

# America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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## Ministry In America

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

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# OF MANY THINGS

**W**e were an NBC family, even during the heyday of Walter Cronkite. Every night at 7:00 we'd take our seats in the living room in order to learn what had happened that day in places far afield from Cape Cod. "Don't you want to know what's going on in the world?" my grandmother would ask on the rare occasion when I was watching a movie and didn't want to change the channel. First it was John Chancellor, then Tom Brokaw. The CBS Evening News may have led the ratings and Mr. Cronkite might have been the "most trusted man in America" in poll after poll, but that didn't mean people distrusted Mr. Chancellor. We all trusted these (mostly) men to tell us the truth.

Amazing, isn't it, that so many would trust so few with so much? Some say it was a "more innocent time." I suspect, though, that any innocence or naïveté Gram and her generation once possessed had been stolen long before by the most violent century in history. On the other hand, there was a shared sense of identity then, perhaps the result of that shared history, or of some popular mythology or civic religion. But the sense of community was also the result of basic market forces.

Back in the day, as Gram used to say, Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater, who were mirror ideological opposites, both watched Walter Cronkite. Yes, they trusted him. But broadcast journalism in the United States, whatever its more noble aspirations may be, is also a business, and it exists in part to create mass markets for advertisers. When there were only three television networks, it was the sheer size of the market that mattered most. The networks built those markets by bringing together different demographic groups, people who rarely agreed on anything other than the trust they had for an anchor or program. To hold together such a diverse audience,

the editorial approach had to be scrupulously balanced. Above all, it had to get the story right in some objective sense.

Broadcast journalism still exists to create mass markets for advertisers. But because of the proliferation of cable news channels, not to mention online news sites, those same networks now build those markets not by bringing together different demographic groups but by severing them from one another and serving up that slice of the pie to their customers. So Fox or MSNBC will say to the Widget Corporation that it "owns" a specific demographic. It is a narrow, demographically homogenous audience, to be sure, but it just so happens to be the demographic that buys widgets. This might be a successful business model, but it greatly enfeebles the public discourse, for this strategy is either a cause of, or deeply complicit in, the political polarization of the electorate.

A similar approach is at work in political campaigns. Candidates know that what matters most is who votes on election day and getting those people to the polls. Campaigns no longer do this by building as large a network of supporters as possible. The capabilities of today's complex computer modeling allow candidates to focus instead on the minority of true supporters they need in order to be first past the post on election day.

It should come as no surprise that these two trends should benefit otherwise marginal candidates and the occasional demagogue. Like today's cable news anchor, politicians are not talking to most of us, but to their Mister Widgets, the relatively few of us they need in order to win, whatever "winning" means in their markets. That is a deeply discouraging trend. But as someone used to say, "That's the way it is."

**MATT MALONE, S.J.**

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*Cover:* Truck stop chaplain Deacon Rich Seveska talks with Abdi Rizak at the Foristell Travel Center in Foristell, Mo., in 2012. CNS photo/Lisa Johnston, St. Louis Review

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## ON THE WEB

Full coverage of **Pope Francis' visit to the United States** with on-site reporting from **America's** editors and contributors. Visit [papalvisit.americamedia.org](http://papalvisit.americamedia.org) for commentary, photos and a timeline of the papal trip.



### A Union Opportunity

The campaign Fight for \$15 has had major successes this year in efforts to raise wages for fast-food workers, thanks to its embrace of unorthodox organizing tactics. That is partly because older strategies for improving working conditions have not worked in the fast-food industry. That may be about to change.

The modern workplace has become “fissured,” say labor historians. Innovative business models, like outsourcing supervision, help maximize profits but tend to worsen working conditions and wages. Noting that almost three million U.S. workers are now employed through temporary agencies, on Aug. 27 the National Labor Relations Board revised a definition of the term joint employer that has hamstrung organizing efforts since the Reagan era. The ruling means that companies cannot obscure their obligations to employees through franchise agreements or by subcontracting staffing to third parties. Unions struggling to organize workers will now be able to bargain with the parent company that is ultimately calling the shots.

Kendall Fells, organizing director of the Fight for \$15, celebrated the ruling by pointing out the obvious: “McDonald’s is the boss.... The company controls everything from the speed of the drive-thru to the way workers fold customers’ bags. It’s common sense that McDonald’s should be held accountable for the rights of workers at its franchised stores.”

What comes next is up to the national unions currently competing to organize fast-food and low-wage retail workers. They should seize this opportunity to coordinate their efforts and avoid disheartening labor turf squabbles. For their part consumers should be attentive to those national chains that cooperate with the N.L.R.B.’s intent and direct their dollars accordingly.

### Another Border Crisis

To the sea of images of migrants making their way across borders we can add one more: families carrying mattresses, luggage, even what appeared to be an air conditioner, across a river separating Venezuela from Colombia (New York Times, Aug. 27). In recent weeks, roughly 1,000 Colombians living in Venezuela were forcibly deported by the government of President Nicolás Maduro. Many more—an estimated 15,000—fled in fear as the government began its crackdown.

