. Clinton. "Do all the good we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, in all the places we can, at all the times we can, to all the people we can, as long as we ever can," said Mr. Shillady, a Methodist minister who had buried Mrs. Clinton's mother and married her daughter. The Democratic candidate wiped her eye.

We know about Mrs. Clinton's post-convention prayer because a camera crew filmed it and the campaign posted the gauzy video on her Twitter account. It is perhaps the most intimate moment we have seen so far during Mrs. Clinton's run for the White House, and reaction was swift.

Some jeered, accusing her of sensing a political opening to attract faith voters disillusioned with her seemingly irreligious opponent, Donald J. Trump—of "I drink my little wine" and "have my little cracker" infamy. But others, including those who know her well, were thrilled that Mrs. Clinton had invited the public to see her at her most authentic, practicing the faith that, they say, has guided her from childhood through her very public career.

This was not the first time Mrs. Clinton's faith surfaced during the 2016 race. Back in January, when pressed by an Iowa voter to describe what she believed, Mrs. Clinton responded with a trinity of faith statements. "I am a person of faith. I am a Christian. I am a Methodist," she said. Unpacking those three assertions sheds light on a part of Hillary Clinton that those close to her say is integral to how she lives her life and the decisions she makes.

## Profoundly Methodist

Growing up, Mrs. Clinton attended First United Methodist Church in Park Ridge, Ill., a white, upper-middle-class suburb of Chicago. She has said in speeches and in her memoir that she recalls her father praying each night before bed and her mother helping out in various church ministries.

**Hillary Clinton speaks to the congregation at Greater St. Paul Baptist Church in Oakland, Calif., on June 5, 2016.**

This article is the first in a two-part series about the faith lives of the major presidential candidates.

As a teenager, Hillary Rodham took a liking to the church's youth pastor, Don Jones. According to a 2014 CNN profile, Mr. Jones shook things up at First United, focusing on Methodism's social justice tradition, perhaps at the expense of the faith's emphasis on personal salvation. Mr. Jones brought the young people to Methodist churches in dicey sections of Chicago to expose them to how their peers lived, in sharp contrast to their own lives in Park Ridge. He pushed them to question their faith, once arranging a debate with an atheist about the existence of God. He took them to synagogues to introduce them to different religions.

His style ultimately did not mesh with conservative Park Ridge, and Mr. Jones left after just two years. But Mrs. Clinton was clearly affected, and she and Mr. Jones stayed in touch for decades after. The pair exchanged letters when Mrs. Clinton headed off to college, and Mr. Jones went on to attend both of

her husband's presidential inaugurations.

When Mr. Jones died in 2009, Mrs. Clinton said that the former youth minister, who looked to figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Franklin Delano Roosevelt for inspiration, had "helped guide me on a spiritual and political journey of over 40 years."

Though Mrs. Clinton has cited a range of spiritual figures from varying faith communities as personal inspirations, her faith journey has been profoundly Methodist, says Mike McCurry, a professor of theology at Wesley Theological Seminary and a former press secretary for President Bill Clinton.

"She is a very much a part of that tradition," Mr. McCurry told **America**.

Methodists are guided by what is known as the Wesley Quadrilateral, he said. These are four principles that the denomination's founder, John Wesley, used to "illuminate the core of the Christian faith for the believer," according to the United Methodist Church's website. The four pillars are Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. (According to family lore, Wesley himself converted Mrs. Clinton's forebears back in 18th-century England.)

Calling Mrs. Clinton "a child of the Methodist Church," Mr. McCurry said she probably could not offer "a long dissertation on the Wesley Quadrilateral, but she knows her faith tradition and she knows that thinking because it's very much what you're exposed to when you grow up in the Methodist Church."

In the 1960s, Mrs. Clinton was a subscriber to *Motive*, a now-defunct magazine published by the Methodist Student Movement. During that period, the publication was largely anti-war, pro-worker and anti-nuclear weapon, publishing essays by Methodist thinkers and activists, as well as oth-

er Christians, including Thomas Merton, O.C.S.O., and Sister Mary Corita Kent, a one-time Catholic sister active in the 1960s peace movement and known for creating colorful pop art.

Mrs. Clinton and her husband were married by a Methodist pastor in Arkansas, and when they moved to Washington, they attended Foundry United Methodist Church, located just a few blocks north of the White House. The church's pastor at the time, the Rev. J. Philip Wogaman, can be described as both a theological and social progressive. In 1997, when the Clintons were still attending Foundry, Rev. Wogaman signed a petition disagreeing with the United Methodist Church's refusal to ordain openly gay ministers or bless same-sex unions. (It would take more than 15 years for Mrs. Clinton to articulate her own support for gay marriage.)

It was during her years as first lady, one Clinton biographer argues, that Mrs. Clinton began to feel reticent about discussing her faith.

Kristin Kobes Du Mez, a professor at Calvin College who is writing a book about Mrs. Clinton's religious history, points to a 1993 speech in which she called for a "new politics of meaning." With her husband's administration in turmoil, Hillary Clinton called on Americans to embrace "a new ethos of individual responsibility and caring" and to recognize that "we are part of something bigger than ourselves."

The address was panned in the media, and, Ms. Du Mez suggests, remains the reason Mrs. Clinton still shies away from publicly expressing her faith more often.

## The Candidate's Faith

Nonetheless, there have been some hints throughout the years at the kind of religiosity that informs Mrs. Clinton. She is said to read snippets of Scripture each day; she has cited figures from the familiar canon of progressive, modern theologians, including Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr and Henri Nouwen, as inspirations; and during her husband's affair with a White House intern, Mrs. Clinton is said to have leaned especially hard on her faith.

"The moments in which I've seen her draw most deeply on her faith have been very, very personal," Mr. McCurry said. "You can imagine that they are related to events that I had to publicly deal with when I was at the White House."

"During moments of enormous personal pain for her, I think her faith sustained her," he said.

A Southern Baptist political activist named Burns Strider met Mrs. Clinton in 2006, when they bonded over how faith informs social justice issues. He then served as a faith outreach director during her 2008 campaign, and today he sends Mrs. Clinton emails several times a week with short passages from Scripture or quotations from figures she has said she enjoys reading, including the Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor, the poet Mary Oliver and the Christian writer Jim Wallis.

Mr. Strider told **America** he is happy the campaign seems to be highlighting Mrs. Clinton's faith, and he hopes it happens more frequently heading into November.

"Good campaigns reveal the real person that carries the label candidate," he said, praising the video the campaign posted on Twitter. He said he has seen Mrs. Clinton pray backstage before and after big events, often making it a point to meet local clergy. "Films and discussions about Hillary's faith would be doing just that, revealing the real Hillary."

Back in January, when an Iowa voter pressed Mrs. Clinton on her faith during a town hall event, the candidate riffed on a couple of passages from the New Testament.

"The most important commandment," she said, "is to love the Lord with all your might and to love your neighbor as yourself." She spoke of the Bible's commandments about "taking care of the poor, visiting the prisoners, taking in the stranger, creating opportunities for others to be lifted up."

She then asked some rhetorical questions about the Sermon on the Mount and offered an off-the-cuff exegesis. "What is it calling us to do and to understand?" she asked. "Because it sure does seem to favor the poor and the merciful and those who in worldly terms don't have a lot but who have the spirit that God recognizes as being at the core of love and salvation."

Finally, she expressed disappointment that Christianity is "sometimes used to condemn so quickly and judge so harshly" and concluded by saying that reflecting on her faith is "something that I take very seriously."

One of the reasons Mrs. Clinton's religious sincerity is questioned could be the clash of her social positions with the priorities of the U.S. religious right, which is often perceived as synonymous with U.S. Christianity.

Yet Methodists rank as the third largest Christian denomination in the United States, behind Catholics and Southern Baptists. The church's numbers peaked in the 1960s, with about 11 million members, and today U.S. Methodism claims about 7.5 million adherents. Methodists are part of the mainline Protestant tradition, a slice of Christianity more politically liberal as a whole than their evangelical or Catholic peers.

Ms. Du Mez says Mrs. Clinton's religiosity can be best perceived through this prism of socially liberal Christianity, both her own tradition and the relationships she has formed with African-American pastors and churches that compose a large part of the Clinton political base.

"Her views on many social issues are absolutely in line with her church's views, with the possible exception of war and capital punishment," Ms. Du Mez told **America**.

That includes toeing the church line on the issue of abortion, says Katey Zeh, an abortion rights activist who has worked for the United Methodist Church. The church's stance on abortion seems compatible with former president Bill Clinton's assertion in the 1990s that it should be

“safe, legal and rare.”

The church’s “Social Principles” state, “Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion.” But the principles also “recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures by certified medical providers.” The denomination was even one of the founding members of a nonprofit group that pushes for increased access to abortion, though the denomination recently withdrew from the organization.

While Mrs. Clinton’s views on abortion have become more extreme in recent years—she is currently pressing for the repeal of a ban on federal funding for abortions—Ms. Zeh told **America** that Mrs. Clinton still falls squarely within the Methodist tradition on the issue.

“There’s no conflict,” she said. Methodists should consult the church’s guiding principles, “but there’s also acknowledgment that we don’t all agree about all of these issues.”

The Catholic Church, of course, is against abortion, and no matter how much she draws on her faith, Mrs. Clinton is unlikely to win over some Catholic voters who reject her and her party’s views.

### More on Faith to Follow?

With some traditionally Republican evangelicals and Catholics pushing back against Donald. Trump, it is likely

that Mrs. Clinton’s team will continue to encourage her to speak more openly about her faith. It could be that her foes will continue to call her a phony when she does so.

Should she decide to continue opening up about her faith on the campaign trail, Mrs. Clinton may look to a speech she gave to the 2014 United Methodist Women’s Assembly in Louisville as a model.

Mrs. Clinton was introduced to a crowd of more than 7,000 women and praised as “a relentless advocate for women, children and youth,” to thunderous applause.

Curiously, the woman introducing Mrs. Clinton, Yvette Richards, noted in her introduction that the former secretary of state had covered her own expenses and refused the assembly’s standard honorarium, a contrast to the \$300,000-or-so stipends she had been receiving for speeches to Wall Street banks and public universities.

Mrs. Clinton then delivered her usual thoughts on the need to strengthen opportunities for the disadvantaged, especially women and girls, but this time through an explicit lens of faith. She riffed on her church’s social justice tradition as well as the Gospel, focusing on the story of the loaves and fishes and how it has motivated her politics.

“Like the disciples of Jesus, we cannot look away, we cannot tell those in need to fend for themselves and live with ourselves,” she said. “‘You feed them,’ [Jesus] said, feed them, rescue them, heal them, love them.” **A**

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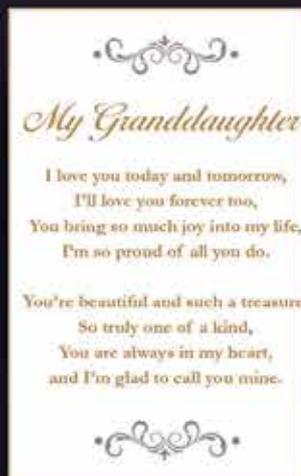
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# Where We Fit In

Psalm 8 helps us see our role in God's creation.

BY DANIEL POLISH



**W**hen we think of the questions that we expect faith to answer for us, perhaps we assume that the most important ones are theological: Who is God? How do we build our relationship with God? But religion speaks to other profound issues as well. And before we begin to ask questions about God, perhaps we need to ask questions that we could characterize as anthropological: What can we say about human beings? What sense do we make of the human condition? Where do we fit in? What is our place in the divine order of things?

Psalm 8 balances questions of both types. As we read it and make its words our own, we give voice to a powerful wonder and exaltation of God for all that God has created. At the same time, embedded in this psalm is a profound reflection on the role that we humans play in God's creation. What is our role in this vast cosmos that is the handiwork of God's design? Psalm 8 raises profound questions for us and then, answering them, gives us a way to understand our

place in the whole of creation. We finish reading it reoriented and seeing more clearly our place on the map of reality.

Verse 2 prepares our entry into the psalm with its invocation of heaven and earth. Of course, it is not just in these two spheres that God's majesty is proclaimed. Rather, the invocation of heaven and earth serves to represent the whole of creation. Everything that exists attests to God's greatness. Heaven and earth are not the skies and this planet alone, but representative of the totality of God's creative work. The terms are meant not to make a separation, but to be inclusive. This sense of inclusiveness and wholeness is reflected in the very structure of the psalm. The first phrase is repeated at the conclusion of the poem; the psalm comes full circle. "O Lord our God how glorious is Thy name in all the earth!" And, of course, the emphasis is on the word "all." We might say that verse 2 sets out the premise of the psalm. The ensuing verses demonstrate the case. And the final words reassert the fundamental message of the work—only now with deepened appreciation of the fullness of what that message means.

Verse 4, like so many others of the psalms, begins with the psalmist—and with us as we make the words our own—standing outside on a clear night looking up at the wonders of the skies. Perhaps to the polytheistic peoples who came before the emergence of the religion of Israel, each of those lights was a divinity to be worshiped. But to the psalmist

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**DANIEL POLISH**, *rabbi of Congregation Shir Chadash of the Hudson Valley in LaGrange, N.Y., is vice-chairman of the International Committee for Interreligious Consultations with international religious bodies and the author of Bringing the Psalms to Life. In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," America has invited Rabbi Polish to reflect on some of the psalms.*

and to all those who have taken for themselves the monotheistic lessons of the Hebrew Scriptures, the splendors of the heavens point beyond themselves and testify to the power of their Creator.

*The heavens declare the glory of God  
And the firmament showeth His handiwork.*  
Ps 19:2

*He counteth the number of the stars;  
He giveth them all their names.  
Great is our Lord, and mighty of power;  
His understanding is infinite*  
Ps 147: 4-5

The prophet Isaiah understands the starry skies as testimony to God's creative power—mute witnesses to God's greatness:

*Lift up your eyes on high,  
And see: who hath created these?  
He that bringeth out their host by number,  
He calleth them all by name;  
And because of the greatness of His might and vast power,  
Not one faileth to appear.*  
Is 40:26

The great theophany—the overwhelming appearance of God in the Book of Job—also reflects the understanding that the wonders of heaven are witnesses to the wisdom of God and of God's infinite power. God demands of Job, "Where wast Thou...":

*When the morning stars sang together...  
Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days began,  
And caused...[the dawn] to know its place...  
Where is the way to the dwelling of light  
And as for darkness where is the place thereof?  
Canst thou bind the chains of the Pleiades  
Or loose the bands of Orion  
Canst thou lead forth the...[constellations] in their season?  
Or canst thou guide the Great Bear [constellation] with her  
offspring?  
...Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens....*  
Job 38:7, 12, 19, 31-3

In his inability to answer yes to any of these questions, Job underscores the distance between finite human beings and the infinite God who can and does do all of these wondrous deeds. So it is with us. As we look up at the stars we, too, can be overwhelmed by the glory of creation, and feel awe at the Creator of it all.

And yet even as we feel the greatness of God so deeply, we

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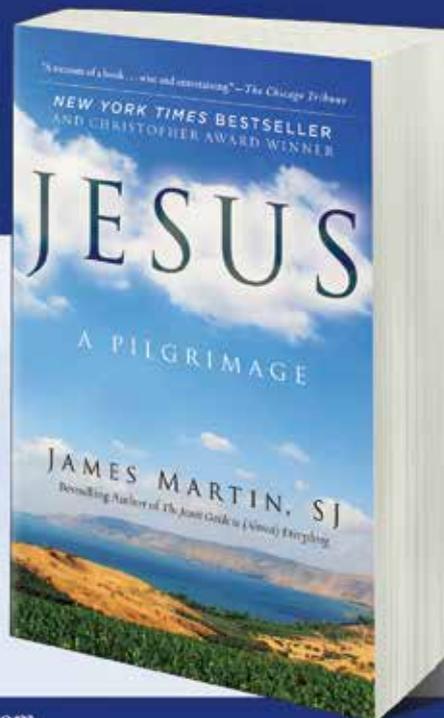
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feel welling up within us—as Job must have felt—a sense of our own smallness and insignificance. It is in this frame of mind that we can ask, with the psalmist, “What are we that you are mindful of us, we human beings that you should care for us?”