The image tells the story: Here are families who had started new lives in Venezuela. When the government targeted their homes for demolition, they decided to

pick up and leave. President Maduro closed the border with Colombia in late August when three soldiers were wounded in a skirmish that he blamed on the Colombian paramilitary. Soon Colombian immigrants were targeted in a deportation campaign that has been roundly denounced as scapegoating. Mr. Maduro has been the subject of intense criticism as the Venezuelan economy suffers from extreme food shortages. Once again, he is pointing the finger of blame at outside forces to bolster his own political standing. Meanwhile, in a bit of bewildering political theater, he has pledged to take in 20,000 Syrian refugees.

Bishops from Venezuela and Colombia met in early September to discuss the growing animosity between the two countries. Pope Francis called the meeting a “sign of hope,” but unfortunately the bishops in Venezuela do not seem to have much influence in Caracas. As the country looks to elections in the fall, world leaders should not be afraid to reprimand Mr. Maduro for his increasingly desperate and dangerous antics.

### Drilling Down

Many environmental activists accused President Obama of hypocrisy during his recent trip to Alaska, which focused on climate change, because of his administration’s approval of offshore drilling permits in the Alaskan Arctic just weeks before. Approving a permit for any new production of fossil fuel sources, they charge, amounts to accelerating global warming.

In an article in *Nature* last January, Christophe McGlade and Paul Ekins suggested that in order to meet the broadly agreed-upon goal of holding global temperature increase to two degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial average, “a third of oil reserves, half of gas reserves and over 80 percent of current coal reserves should remain unused from 2010 to 2050.” If we must make a commitment to leaving some fossil fuels in the ground, then issuing new drilling permits does not make any sense. The trouble, however, is that constraining the development of new supplies is neither a sufficient nor a fully coherent response to the problem.

It might help the argument to note that burning all the available Arctic reserves would damage the climate more than any of President Obama’s other initiatives would help it. But our attention and energy would be better spent on comprehensive responses to climate change, like pricing or taxing carbon emissions or developing competitive renewable energy. And we urgently need a political discussion about how to achieve real solutions, not just set environmental tripwires that we dare not cross.

# Why Educate?

As summer draws to a close, families deliver their sons and daughters to college. They have checked the ratings, visited the campuses and “fit” the young person into an environment where they hope he or she can thrive. Private college tuition in the United States runs from an average of \$25,000 a year to as much as \$50,000, plus room, board and books. To afford this some parents are forced to work two or more jobs, postpone retirement, skip vacations—even sell their homes. To them the investment is worth it, but people measure value in different ways. A college education may “pay off” in a Wall Street job or, for others, two years in the Peace Corps.

Because of the crippling effects of economic inequality, education matters more than ever. But recent headlines bring bad news. Eighty-nine percent of colleges report a rise in clinical depression and 58 percent in anxiety disorders. Binge drinking clouds the mind. Counseling centers struggle to meet the demand, with long wait times to see a psychiatrist. Meanwhile, well-known universities grapple with how to prevent and fairly prosecute sexual assault. According to U.S. Catholic (Sept. 2015), eight Catholic schools have introduced sexual assault prevention programs. Others have banned fraternities and sororities and prohibited alcohol.

Students’ responses to these and other moral crises will depend on the values they have learned from their families and what they learn in class and the dorms. But beneath these experiences is a more fundamental problem, one that rarely makes the headlines but is at the heart of higher education in the 21st century.

In a provocative essay in the September issue of Harper’s, “The Neoliberal Arts,” William Deresiewicz, author of *Excellent Sheep*, indicts the encroachment of neoliberalism, an ideology that reduces all values to money, on campuses. Its purpose, he says, is to “produce producers” rather than “complete human beings.” One need not adopt his terminology or agree with his examples to see the importance of his argument. Indeed, his central thesis is consistent with the mission of Jesuit higher education and many other colleges, religious and secular: the college experience must enable students to “build a self or (following Keats) to become a soul.” This standard measures a graduate by who she becomes as a person, not on how much she makes.

This is not an elitist idea. It applies to anyone who wants to read a book, sing a song, appreciate a painting or

a show. And a student can major in anything—filmmaking, engineering, accounting, nursing, theology or management—and still, if the core curriculum is strong, receive a solid liberal education.



Governors and presidential candidates have proposed several ideas for higher education reform. Florida’s Gov. Rick Scott, to save money, wants to charge higher tuition for those who major in liberal arts in order to attract more engineering and biotechnology students. Wisconsin’s Gov. Scott Walker tried to rewrite the University of Wisconsin’s mission statement, crossing out public service and replacing “search for truth” with “meet the state’s workforce needs.” President Obama once promised that “folks can make a lot more” learning manufacturing and trades than with an art history degree.

Our leaders are responding, in part, to the student debt crisis, which leaves many students in need of a well paying job in order to get a good start in life. Senator Bernie Sanders has proposed the College for All Act, by which the federal government would cover 67 percent and the states 33 percent of the total tuition of public colleges and universities. The money would come from a Robin Hood tax on Wall Street’s investment houses and stock trades. Another proposal would cut by half the interest rates on student loans and enlarge the federal work-study program.

Under either political party, the government must assume its obligation to make education possible. Private schools too, should continue to search for ways to make a college education more affordable for poor and middle-class students. All students should have the opportunity to take the unique journey that college affords.