At the very center of the psalm, in the midst of words of exultant praise, Psalm 8 poses the great question: What is the value of human life? Is God’s greatness so vast that it must mean that we are worthless? We might expect the psalm to dwell upon human insignificance. Truth be told, we often do when looking up at the infinite sky or contemplating the vastness of creation. Perhaps the psalm’s answer will come as a surprise to us. Rather than attesting to human insignificance, Psalm 8 affirms the infinite worth of human life. In verse 5 it acknowledges that we might imagine ourselves as unworthy of God’s attention. But then the tone shifts dramatically in verse 6. In a powerful phrase, we are reminded that we are “little lower than the angels.” In verses 7 through 9 we read a very tangible reminder that we occupy a place of supreme importance in the order of things. The psalm that starts out contemplating the starry skies now directs its attention downward to the earth—offering a veritable inventory of animal life. All things on the planet are turned over to us—not to exploit, but to protect. The imagery of these verses echoes words from the very first chapter of the Bible: “God blessed them and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and

multiply, fill the earth and master it; and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky and all the living things that make their way upon the earth” (Gen 1:28).

This image of human beings as given “dominion” over all living creatures came to be understood in terms of an idea that is perhaps the most audacious assertion of the monotheistic traditions. It is the suggestion that we are “partners” with God with regard to life on the planet. Little lower than the angels, we have the privilege and responsibility of overseeing all that God has created.

God is great and wondrous. And yet we matter. We matter greatly. We are of the greatest possible significance to the order of God’s creation. This is hardly the response we might assume in the face of the first verses of the psalm, and yet it is not out of keeping with a sense of wonder at the splendor of creation. It is as if the message of the psalm is “among the wondrous things that God has fashioned...is me!” This idea is stated explicitly in Psalm 139:

*...Thou hast made my inner workings  
Thou hast knitted me together in my mother’s womb.  
I will give thanks unto Thee, for I am fearfully and wonder-  
fully made;  
Wonderful are Thy works;  
And that my soul knoweth full well.*

Ps 139:13-14



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# Papal Abundance

Ever since Francis was elected pope on March 13, 2013, there has been much interest in and speculation about his relationship with his predecessor, Benedict XVI.

From the beginning, Francis made clear that he considers his predecessor a kind of “grandfather” in the family, whose wisdom and counsel he treasures and for whom he has the utmost respect.

Francis has visited him many times, and they speak by phone and communicate in writing. He encouraged Benedict to come out of his self-imposed seclusion and to be present at Francis’ first consistory for new cardinals, at the canonizations of John XXIII and John Paul II and at the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter’s Basilica for the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

Over the past three years, however, some prelates and lay Catholic intellectuals and bloggers, part of that tiny minority who do not like the direction in which Francis is leading the church, have sought to portray their relationship in a less positive light. Some have even hinted at sharp theological differences between them regarding the liturgy and the family; others fail to recognize Francis’ “The Joy of Love” as a development of his predecessor’s teaching.

Twice this summer, however, Benedict has made clear that he does not share this distorted view of their relationship.

In an interview just published,

but given after his resignation to Elio Guerriero, curator of his works in Italian and author of his new biography, Benedict declared, “obedience to my successor has always been unquestionable” and “then there is a sense of deep communion and friendship.”

Moreover, he said: “I personally felt deeply touched right from the start by Pope Francis’ extraordinary human warmth toward me. He tried to reach me by phone right after his election. He wasn’t able to get hold of me so he tried again straight after the meeting with the universal church from St. Peter’s balcony and he spoke to me in a very cordial manner.”

“Since then,” Benedict said, “he has given me the gift of a marvelous paternal and fraternal relationship. I often receive small gifts, letters written in person. Before undertaking any major trips, the pope always comes to visit me. The human kindness he has shown me is for me a special grace in this final phase of my life, which I can only be grateful for. What he says about being close to other people are not just words. He puts them into practice with me. May he in turn feel the Lord’s kindness every day. For this, I pray for him to the Lord.”

On the flight back from Armenia last June, Francis confirmed that Benedict has faithfully kept the solemn promise that he made in his farewell speech to the College of Cardinals on Feb. 28, 2013, when he said, “Among you, in the College of Cardinals, there is also the future pope to whom today I promise my unconditional reverence and obedience.”

Francis affirmed this when responding to a reporter’s question regarding the extraordinary statement made by Archbishop Georg Gänswein, prefect of the papal household and Benedict’s private secretary, in which he spoke about an “extended Petrine ministry” where one pope is active and the other contemplative.

He rejected Gänswein’s thesis and stated clearly, “There is only one pope.”

Benedict “is the emeritus pope, the one who watches my back with his prayers.”

Alluding to attempts to drive a wedge between them, Francis said he had heard but did not know if it was true, “that some people had gone there [to Benedict] to lament about ‘this new pope’ and he sent them packing, in the best

Bavarian style—politely, but he sent them packing.” The Jesuit pope added: “If it isn’t true, it is a good story, because he is like that. He is a man of his word, an upright, a completely upright man!”

If Francis feels “protected” by the emeritus pope, Benedict, speaking at the celebration for the 65th anniversary of his priestly ordination on June 28, stated frankly that he feels protected by his successor. Speaking without a script, he thanked Francis for his “kindness,” which, he said, “from the moment of your election in every moment of my life here reaches me. I feel it profoundly.... Really more than in the Vatican Gardens with its beauty, your goodness is the place where I live and where I feel protected.”

**GERARD O’CONNELL**

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# Single by Default

When a vocation is not a vocation

BY JESSICA KEATING

**A**s children, my older sister and I staged elaborate Barbie doll games. Whenever we played, my sister's dolls would go off to work, go on dates and generally engage in the adult world as we encountered it. Her dolls would eventually marry one of our two Ken dolls in an extravagant Barbie wedding. My dolls, on the other hand, were always married the moment we began and procreated at an unrealistic pace soon thereafter. Often we would have to draft other dolls into our games to function as children. Strawberry Shortcake often made an appearance, as did an occasional troll. I was also the child who, at the tender age of 5 or 6, boldly declared to my father that I would have a million children. He playfully pointed out that I would probably have to number them rather than name them, and then he would call out, "Number 1,532!"

Not long ago I participated in a panel called "Living Mercy in Daily Life." As I sat uncomfortably on a stool next to a parish priest, a Franciscan sister and a married couple, it occurred to me that I was the only person in the row who was not living the vocation I felt called to. I was the only one whose state of life lacked free assent and enduring permanency—the essential marks of a vocation. I was glad to be included on the panel but also a bit perplexed.

I was glad to be included because, according to a 2012 Pew study, one in five adults ages 25 years and older—42



million Americans—had never been married. The authors of the study concluded that if current trends continue, one quarter of today's young adults will remain unwed into their 40s and 50s. The causes for the rise in singlehood are complex, but suffice it to say it is a growing reality that needs to be honestly represented in all its pain and possibility. Being single touches my daily life in ways more mundane, more painful and more beautiful than stereotypes of single people, particularly single women, might suggest.

On the other hand, I was uncomfortable with the underlying assumption that being single, particularly being single by default, is a vocation in the same way as marriage, the priesthood or consecrated life. After all, I was the only one on the panel actively trying to exit my present state of life.

In a culture that oscillates between the unqualified celebration of single life and despairing laments of it, it is tempting to try a cost-benefit analy-

sis, or a pros/cons list.

*Cons:* I go to bed alone every night and wake up alone every morning. There is no one to share household tasks with, or to do the grocery shopping. I wait for the plumber and do all the yard work. If the toilet is going to get cleaned, I am the one who will clean it. There is no one to pick a fight with when I am feeling tired or cranky. I do not receive the tender embrace and the soft sigh of my exhausted child as she leans her head on my shoulder right before she falls asleep. Sometimes I realize that I have gone several days without the physical touch of another person.

*Pros:* I do not have to listen to anyone snore; I get the whole bed to myself, and I can sleep until 10 a.m. on Saturday morning. There is no one who does things I find annoying, unacceptable or disgusting. The toilet is always clean. No one is going to pick a fight with me when they are tired or cranky. I never have to shepherd a child

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through a buffet line (which is a lot harder than it sounds). Theoretically, at least, there is no one who makes demands on my time or my attention when I'd rather be doing something else.

There are many problems with this kind of analysis, not the least of which is the assumption that being single—that any vocation—is fundamentally about me, about my preferences, about weighing benefits and losses. As seductive as this kind of thinking about vocation is, it is profoundly un-Christian. At its core, a Christian understanding of vocation tells us that it purges us of our selfish desires. Christian vocation exists in the gift: the gift of existence; the gift of baptism; the gift of marriage, ordained or consecrated life; the gift of particular charisms for work in the apostolate. Christian vocation is fundamentally not personal achievement or a project of self-fulfillment. A vocation, in other words, is a gift and call from God to die to oneself and become a gift to another. This means my own vocation is not about me at all. I still desire to marry.

As a child who imagined I would have a million children, I never thought I would feel the bitter sadness I sometimes do when friends discuss the

anxieties and frustrations, the absurdities and joys, of being a parent. I never imagined that some people would try to figure out how my singleness was my own fault, rather than a sign of the vicissitudes of life to which we are all vulnerable. I never imagined my snarkiness would get the better of me when I encountered religious who express the same pain at facing an empty bed night after night, and instead of feeling compassion, found myself thinking, "Yeah, try doing that and having to pay rent." Yet, here I am in my mid-30s trying, like a growing number of people, to live somewhere between stability and uncertainty.

Things do not always work out the way we expect. Life is precarious. We are thrown into situations over which we have no control. Married couples experience infertility. The person one falls in love with may not return that love. A religious order may ask a member to leave. We are all vulnerable. Yet we are called to holiness precisely in the circumstances of reality as it is, not as we would like it to be.

But I did not discern a call to single life. In fact, I am deeply skeptical that unconsecrated single life is a vocation at all, any more than infertility is a vo-

cation, or chronic illness is a vocation. I suspect our inclination to call the unwed single life a vocation comes from anxiety about putting people into categories, about making the suffering and the scandal of our unfulfilled desires a bit safer, about comforting ourselves with the idea that God will always act according to our will. Which means that perhaps my single life, like so many others, is not a vocation.

Yet I am also called to holiness today, now, here. Not at some vague time in the future when I may get married. I feel this tension every day.

### Living in Between

Being single is not easy, and there are days when it feels like God has forgotten me. But being Christian doesn't come with any guarantees or promises that we will be spared suffering. Christ's experience of abandonment in the garden of Gethsemane, his pleading prayer to the Father, becomes our pleading. I take up the words of Jesus: "Father if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42).

Being unwillingly single requires particular agility. It means balancing commitment to particular people and practices while also remaining open to the possibility of marriage. It has required me to navigate loneliness, desire, commitment and stability in ways I never anticipated. The reality of being single is with me most days, as is the desire to share my life and body with another in marriage—to make a concrete and permanent commitment to another person before God in the church. Realistically, I understand that I may never marry, that despite my desire for the beautiful mess of marriage and family life, I may remain single. Yet I am called to holiness today. I was called to holiness on the day of my baptism, as a Christian incorporated into the reality of divine love. I am called to remain wildly and uncomfortably open to possibilities, to saying, "Still, not my will but yours" to

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God, to my neighbor, to the church and in ways I never imagined.

Sometimes I say these words with tears streaming down my face, at other times with self-pitying anger knotted in my stomach. Sometimes I say them with resignation, at other times with no particular emotion at all. But at other times when I say these words, joy pierces the sadness, assumes it in a way, and I pray these words as though I really believe them. God's will be done, because divine love penetrates even the wounds of life's tragedies and disappointments, transforming them from bitterness to joy, from self-pity to self-sacrifice.

In the Eucharist, we encounter the kind of extravagant squandering of love to which we are all called. In his unreserved yes to the Father, Christ destroys death and transforms it into life. He takes up all of the ambiguity and tragedy that attends life and transfigures it into possibility and joy. In the brackets of Eucharistic love, being single is not just an empty holding pattern or a negative space waiting to be filled. It becomes the freedom to give myself away in love in ways I hadn't imagined: to hold a squirming godchild during Mass so his parents can attend to his younger siblings, to change a diaper, to doze on my best friend's sofa while the children sleep upstairs so she and her husband can have a much needed evening off, to spend my Sunday mornings catechizing children, to enter the wild spaces of life in community. To be available to say yes.

No matter what shape or form my life takes—even if I don't marry until I am 75, even if I never marry—as a Christian I am called to the wasteful, uncalculating expenditure of love, a love that only flows from the open heart of Christ, a love that makes the in-between fruitful, that makes time abundant. It is the love that transforms the ambiguity of being single into the freedom of saying yes, "your will be done." Perhaps this is not a vocation to a state of life, but simply and profoundly to being a Christian in a broken world. **A**

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# Confessions of a Solidarist

Appalled by both Hillary and the Donald? Unimpressed by Gary and Jill? Lurking in the folds of the internet is an offbeat alternative: the American Solidarity Party.

Visiting the office of a colleague a few weeks ago, I noticed a new framed document on the wall. She explained that it was the platform of the American Solidarity Party, a new political formation “somewhere out there beyond the Alleghenies.”

For anyone who loves Catholic social doctrine, the platform is a political Rembrandt. For those of us orphaned by the major American parties, it offers a political home in the tradition of the old Christian Democratic parties. Like the venerable formations of Adenauer and de Gasperi, the Solidarist ideology leans leftward on economic issues, rightward on social issues and firmly internationalist on questions of war and peace.

The treatment of human life issues shows the breadth of the party’s moral vision, overcoming our standard right/left cleavages. Firmly opposing abortion and euthanasia, it affirms a comprehensive defense of the human right to life: “We support constitutional and legal measures that establish the Right to Life from conception until natural death.” It condemns capital punishment. Eschewing pacifism, it adheres to a strictly limited version of just war theory, allergic to the sirens of preventive warfare: “We oppose the use of military force in vi-

olation of Just War principles. Among other things, this precludes the use of pre-emptive strikes and disproportionate retaliation.” The censure of the political use of torture is categorical: “We condemn the use of torture—by whatever method, for whatever purpose, and by whatever euphemism it may be called—by any representative of the United States.”

Its opposition to the culture of death is not confined to the censure of homicide; the platform endorses a broad welfare state. “To replace the culture of death with respect for life, we call for adequate social services and income support for women, the elderly, immigrants and other vulnerable persons.”

This welfarism includes a gradual transition to a single-payer health care system. Immigrants are to receive legal protection: “We favor a generous policy of asylum for refugees from religious, political, racial and other forms of persecution.” Calls for subsidiarity leaven the summons for social responsibility.

The traditionalism of the party appears in the treatment of family policy. Civil marriage is defined as the union between one man and one woman. Education is to be firmly controlled by the schooling choice of parents, financially enabled by the state to follow their pedagogical consciences.

Bathed in a religious sensibility, the platform unabashedly singles out the Judeo-Christian tradition as the moral matrix of the nation. Religious

freedom emerges as the central right among the guarantees in the Bill of Rights. “We deplore the reduction of the ‘free exercise of religion’ guaranteed by the First Amendment to ‘freedom of worship’ that merely exists in private and within a house of worship. The right to follow what the Declaration of Independence called ‘the Laws of Nature and Nature’s God’ must be respected.”

For anyone who loves Catholic social doctrine, the platform is a political Rembrandt.