For those entering college this fall, make the most of it. Pray, make a retreat or take an in-depth course on a Gospel. Choose a mentor, attend a lecture, seek guidance on your future. A service project, especially the chance to help the sick and the poor, can educate the heart. After a year abroad, one will never be the same. Embrace friends; struggle to keep them for life. Read some of the Great Books—Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Hugo, Dickens, Austen, Melville. The goal is not to “teach a lesson” but to allow the great writers to intimately enter the lives of readers literally hundreds of years and thousands of miles away. In this way they live again, and we “build a self, become a soul.”

## REPLY ALL

### No to Vouchers

In "Our Segregated Schools" (Editorial, 8/31) the editors call for the expansion of voucher programs as a way to combat segregation. What that suggestion misses is that Catholic schools are overwhelmingly not unionized. As such, the pay for teachers is significantly lower in Catholic schools than it is in public schools. This is the reason why I oppose any and all vouchers. They weaken teachers' unions when they are already under attack.

The Catholic Church as a universal institution is, of course, multicultural. But Catholic schools in the United States, as well as elsewhere, are segregated because of the prohibitive expense of tuition and the segregation of our communities. More important, the pews at Mass are overwhelmingly segregated in terms of Latino, white and black Catholics as well as by class. But the injustice that leads to the segregation of schools, parishes and communities will not be solved by politically supporting vouchers. It will only be deepened. Vouchers do not advance

the church's mission if they harm the ability of working folks to resist unjust reductions in their wages, benefits and political power.

MARCUS WAGNER  
*Online Comment*

### Nothing to Celebrate

As a former Franciscan friar, I read "Serra's Sainthood," by Jeffrey M. Burns (8/31), with interest. He should have disclosed that he is the director of the American Academy of Franciscan History, an organization that funded, in part, the Serra biography he is touting, by Rosemary Beebe and Robert Senkewicz. He sets up a straw man when he cites fringe groups that condemn the Serra canonization. There are many responsible Native Californians who oppose the canonization. Serra's missionary conquest of California accompanied and supported the military conquest that decimated the Indian population as well as their culture. He supervised the whippings of Indians and even offered to supply stocks and shackles to military commanders if they needed them. These were not "spankings," as some

Franciscan apologists claim.

"Let us look for healing," Burns says. But the Franciscans, the Vatican and the California bishops are not looking for healing, for reconciliation, or offering any apologies. The Indians rightfully call the mission system "genocide" and "slavery." It doesn't matter what the friars and soldiers intended. It's what they did that mattered. They left a wake of sickness, death and the destruction of a culture in their wake. No, you cannot mark this with a canonization, only with sincere apologies. But there will be none of this at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington in September. There will be pomp, self-congratulations and a clerical sideshow. Native Californians consider that insulting, and so do I. A Jesuit magazine should promote the voices of the oppressed, not the defenders of the oppressors.

MARK DAY  
*Online Comment*

### Immigration Now

"Surviving in America," by Tom Deignan (8/17), provides much food for thought. What do we do now, though? Armed with our historical perspective and a sense of what has worked and what has not, how do we plan and build a better future? In the Boston of Anthony Lukas's *Common Ground*, the poor whites were pitted against the poor blacks successfully by the politicians, even though their interests were largely congruent. Editorial pages of some big city dailies still carry an all too visible hint of anti-Catholicism. When our Catholic high schools are populated, for the most part, by largely white middle- to upper middle-class students, how can we expect these young people to develop healthy attitudes toward immigrants or others who are different? And what message is being preached from the pulpit to those who identify as Catholic when it comes to incorporating the lessons of our Catholic American history into

### f STATUS UPDATE

In "Trigger Warning: On Not Looking at Dead Syrian Babies" (*In All Things*, 9/1), Kevin Clarke considers the decision of mainstream media outlets, including *America*, to not publish photographs of migrant and refugee children who drowned in the Mediterranean. Readers weigh in.

I think we've got it right in the United States for this reason: Those who have compassion do not need to see the pictures, whereas those whose humanity has withered are, believe it or not, unshaken in their views even by the sight of dead children. I have been totally shocked by the comments on Facebook below an image of drowned babies, people

frequently saying, "It's a shame, but we've no room!" So I don't believe the images change people's opinions, and once such an image has been printed, where do we go from there? The images become commonplace and we start to be hardened to them. We should also respect the dignity of the dead. We do not need to plaster them across social media; it doesn't help and can have a negative effect.

SUSAN WARDLE

Publish the pictures: from Syria, from Iraq, from Africa and from every place of conflict. Paraphrasing the words of Robert E. Lee after one of the battles of the Civil War: "It is well that war is so terrible, lest we should grow too fond of it."

GREG WOOD

the present day issue of immigration?  
BARRY FITZPATRICK  
*Online Comment*

### Closed Ears

The Aug. 3 column *Of Many Things*, by Matt Malone, S.J., sounded so very clerical, something Pope Francis has spoken against. Yes, we have many good bishops who are attentive to the welfare of their flock. However, this column could not have been written by the many parents, particularly mothers, who have approached and continue to contact bishops to report abuse of their children and have been summarily dismissed. It could not have been written by the many women who have been made to feel guilty when they bring concerns to a bishop. It could not have been written by the parents who have children who are homosexual and who are seeking the church to be more inclusive and are told to disappear. It could not have been written by the poor who see the lavish regalia of the bishops when they are seeking to just have food and housing for their families. I could go on with many others who have experienced the closed ears of many bishops. Yes, we cannot lump all of the hierarchy together, but we do have to acknowledge that many bishops have failed to serve their flock as Pope Francis has set forth in many addresses and documents.

MARIAH SNYDER  
*St. Paul, Minn.*

### Church Commons

Re “Pontifex Economicus,” by Nathan Schneider (8/3): As I see it, we must first and foremost practice “commoning” in our own parish boundaries. What if each parish provided food, shelter, clothing and health services for everyone who is needy within the boundary of that parish? Yes, some

parishes would need help from well-off ones. But, sadly, we want to turn feeding, clothing, sheltering and healing over to civil government, which has no interest in treating people as if they were treating Jesus. Combine the free market with a mindset of commoning in each parish and thus include God in the mix, who then has a chance to bless and even multiply our efforts. The question, as always, is: What are we, individually, willing to offer from the personal gifts we have received from God? When we shirk that responsibility and turn it over to civil government, we lose an opportunity to be Christ-like. With man it is impossible. With God, all things are possible.

MIKE VAN VRANKEN  
*Online Comment*

### Product Placement

I find it rather disconcerting to find an ad for a “Pope on a Pedestal” figurine next to “Blue Skies Ahead” (7/20), a column by James T. Keane regarding air quality and with the clear connection to Pope Francis’ recent encyclical on the environment. Is **America** truly so in need of revenues that it must take ads for stuff like “collectible items”

at an “incredible value—strictly limited,” while trying to bring home the message of “Laudato Si’” to readers, as covered in previous issues? One of the pope’s points is that we consumers buy so much unnecessary stuff and that each purchase has an environmental impact that diminishes the quality of the environment. Do we really need to have **America** participate in selling such stuff? Please, talk the talk and walk the walk.

JAMES OKRASZEWSKI  
*Land O’ Lakes, Wis.*

### In Christ’s Gaze

I so enjoy hearing from today’s “new evangelists” in the *Generation Faith* column. In particular, thank you and kudos to Robert Minton for “Fortified Faith” (7/6). Mr. Minton’s essay evoked in me memories of my own struggles as a student at Northwestern University so many years ago. The environment was quite hedonistic; I was constantly challenged in my striving for holiness and wholeness. I, too, was my own toughest critic.

The author wrote of forgetting his failures and gazing, “however obliquely, upon the good in others and ourselves”

and using that good “as the well-spring of growth.” Bravo! Pope Francis writes of another kind of gazing in “The Joy of the Gospel.” He says we need to place ourselves in the presence of the Lord and let Jesus gaze upon us: “Standing before him with open hearts, letting him look at us, we see that gaze of love which Nathaniel glimpsed...” (No. 264). When one sits in the presence of the Lord and allows the Lord to gaze upon him- or herself, one cannot help but be moved to share that warmth and love with others.

MATT FURJANIC  
*Chicago, Ill.*



CARTOON: BOB ECKSTEIN

MIDDLE EAST

## U.S. Bishops Urge Stepped-up Response to Syrian Refugee Crisis

**T**he Obama administration announced on Sept. 10 that it would seek to admit 10,000 Syrian refugees during the next fiscal year in response to a growing crisis that has shocked consciences around the world. That number would reflect a significant increase from the 1,293 admitted in fiscal year 2015, but it falls far short of the number other nations have pledged to accept.

“The United States could take considerably more refugees for resettlement if it had the political will to do so,” said Mitzi Schroeder, the director for policy for Jesuit Refugee Service/USA. She explained that resettlement capacity is not an obstacle in the United States. In the past, in fact, much higher numbers of refugees have been absorbed. After the chaotic end of the Vietnam War, the United States resettled 10,000 refugees a month from Vietnam alone, according to Schroeder.

But now, she said, the “cumbersome and lengthy security procedures” put in place after 9/11 make rapid response to such crises problematic, requiring the deployment of tremendous resources to get refugees interviewed and approved.

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a call for a stronger effort on behalf of Middle East refugees on Sept. 10, just a few days after a dramatic appeal from Pope Francis that every Catholic parish in Europe sponsor a refugee family. “I urge all Catholics in the United States and others of good will to express openness and welcome to these refugees, who are escaping desperate situations in order to survive,” he said. “Regardless of their religious affiliation or national origin, these refugees are all human persons—made in the image of God, bearing inherent dignity and deserving our respect and care and protection by law from persecution.”

Archbishop Kurtz encouraged a stronger response from the U.S. government to “assist more robustly the nations of Europe and the Middle East in protecting and supporting these refugees and in helping to end this horrific conflict.” He added, “The Catholic Church in the United States—with nearly 100 Catholic Charities agencies and hundreds of parishes assisting refugees to this country each year, and with Catholic Relief Services providing humanitarian aid to refugees in the Middle East and Europe—stands ready to help in this effort.”