As attractive as its platform is, there is a major problem with the American Solidarity Party. It scarcely exists outside of cyberspace. It will be present on few if any state ballots. It controls not a single seat in the national or state legislatures. Its current candidate for the U.S. presidency, Michigan’s

Mike Maturen, has no political credentials. He is a professional magician, indeed a card-carrying member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

In November most of us will grimly choose between Clintonism and Trumpism—between corruption and xenophobia. The American Solidarity Party will remain a tiny club of eccentric Catholic intellectuals tending the embers of distributism, corporatism and solidarism.

But the embers are noble. Glossed by Leo XIII and G. K. Chesterton, the common good endures. And somehow our morally troubled trip to the polls has been ennobled by A.S.P.’s eccentric whisper.

JOHN J. CONLEY

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TELEVISION | JOHN ANDERSON

## KIESLOWSKI'S COMMANDMENTS

*How the Polish director found God in all things*

A Polish television crew is interviewing the head of a Warsaw elementary school, who boasts that yes, his children get free milk each day at recess.

But the milk is bad, the interviewer tells him: The students pour it down the toilet.

"Oh no," he says. "We always lock the restrooms at recess."

Krzysztof Kieslowski was hardly a comedian, but there was always a vein of black wit running through the late Polish filmmaker's work, which included the acclaimed "Three Colors" trilogy—"Blue" (1993), "White" (1994) and "Red" (1994)—as well as "The Double Life of Veronique" (1991) and earlier works like "Blind Chance" and "Camera Buff" and the documentaries that established his career. The absurdities of life seemed to tickle him, even the absurdities of life under a Soviet-era regime. Given that he was regarded as a giant of cinema, he probably found some humor in the fact that his best work was made for television.

**Dekalog**, produced for Polish television in 1989 and 1990, was originally planned to be the work of 10 different directors, but Kieslowski did it all himself. (Well, sort of: The script is by the director and his longtime writing partner, Krzysztof Piesiewicz, who is now a member of the Polish Parliament; and the music is by Kieslowski's regular composer, Zbigniew Preisner.) We live in an age of superbly executed television, thanks to an explosion of venues, a subscription-based business model and standards of so-called de-

centy that are much looser but sometimes lead to more sophisticated entertainment. Kieslowski had none of that, plus Communism. Yet, it is hard to say that anything on the small screen has surpassed "Dekalog" since it first aired in 1989.

The good news for fans, and fans to be, is that Janus Films, marking the 20th year since Kieslowski's death, will begin a national theatrical tour of the newly restored "Dekalog" on Sept. 2 in New York, followed by Los Angeles and 20 more cities. This tour will be followed by the release of the film by the Criterion Collection on Blu-ray/DVD on Sept. 27.

Each of the 10 episodes in "Dekalog" is based on one of the Ten Commandments; the fifth and sixth episodes were expanded and released theatrically as "A Short Film About Killing" and "A Short Film About Love," respectively. In his adaptation of the Ten Commandments, Kieslowski, setting his stories in what was then contemporary Warsaw, and posing his parables against a gray apartment block and its inhabitants, took the distant, austere majesty of the Old Testament dictates and made them not just real but homely; not just immediate but intellectually disturbing. "Dekalog," like much great art, makes audiences look at things differently, even God and God's word.

Episode One tells the story of a beautiful boy of 12 named Paweł (Wojciech Klata) and his father Krzysztof (Henryk Baranowski), a university professor of linguistics.

The whereabouts of the boy's mother are unknown, though she seems to be far away (the boy has programmed their antediluvian P.C. to track her time zone). Paweł is cared for at times by his father's sister, Irena (Maja Komorowska), who is as devout as her brother is not. The boy begins to ask existential questions, and his father tries to answer them rationally, substituting science for what the boy really yearns for, spiritual nourishment.

There is a beautiful scene in which Krzysztof and Paweł compete in a chess tournament in which a female grandmaster is engaged in a dozen matches at once; that they win their match is a result of both logic and trust (in each other). But when Paweł wants to try out his new ice skates and Krzysztof concludes that the ice is sound—because every measurement tells him so—his trust in facts, and lack of faith, is tested.

In Episode Two, Dorota Geller (Krystyna Janda) is a concert violinist who loves her seriously ill husband, Andrzej Geller (Olgierd Łukaszewicz), but is pregnant by a fellow musician whom she also loves. Dorota wants her husband's doctor, played by Aleksander Bardini, to swear to a prognosis: If her husband is to die, she will not abort the baby. The doctor, a believer, swears to God. But gets it wrong.

Or does he?

Episode Two is particularly unsettling: Who is the sinner and where is the sin? For that matter, what is the relationship of the story to a corresponding commandment? Kieslowski admitted those connections were not always simple or direct. But the doctor certainly presumes, in swearing to God, about a fate God himself has yet to determine. The doctor has taken the Lord's name in vain but with a twist



**Cast members of “Dekalog.”**

worthy of O. Henry. In Episode One, the father’s “worship” of computers and technology substitutes for a reverence for God. In Episode Three, it is a mix of sins—a woman dupes her ex-lover into spending Christmas Eve with her, away from his wife and family, thus venturing into a kind of twofold violation—of the Sabbath, so to speak, and adultery.

Kieslowski used different cinematographers for each episode (except for Piotr Sobociński, who shot Episodes Three and Nine), and the look is a dour view of Warsaw and, by extension, human nature. At the same time, the visual asides provide poetic commentary on the narrative, and the

camera is always alive and probing. The acting is superb, the cast largely a now-anonymous group of Polish performers who walk through each other’s episodes with the flair for comic coincidence that exercises the intellect and would later materialize in the mostly French-language “Three Colors” films (they were, in fact, French)..

“These films dramatize their ideas with such dazzling skill,” Stanley Kubrick said of “Dekalog,” “that you never see the ideas coming and don’t realize until much later how profoundly they have reached your heart.” Or your mind. Most of us have probably lived all our lives with an idea of the Ten Commandments that was, ex-

cuse us, etched in stone. Kieslowski was raised Roman Catholic and professed to those who interviewed him (including this writer) a “personal and private” relationship to God. The question of God always came up because his films both questioned belief and affirmed it. In “Dekalog,” he used the Ten Commandments to create tantalizing intellectual exercises that bordered on philosophical acrobatics. But the results were also prayers of thanks, for being able to find God in the often irrational details.

**JOHN ANDERSON** is a film critic for *Variety* and *The Wall Street Journal* and a regular contributor to the Arts & Leisure section of *The New York Times*

# THE HERO'S OTHER LIFE

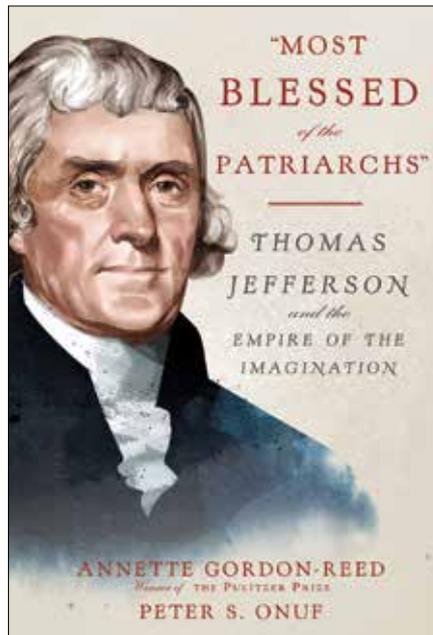
## 'MOST BLESSED OF THE PATRIARCHS' Thomas Jefferson and the Empire of the Imagination

By Annette Gordon-Reed  
and Peter S. Onuf  
W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 400p  
\$27.95

Americans like the big picture of their heroes—the big, *simple* picture. This especially applies to presidents. George Washington, the father of his country, was a little boy who could not tell a lie and grew up to be a great soldier whose men loved him and whose ragtag army defeated the British. Abraham Lincoln, the youth who chopped wood, walked miles to school every day and studied many hours by firelight, grew up to be the great soul who freed the slaves and saved the Union.

As a child, I read and reread picture book lives of Washington and Lincoln. There was no picture book life of Thomas Jefferson. He was far too complicated for the big, simple picture. Jefferson may have written America's great indelible document, but Jefferson the man never really stirred the American imagination. Jefferson was actually something that Americans never particularly understood or trusted—he was an intellectual, indeed, a polymath. With Benjamin Franklin (though less lovable, less wise and without the humor), Jefferson was one of the new nation's rare Renaissance men. He may not have had great courage or a great soul, but he had a great mind that allowed him to envision great ideas. He considered the Declaration of Independence to be an "expression of the American mind," a document in which citizens of the new nation would hear themselves speak. The Declaration was actually an expression

of Jefferson's mind—tying together all the colonists' grievances. As the father of the American Enlightenment, Jefferson believed in the idea of inevitable human progress. He saw the outcome of America's republican revolution as essentially so perfect that reform would inevitably follow in its



wake. This vision of American exceptionalism became Jefferson's religion—for ill as well as good.

According to the authors of "Most Blessed of the Patriarchs," *Thomas Jefferson and the Empire of the Imagination*—more a picture of Jefferson's ideas than of his actions—Jefferson hoped that "echoes of the people's voice would resound across the generations, keeping the Spirit of '76 alive." While the echoes of 1776 certainly have resounded across the generations and even around the world, Jefferson's idea of inevitable, almost unavoidable, progress allowed him to indefinitely postpone dealing with slavery, the seemingly indelible

"stain" on America's perfection.

Besides having a great mind, Jefferson had a great ego—also for good and ill. His ego would not permit him to have an unworthy thought, but his sense of superiority allowed him to rationalize unworthy deeds. Because he had a vision of himself as an honorable person, his ego served the new nation for good. No other member of the founding generation served in public life for so long and in so many different roles: as a member of the Continental Congress, as governor of Virginia, as a diplomat in Paris, as secretary of state under George Washington, as vice president under John Adams and as the third president of the United States. As leader of the first great political party, his enemies were the Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton. Republicans called Federalists "the English party" and Federalists called Republicans "French puppets." Jefferson's inaugural address stated: "Let us...unite with one heart and one mind.... Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty, and even life itself, are but dreary things...we are all republicans: we are all federalists...."

Jefferson spoke of national unity, but everything about the man spoke of duality and paradox. He had two "countries," free America and slave-holding Virginia; America was the country of his head and Virginia the country of his heart. He had two cultures: republicanism, whose political ideal was the New England town meeting, and Enlightenment France, whose art, cuisine and conversation he sought to mirror at Monticello. His political instincts were those of a modern liberal-progressive—his 1779 bill for universal public education, for example. He believed in the rule of science and reason, and the separation of church and state. His 1786 Virginia Legislature bill for religious freedom was a model for the First Amendment. Although a revolutionary, Jefferson

was also a pacifist, who hated war and conflict. Believing that peace should be the ultimate goal of statecraft, he wore no sword at his inauguration and hated duels. (Hamilton called Jefferson's hatred of conflict "womanly.") Anticapitalist and pro-agrarian/artisan, Jefferson was "green"—writing to James Madison that no living generation of any era had total ownership over the land, merely the right to use it in a way that did not negatively affect future generations.

Struck by the poverty of European peasants, who seemed worse off than the enslaved workers of Monticello, Jefferson pursued the socialist idea of redistribution of property. "Whenever there is in any country, uncultivated lands and unemployed poor," he wrote in a letter to James Madison in 1786, "it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right." In a slightly eccentric fashion, he was pro-immigration, seeking to import Italian workers as artisans and musicians because, as a music lover, he longed for a private orchestra. Two years later, he sought to settle imported Germans at Monticello: "I shall endeavor to import as many Germans as I have grown slaves. I will settle them and my slaves, on farms of 50. Acres each, intermingled." He hoped the Germans would teach his slaves to become "good citizens." Only slavery itself, which contradicted all the tenets of enlightened 18th-century republicanism, made a mockery of Jefferson's faith in the new progressive order.

Torn between being a republican statesman and a

plantation patriarch, Jefferson was anti-slavery in prose, even in his original draft of the Declaration, and pro-slavery in practice—on the one hand for posterity's opinion, and on the other to support his way of life. Reflecting this duality, Jefferson had two families: one legal and white, the other illegal and enslaved. He had promised his legal wife on her deathbed that he would never remarry; but two years later in Paris, as the French revolution exploded about their heads, 41-year-old Jefferson made the 16-year-old slave Sally Hemings, the same age as his eldest daughter, his "substitute for a wife," to use the words of one of Jefferson's friends. The union

produced at least six children, none of whom were officially recognized by their father, though he did permit at least two who looked white to escape into the white world. He possibly told himself that his relationship with Sally was not breaking a promise because it could never be legal—although, as an exemplary father and grandfather, the concept of "family" was his social ideal.

How did Jefferson's very protective daughters and grandchildren explain the marked resemblance of Sally Hemings's six children to Jefferson? They explained it by saying that they were the children of Jefferson's black sheep nephew, one Peter Carr.

Although plantation relationships like this were common and often recognized, Jefferson's refusal to recognize Sally Hemings in any way becomes rather despicable, given his self-image as a man of honor.

Jefferson had generous instincts; but, being very human, was selfish to the core. In a letter to the anti-slavery activist Dr. Benjamin Rush in 1803, he wrote of all mankind as "one family, under the bonds of love, charity, peace, common wants and common aids" (except, of course, for slaves). In *Notes on Virginia*, Jefferson stated that if God were just, he would surely judge America for slavery, essentially saying that slaves had as much right to seek their freedom as colonists did, yet Jefferson's administration denied recognition to the new Haitian republic and limited trade. Although slavery was antithetical to the rights of man, Jefferson could not envision a multiracial society without conflict. His idea was to emancipate and expatriate

## Amaryllis

Why did you welcome it into the house?  
Numb in the coffers  
of discounted bulbs, it seemed so harmless—  
Blind as a doorknob, intimating green.  
But coddled indoors,  
it pillared overnight, and pursued the sun,  
fattening its five uneven sacks of flame.  
It knew our natures,  
and had come to ready its own kingdom.  
In the midst of our domestic exhibit,  
all the souvenirs  
of ceramic, brass, dyed glass, and silver plate  
that you positioned for a sensuous curve or gleam  
become amateurs:  
the foolish gestures of the game of home.  
As for your fine timbers, your careful décor—  
At any moment all may break with pleasure.

### JAMES NAJARIAN

*JAMES NAJARIAN teaches 19th-century poetry and prose at Boston College, where he edits the scholarly journal Religion and the Arts. His poetry has been published in West Branch, Christianity and Literature, Southern Poetry Review, The Literary Imagination and other journals.*

all slaves. Meanwhile, striking a balance between humanity and self-interest, Jefferson focused on ameliorating slavery rather than abolishing it. Whipping was extremely rare at Monticello, for example; and house slaves (but not field slaves) received wages (especially the Hemingses), as did Monticello artisans (the boys who worked in Jefferson's nail factory, for instance).

According to the authors, "Monticello was a kind of self-portrait." It was at Monticello that Jefferson saw himself as "Most Blessed of the Patriarchs." (In a letter to Abigail Schuyler Church in November 1793, Jefferson described his happiness in Virginia, while surrounded by his family at his beloved Monticello, as "blessed as the most blessed of the patriarchs.") To his contemporaries and doubtless to himself, it was an ideal life—*blessed*, not embarrassed, by its duality. Living beyond his means, and constantly remodeling, Jefferson was squire of all he surveyed. His lifestyle, as well as his decision to build his home on a mountaintop, showed him to be a man above worldly concerns. This was true even in dress. He never followed fashions of the day, mixing different eras of male clothing, but always in the finest materials. Jefferson knew how to live—surrounding himself with family, friends, interesting people and beautiful but not necessarily luxurious objects. Dazzled by France, he brought France back to Virginia in food, pictures and manners. According to one visitor in 1822, he "shrugs his shoulders when talking, has much of the Frenchman, is rapid, varying, volatile, eloquent, amusing."