Officials from Jesuit Refugee Service/USA welcomed the new commitment from the United States but suggested that the new numbers should reflect only the beginning of a more comprehensive effort to respond to the deepening crisis. J.R.S. officials point out that even as nations agree to higher refugee thresholds, the current bureaucratic process for registering, vetting and accepting refugees remains onerous and in its current composition will never meet the pressing needs of the crisis. Most resettlement officials agree that it would be best to increase the processing of resettlement applicants before they begin a hazardous flight across the Middle East and the Mediterranean to gain access to Europe.

But resettlement, “while tremendously important for some individuals,” is not the full answer for a crisis of this size, said Schroeder. “More resources are needed to improve the situation in



the region to keep the door open for refugees arriving and to make refugees’ lives tolerable while in exile.” That could “alleviate the pressure forcing refugee families to take risky routes to seek better conditions.” She added, “Creative thinking is also needed on ways to make refugees safe and self-sufficient in the short term, for example, through a legal status including right to work, until some long term solution can be reached.”

**KEVIN CLARKE**

SACRAMENTS

## Papal Decrees Seek Faster Annulments

**P**ope Francis’ reformed rules for marriage annulment cases, making the process simpler, quicker



**SAFE AT LAST?** Syrian refugee children covered with dust arrive on Sept. 10 at the Jordanian border with Syria and Iraq, near Amman, Jordan.

and less expensive, respond to calls that bishops from around the world have been making since before the 1980 meeting of the Synod of Bishops on the family convoked by St. John Paul II. With the new rules released on Sept. 8, Pope Francis has made important changes to the annulment process, but he did not make it easier for couples to prove a union was not a marriage.

“I think these decrees are another indication of Pope Francis’ pastoral concern and fleshing out that concern with a practical and viable strategy,” the Rev. Kevin McKenna, a canon lawyer who is pastor of the Sacred Heart Cathedral Community in Rochester, N.Y., told *America*. “He has not changed the dogmatic and theological principles which underlie the annulment process. He has instead worked to make it less cumbersome and less expensive.”

In two apostolic letters—one for the Latin church and one for eastern-rite

churches—Pope Francis removed the requirement that all decrees of nullity must be confirmed by a second panel of judges; he urged dioceses around the world to make the process free or as close to free as possible; and he established a “brief process” by which diocesan bishops can recognize the nullity of a union when both parties agree and have overwhelming proof that their union did not meet at least one of the Catholic Church’s requirements for a sacramental marriage.

“Hopefully tribunal personnel will be reinvigorated in the upcoming Year of Mercy to work with applicants with compassion and to utilize the new procedures as a form of ministry to those who come to them from a difficult domestic situation,” Father McKenna said.

Catholic marriage tribunals do not dissolve marriages, but assess whether or not a valid sacramental marriage was present from the beginning. Catholics whose first unions are declared null—meaning there never was a sacramental marriage—are free to marry in the church and receive the sacraments, including reconciliation and Communion.

The need to reform the annulment process and cut its costs was supported by an overwhelming majority of bishops—about 90 percent—at last year’s meeting of the Synod of Bishops. The U.S. bishops report that most tribunals charge between \$200 and \$1,000, and the process can take 12 to 18 months. Some go on for years.

James Conn, S.J., professor of the practice of canon law at Boston College,

suggested that the pope’s decision to respond to calls to reform the annulment process now has moved the subject off the table for the upcoming synod on family life in October. That should allow synod participants to focus on other problematic challenges related to divorced and remarried Catholics. Although the new rules respond to most bishops’ sense that the annulment process was too cumbersome, they do not resolve the cases of Catholics who want to return to the sacraments after they are divorced and civilly remarried without having received an annulment.

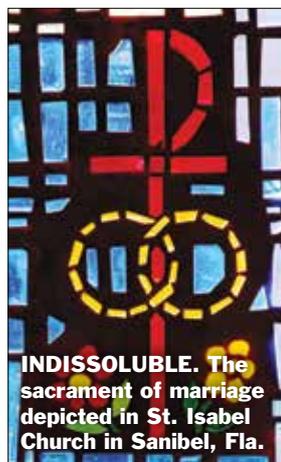
When Cardinal Walter Kasper of Germany, a well-known theologian, former diocesan bishop and Vatican official, suggested to the College of Cardinals in February 2014 the possibility of a “penitential process” that could lead some divorced and civilly remarried Catholics back to the sacraments without an annulment, he insisted it would respond to

the needs only of a small portion of divorced and remarried Catholics. Most should seek an annulment, he said.

For those who have little or no chance of proving their initial union was not a sacramental marriage and cannot leave their current partner, the penitential path would—in a reflection of God’s mercy—tolerate their second union and allow them to receive

Communion, Cardinal Kasper said. It would not entail denying that their sacramental marriage was indissoluble, and it would not permit them to marry again in the church.

That “penitential path” option is expected to be debated at the world synod of bishops in October.