A great host, a connoisseur of art, literature, music, wine and furniture, he also made time to pore over his books, to study Greek, Latin, French, mathematics, architecture and law, to keep journals, write letters and play his violin. One of Jefferson's appealing qualities was his love of all music, which he called "the favorite passion of

my soul." Constantly singing in a "fine clear voice," he even paid some of his younger Hemings children to capture mockingbirds to be trained not only to imitate other birds but to sing specific American tunes. The Hemings boys were trained to be musicians as well as carpenters. Jefferson, of course, ignored the various rude songs and verses that circulated about him and Sally Hemings circa 1802. He arranged his private life to suit himself absolutely.

One of the book's pleasures is the revelation of Jefferson's attractive personality. A man who very much wanted people to like him, not from insecurity but from his ego's sense of self-worth, he once wrote to his grandchild, "It is a charming thing to be loved by everybody." His ego needed love. So, outside of politics, he aspired to be consistently lovable. Jefferson's personality shone at Monticello. His "charm of manner and conversation that passes all description" was proverbial. The constant stream of visitors would "be met by the tall, and animated, and stately figure of the patriot himself, his countenance beaming with intelligence and benignity, and his outstretched hand, with its strong and cordial pressure, confirming the courteous welcome of his lips." Jefferson's courtesy even extended to slaves. A grandson tells this story: Out riding with his grandfather as a boy, "we met with a negro who bowed to us; he returned his bow. I did not; turning to me he asked, 'do you permit a negro to be more of a gentleman than yourself?'"

Jefferson, who had traveled widely on behalf of his new nation, found Monticello a special haven in retirement and old age. Attacked throughout his career for what was seen as a lack of religious faith, in old age Jefferson embarked on a genuine spiritual quest. Calling himself a "primitive Christian"

and rejecting the concept of Christ as a divinity who performed miracles and raised the dead, Jefferson considered Jesus the man to be the greatest of moral philosophers. Poring carefully over the Christian Gospels and drawing inspiration from Jesus' life and teaching, in 1819 and 1820 Jefferson completed an essentially secret work on the "life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth," known as

*The Jefferson Bible.*

Although he continued to reject organized religion, stipulating that the University of Virginia would have no professor of theology, Jefferson was not an atheist. "When we take a view of the Universe, in its parts, general or particular," he said in a letter to John Adams, "it is impossible for the human mind not to perceive and feel a conviction of design, consummate skill, and indefinite power in every atom of its composition." Writing in a letter in 1822, however, he essentially hoped, that "there was not a young man now living in the United States who will not die a Unitarian." Still, Jefferson hoped that Americans would also recover "the primitive and genuine doctrines" of Jesus, "the most venerated reformer of human errors," adding, "For it is in our lives, and not from our words, that our religion must be read."

"Living or dying, the end of slavery will ever be my most fervent prayer," Jefferson wrote in old age. If Jefferson's actions in his prime had matched his words in old age he would truly have been the father of his country. But Jefferson betrayed his own dream of American exceptionalism by helping to create (through inertia or self-interest) an "empire of slavery" instead of the glorious republican ideal of universal freedom, throughout his beloved Virginia and the entire South. Both Jefferson's first memory and his last moments in-

## One of the book's pleasures is the revelation of Jefferson's attractive personality.



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volved slaves. His first memory in life was of being handed on a pillow up to a slave on horseback to be carried to another plantation; while on his deathbed, the last words he spoke, to be lifted higher on his pillow, were intelligible only to his enslaved manservant, Sally Hemings's nephew. It might be said that Jefferson's entire life was

cushioned by slavery. Jefferson himself personified the eternal American dilemma: the conflict between the promise (of which Jefferson was a creator) and the practice.

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**GAIL LUMET BUCKLEY** is the author of *American Patriots, the Story of Blacks in the Military From the Revolution to Desert Storm*.

10-year-old Irish-Italian street urchin who had made his first Communion a year earlier. A gang of Protestant boys catches him drowning a kitten in the river and as punishment ties him up and hangs him upside down, trying to force him to say he is a "Dago an' a Republican an' a Protestant." Dangling over the river, he balks at saying he is a Protestant because "I can't say Y'ere not there"—meaning that to say he is a Protestant would be to deny the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He dies a tortured death, repeating those words—a martyr.

Tony's story suggests that American Catholicism is at once alienated and confident and shows how the church's worldview revolves "around the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, of the holy in the material, of the supernatural in the natural," Orsi writes.

In the chapters that follow, Orsi conducts a tour of how American Catholics have connected to the sacred through Marian apparitions and devotion to the Sacred Heart and saints. He does this in some cases through interviews that reveal highly personal stories of suffering and devotion.

One story involves an Arizona woman he calls Natalie. In an interview, she told of how she grew up trapped in a household in which her stepfather sexually abused her from a young age. She told the priest in her first confession about the abuse—the stepfather had threatened to kill her if she did—and the confessor replied there was nothing he could do. So Natalie started to confide in a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Five years later, the stepfather was killed in a mining accident.

Orsi deftly uses these stories to

PAUL MOSES

## THE AGE OF ABSENCE

### HISTORY AND PRESENCE

By Robert A. Orsi  
Belknap Press. 367p. \$29.95

In the academic world, it sometimes seems untoward for religion scholars to be enthusiastic about religion. It's fine for specialists in the social sciences or arts to revel in some particular school of thought. But, it seems to me, a certain distance is expected from the religious studies expert—to view the subject of the transcendent as an entirely human construct.

In his new book, *History and Presence*, the historian Robert A. Orsi argues for an approach to history and culture "with the gods fully present." The norm of modern discourse is the opposite, he says. It assumes the absence of the transcendent. And so at the outset of his book, Orsi asks the reader "to withhold from absence the intellectual, ethical and spiritual prestige modernity gives to it."

The reader's reward is an intellectual and spiritual adventure with a guide who has a keen eye for the inbreaking of the sacred in 20th- and 21st-century Catholic America. Anyone with a deep interest in what it means to be Catholic amid U.S. secular culture will find much to ponder in these pages.

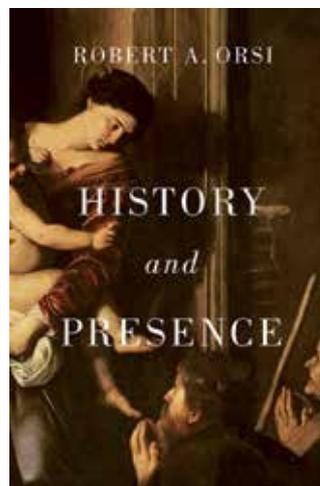
The trail leads from the Reformation debate over the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist to a concluding chapter on the clergy sexual abuse crisis, a

fascinating section based on numerous interviews with survivors about their faith lives.

Orsi traces the rise of "absence" to the religious debates of the 16th century. The Catholic belief in the presence of Christ in the consecrated host influenced the medieval Catholic imagination, Orsi writes, and is reflected in the cult of the Blessed Virgin and the saints and attendant miracles, apparitions, shrines and devotions.

Protestant reformers rejected these "popish" practices, and the question of a sacred presence or absence in the Eucharist and in Catholic devotions became the source of hatred, vitriol and even warfare. "Modernity exists under the sign of absence," Orsi writes. "The reimagining of the relationship between God and humans that commenced in the early 16th century introduced an ontological fault line that would eventually run through all of modernity."

This battle echoes in 20th-century America. In his opening chapter, Orsi recounts the novella *Tony*, written in 1933 by Thomas B. Chetwood, S.J., regent of the Georgetown University School of Law. Tony is a tough



explore his idea of “presence.” He also shows a sharp eye for detail as he explores mid-century printed material aimed at children—holy cards that use 3D images, “as if such cards were reaching toward presence, in excess of print itself.” Also, devotional magazines, catechisms, manuals for religious educators, missals and a gory comic-book account of St. Maria Goretti’s life.

There is an enjoyable side trip into the metaphysics of Catholic school penmanship, since, as Orsi reports, Sister Mary Leo wrote in 1943 in the *Journal of Religious Instruction*, “there is no subject in the curriculum that affords a better chance to teach and inculcate in the minds of little ones respect for the persons and things about which they write.”

Reading Orsi’s vivid descriptions of the world of the Catholic school helped me to see my own schooling in the 1960s with greater clarity. The bottom line is that “as a result of their religious formation, Catholic children possessed a kind of internal comic book of the supernatural in which they were characters, too.”

How terribly debilitating, then, when a priest—who consecrates the host, who stands “at one degree of separation from God”—abuses the body of a child who has been formed with a Catholic sense for the presence of the sacred, rooted in the Eucharist. Even though so much has been written on this scandal, the context Orsi offers adds a great deal to the discussion.

This context of the “presence of the gods,” Orsi argues more broadly, is missing in the study of religion and history. Without it, he concludes, scholars “will miss the empirical reality of religion in contemporary affairs and they will fail to understand much of human life.”

**PAUL MOSES** teaches journalism at Brooklyn College/CUNY. He is the author of *An Unlikely Union: The Love-Hate Story of New York’s Irish and Italians*.

## CLASSIFIED

### Pilgrimage

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### Positions

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# God's Watch

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), SEPT. 25, 2016

Readings: Am 6:1-7; Ps 146:6-10; 1 Tm 6: 11-16; Lk 16:19-31

*"The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow" (Ps 146:9)*

If you are not interested in caring for those in need, have no fear, God is on watch for them. Do not worry. The psalmist tells us that "the Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow." Though God would prefer that we join in on the watch, even if we ignore the plight of those in need, or turn from the suffering, God will not turn away or forget them.

On the other hand, even if you have no particular concern for the poor and cannot rouse yourself from your bed of ivory or comfortable couch to watch out for the marginalized and the weak among us for their sake, it might be worth paying attention to those in need if you maintain an inkling of care for yourself. For one thing, those in need, in the instant of a flood, a death, a job loss or lost health care, might be any of us. But there is one other thing to keep in mind: God is on watch for all of us, and God's watch is for eternity.

The words of Scripture that call on us to care for the stranger, the widow and the orphan are the word of God and not reflective of a particular political party or the political rhetoric of one candidate or another. These are not the "lefty" stump-speech bromides of your favorite (or least favorite) candidate; these are God's words for us in

every age and at every time, back when kings ruled as the law and now when some people live as if there is no law. Psalm 146 reminds us, whatever our current political choices, that "the Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations." Here is the long view if you are considering ignoring God's commands to us.

Sometimes, it is true, God's word is difficult to translate and even more difficult to interpret, but there is something straightforward about the psalmist's promises regarding God: "Who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry...But the way of the wicked he brings to ruin."

And the prophet Amos's words to the people of Israel, a kingdom that was soon to crumble under the weight of Assyrian power, resonate across the ages and political divides down to Wall Street, Silicon Valley and our living rooms, suffused in the pleasures of a new age and new comforts: "Alas for those who are at ease in Zion, and for those who feel secure."

What do these words and texts written thousands of years ago mean to us? Do we hear them as God's word to us? It is not just that these texts are challenging to understand; it is that they are challenging to live. Yet we perform our most profound interpretation of

Scripture in how we live, for how we live is what we believe. If we truly believe that the Scripture is God's word for us, then the choices we make with respect to the poor and the marginalized implicate our lives forever.

Jesus tells a parable in which the poor man Lazarus died and "was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham." The nameless rich man, however, was "in agony in these flames" after he died. Images of hell abound in



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Consider the woes that both the Old Testament and Jesus tell us fall upon those who revel in wealth and ignore the needy. How are you caring for the needy at your gate? How can you align yourselves more fully with the widow and the orphan? What opportunities does your church have to serve people in need?

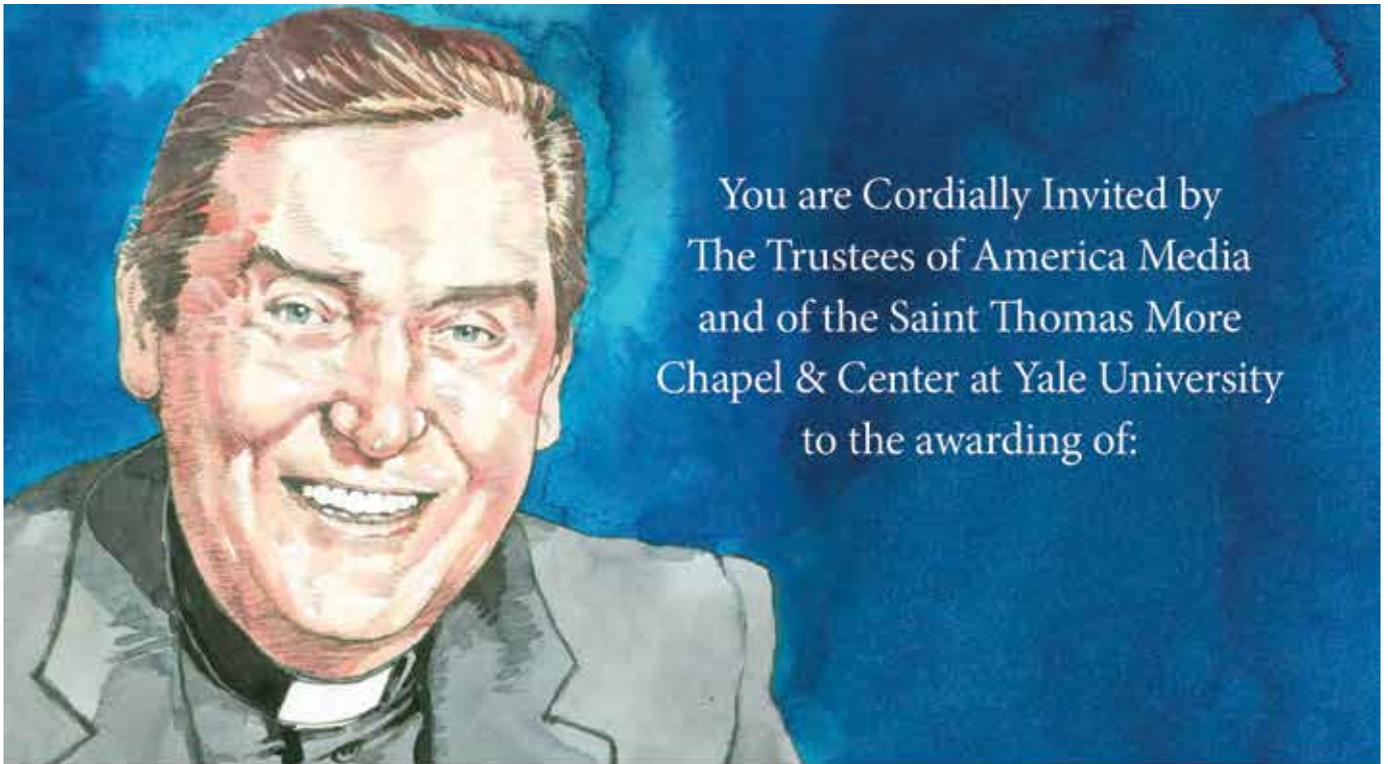
Scripture, in medieval literature and in popular culture, but Jesus' parable shows to us the separation, the chasm, between those comforted in the presence of God after death and those separated from the presence of God by selfish choice. If we truly believe that God is on watch for the poor, the widow and the orphan, then now is the time to align ourselves with God's reign, with Lazarus, for the sake of the poor now and, if nothing else, for our own sakes.

JOHN W. MARTENS

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This event is free and open to the public. Reception to follow.

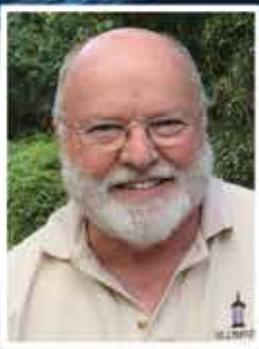
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