**INDISSOLUBLE.** The sacrament of marriage depicted in St. Isabel Church in Sanibel, Fla.

## Mission History Review

California Catholic leaders plan to revamp church curriculum and museum programs on the California mission system to present more accurately the history, the perspective of California Indians and the missions' impact on Indian life. The initiative is part of a larger program of the California bishops and Franciscan leaders preparing for the canonization of Blessed Junípero Serra, a Spanish Franciscan missionary who founded the California mission system. Pope Francis is scheduled to canonize him in Washington on Sept. 23. Many Native Americans and organizations have criticized the upcoming canonization, saying that Blessed Serra was part of a system that destroyed Indian life. "The Indian experience has been ignored or denied, replaced by an incomplete version of history focused more on European colonists than on the original Californians," said the president of the California Catholic Conference, Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento, in a statement on Sept. 4 about the curriculum and cultural review.

## Faith Hiring Protection

Religious leaders from different faith traditions urged President Obama in a letter on Sept. 10 to continue to permit government-funded faith groups to employ people with like beliefs. Their request comes less than a month after a coalition of religious and secular organizations sent the president a letter saying the current policy will tarnish his legacy of fair and equal treatment for all Americans. The latest signatories said the administration's policy allows equal opportunities for religious groups to work with government in helping the needy. "Making it more difficult for faith-based organizations to join those partnerships would undermine, rather

## NEWS BRIEFS

As Israeli students began their second week of classes on Sept. 6, thousands of students and teachers from Christian schools converged in front of the Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu's office to **protest government budget cuts** to their schools. • During his homily on Sept. 10, Pope Francis said, "If you do not know how to forgive, you are not a Christian," before imploring priests who cannot be merciful to **ask for a desk job** and "never walk into a confessional, I beg you." • Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington, D.C., **called for solidarity** with the persecuted Christians of the Middle East during a Sept. 9 prayer service during the In Defense of Christians summit in Washington. • The Vatican's doctrinal congregation **upheld a Spanish bishop's refusal** on Sept. 1 to allow a transsexual person to be a godparent. • On Sept. 10, New York's **Gov. Andrew Cuomo** pledged his support for a minimum wage increase to \$15 an hour, a hike that would help three million N.Y. wage earners. • **Cardinal Charles Bo** of Yangon urged Myanmar's president on Sept. 10 to review laws that could target religious minorities, arguing the legislation fragments "the dream of a united Myanmar."



Israel school protest

than burnish, your commitment to effective and flourishing 'all hands' partnerships," reads the letter, released by the Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance. "Religious staffing by religious organizations is protected in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and is not illegal discrimination," signatories said. "This right is not somehow waived or otherwise lost simply by the receipt of government funds."

## Right-to-Die Bill Rejected in U.K.

British parliamentarians on Sept. 11 soundly rejected a right-to-die bill that would have allowed people with less than six months to live to end their lives legally. Only 118 members

of Parliament voted in favor of the bill; 330 voted against it. The bill had faced strong opposition from various religious leaders in the United Kingdom. A letter written by Justin Welby, archbishop of Canterbury, and signed by leading representatives of the Roman Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh faiths said the proposed bill crossed "a legal and ethical Rubicon" and would turn suicide into a social norm. Meanwhile, across the pond in the United States, a measure that would allow physicians to prescribe life-ending drugs to the terminally ill passed the California statehouse and was on its way to Gov. Jerry Brown's desk on Sept. 11.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

## Church Police in South Africa?

In the last few months a pastor and self-styled prophet, Penuel Mnguni of the End Times Disciples Ministries, has been commanding members of his congregation in Soshanguve township near Pretoria to eat live snakes. Charged with cruelty to animals and released pending trial, the pastor has recently encouraged his followers to eat underwear. Others of his ilk have made believers eat grass or drink petrol.

Church leaders from across the theological spectrum have denounced these practices as dangerous and immoral. They complain they bring religion itself into disrepute. Secular observers have called Mnguni's acts gross violations of human rights. A few have even proposed that some form of regulation be introduced to control religious excesses, with some Christian voices calling for a self-regulatory body.

That such ministries are sinister is obvious. They rely on mass, possibly hypnotic, suggestion, group hysteria and unscrupulous manipulation. In many cases the promise of "miracles" and personal empowerment is directly connected to deeper preoccupations: personal healing and prosperity.

These promises come at a price, of course. Apart from leaving one's reason at the church door (or tent flap, as in the case of our little friend Mnguni), the price includes massive "tithes" to the pastors as a sign of faith in their power. Needless to say, there is no evidence to show that people get better or richer—apart from the pastors.

These cults are driving a deeper

**ANTHONY EGAN, S.J.**, a correspondent for *America*, is a member of the Jesuit Institute South Africa.

wedge between the secular state and the religious communities. South African society is marked by a strange combination of deep faith and growing secularism. The percentage of nonreligious people, particularly among economic, social and political elites, has grown dramatically since 1994. Simultaneously faith practices have become more fundamentalist. Pentecostal-Evangelical and African Initiated Christianity has

Leaders from across the theological spectrum have denounced these practices.

become the dominant spiritual discourse. Biblical literalism, belief in witchcraft and the supernatural and the embrace of "miracles and wonders" is common currency.

Secularists are contemptuous of such credulity, citing it as further proof of the irrationality of *all* religion. The formerly mainstream European-founded churches rightly worry that the credibility of faith itself is at stake. Dysfunctional religion and spiritual abuse make the headlines; the churches' long-established charity and service to the poor do not. Faced with declining membership, they are also faced with a deeper dilemma: whether—or how far—to embrace the beliefs and practices of the new churches.

Suggestions about greater regulation of churches are neither workable nor desirable. They are unworkable because the kinds of churches that practice these dangerous absurdities are part of a long-established, but mushrooming

trend of self-styled, often individual "ministries" built around charismatic individuals. They lack any real structure or theology apart from an eccentric, literal reading of the Bible and people's willingness to believe in what is preached. These churches easily pop up and just as quickly disappear.

Regulation is also undesirable. No one wants to see state control of religion. It is also unnecessary, since the South African Constitution, while strongly defending freedom of religion, sets limitations on church practices already based on deference to human rights. While conscience allows religions to practice what they believe (for example, not to witness same-sex marriages), some practices that violate the law (corporal punishment in faith-based schools) are outlawed. Mnguni has rightly been prosecuted not for his belief but for cruelty to animals.

So what is to be done to curb what I consider at the very least spiritual abuse? It seems essential that the wider South African public receive better religious education, both from within faith communities and from state education—the latter having abolished most religion education and cut back on theology faculties in state universities since the 1990s. Above all, state and faith communities need to understand *why* so many people are being drawn into prosperity and healing religion. As I see it, poverty and desperation, poor education and massively inadequate public health-care are issues that need to be addressed.

I suspect, too, that this is not a uniquely South African problem. If we look at fundamentalism globally, some with practices even more dangerous than eating snakes, we see the same causes, the same challenges to reasonable people of all or no faiths.

**ANTHONY EGAN**



# Nouveau Censors

Who wasn't outraged at the recent news that the required reading for Duke University's incoming students this August was Alison Bechdel's graphic novel *Fun Home*, and that some students had opted out? The students had taken offense on religious grounds at what they called graphic depictions of same-sex liaisons and promotion of a lesbian lifestyle. Those outraged that students were forced to read such material were soon outnumbered by those outraged that students were allowed to decide which assignments they needed to complete. For almost everyone, it was one more sign civilization is collapsing.

The obvious winner here was Alison Bechdel, who immediately gained an enormous new audience (including myself) looking to see what the fuss was all about. While her book is raw at many points, I found it hard to see how anyone could argue it is pornographic or obscene. While obscenity can be a difficult thing to pin down (Remember Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's litmus test: "I know it when I see it"), surely those college students have seen 10 million images more obscene on the side of a bus than the few raw or suggestive drawings in the book.

The students who opted out are an easy foil, of course, because one can and should argue that the whole point of college is to be exposed to unsettling things. But one of academia's dirty little secrets isn't being mentioned by either side: In reality, the threat of literary censorship in academia these days (Catholic and otherwise) does not usually come from religious or cultural

traditionalists but from those who fancy themselves the most progressive.

The fight against obscenity can seem a relic of another age, the quaint time of the Legion of Decency, so when it comes to sexy books these days, we sometimes loudly assure each other we are not prudes. Raise your hand if you've endured a priest tendentiously explaining just how wonderfully naughty the Song of Songs is meant to be. But this doesn't mean we've surrendered our notions of outrage. On the contrary; it might be our signature emotion. We have just found new and different offenses to be outraged by, and most of them can be found in the books we teach.

But literature, like life, is a messy thing. Your favorite author might also be a terrible sexist or racist or homophobic, or an enthusiast for some other loathsome hobby. His or her characters might be even worse. It can make for hard reading and often requires a stout heart. Remember when you first realized what was going on in Nabokov's *Lolita*? That novel abounds in graphic and repulsive scenes, and not in some jejune comic-book fashion either. But did reading *Lolita* land you in the hospital?

An unfortunate commonplace in our educational institutions these days is the notion that students must be protected from certain literature because it could damage them or trigger hidden traumas. Nabokov wouldn't stand a chance against the blizzard of trigger warnings and complaints about micro-aggressions that would accompany his novel today. It has become not a question of whether most can handle *Lolita*, but whether there might be some stu-

dent who can't. This is the new morality, and with it the new pornography.

But what can escape the outrage censors when everything is an outrage? Old episodes of "Family Feud"? (Not the ones with that oleaginous Richard Dawson, that's for sure). Want to read your children *The Chronicles of Narnia*? C. S. Lewis employed vicious caricatures of Arabs to depict the desert-dwelling Calormenes, complete with scimitars, hooked noses and tur-

bans—all worshipping a god clearly identifiable as Satan. How about John Kennedy Toole's brilliant novel, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, something of a hipster bible? A cruel and clichéd mockery of homosexuals is central to the plot. *Huckleberry Finn*? So, so racist. The same criteria will soon sink

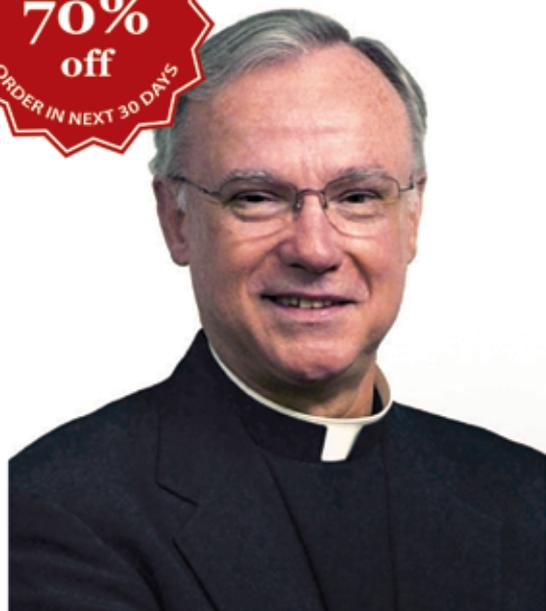
But what can escape the outrage censors when everything is an outrage?

Flannery O'Connor, Richard Ford, Joseph Heller and William Faulkner as well—not in the name of decency, but in the name of safety.

Our irony, in the world of Catholic literature and academia, is that no group should fear the good intentions of the censors more than Catholic intellectuals themselves. It wasn't long ago that Rome was actually blacklisting Graham Greene and other novelists in the Index of Forbidden Books, to say nothing of the academic theologians silenced by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Why? Because good Catholics needed to be protected from harmful literature.

Laughable, isn't it? That we once thought so little of people that we assumed they'd be permanently damaged if they read the wrong thing.

JAMES T. KEANE is an editor at Orbis Books in Ossining, N.Y., and a former associate editor of *America*. Twitter: @jamestkeane.



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# A Deacon's Education

Lessons on the universal call to Christian ministry

BY JAY CORMIER

**O**n Memorial Day weekend last year, 22 of us stood before our bishop and were ordained to the diaconate. We had spent four years—five if you include the year of discernment and application—preparing for this day. In that time we had studied Scripture, liturgy, moral theology and canon law. I would soon discover I still had a lot to learn.

Now, having completed my first year of ordained ministry, I can see that the most important things I have learned apply to all of us who struggle to be disciples of Jesus and sons and daughters of God. These lessons are less about fulfilling the duties of a deacon and more about simply being a Christian.

## It Is Not About You

As my wife, Ann, and I went through the formation process for deacons, we shared our questions and doubts: “Is this the right thing for us? What if I get assigned to a pastor who does not really want a deacon? What if I am asked to take on something I cannot do—or have no interest in? We do not see enough of each other as it is. What if I...? What if we...?”

Finally, a priest whose wisdom and friendship I have cherished since my undergraduate days said to me: “Jay, if you’re doing this because you think you might be able to do some good, if you think you might be able use your gifts for the whole church, then do it. But if you’re doing it for yourself, for what you’ll get out of it, stop now. You will only be disappointed in the end. And, frankly, we don’t need another self-absorbed cleric in the church.”

I think this is the attitude we should all bring to the church: It is about us, not me. Jesus calls us to community, which requires humility, generosity and a spirit of gratitude. To possess the heart and mind of Jesus begins with embracing his model of service. In a very real sense we are all deacons, called to serve and love one another. That is Jesus’ vision of church: He calls us to ministry not in the sacrament of holy orders but in the

sacrament of baptism.

If and when I get too taken with my ordained role in the church, it will help me to remember that the Greek word for *deacon* is also the word for *waiter*.

## The Right Fit

At Mass and liturgical functions, I wear a big, monastic-style alb that was given to me at candidacy. The first time I wore it, I could barely move. I felt I was swimming in this sea of cloth. I still sometimes feel lost in it.

And that is a good thing, I have learned. I should disappear in it. Anyone who ministers in the church should “disappear” in his or her work. We take our cue from John the Baptist in the fourth Gospel: “Christ must increase, I must decrease...” (Jn 3:30).

When I celebrate a baptism or a wedding, it is God working in this moment, not me. God speaks when I preach faithfully; God is present when I lead a community in prayer. We ordained people might possess an authority or competence

**When I celebrate a baptism or a wedding, it is God working in this moment, not me. God speaks when I preach faithfully; God is present when I lead a community in prayer.**

that comes from learning and experience, but the truth is that as a deacon I have no power. And neither does anyone else who is ordained. God has the power. I do not baptize; I pour the water and voice the prayers. God is acting in our words and gestures.

Every day in the parish I become more aware of the everyday “small-s” sacraments we all take part in. The grace of God is present in the generosity and kindness we offer, in the forgiveness we extend, in the justice we sacrifice for.

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JAY CORMIER, a deacon at Saints Mary and Joseph Parish in Salem, N.H., teaches communications and humanities at St. Anselm College and Merrimack College and edits the homiletics resource *Connections*.



**BLESSING BEASTS.** Deacon Eric Bertrand and Deacon Tom Hunkele bless hogs in Iowa on April 10.

Aprons, work gloves and sneakers can be the vesture of ministers; cooking pots, storybooks and rakes are all sacred vessels when they become instruments of the love of God in our midst. Such is the power of God who works in all our ministries. My big alb reminds me to make room for him.

### God Belongs in the Kitchen

Many good and dedicated people, ordained and not, give a great deal of time to make a parish work. But sometimes when we are running off to church, we trip over God on the way out the door of our own homes.

We forget that God is present at our tables every night. God is present when we are reading to our children at bedtime or helping them with their homework. The spirit of God hovers over our teenager and us when we are having one of those “talks.” The love of God surrounds you and your spouse when you are together.

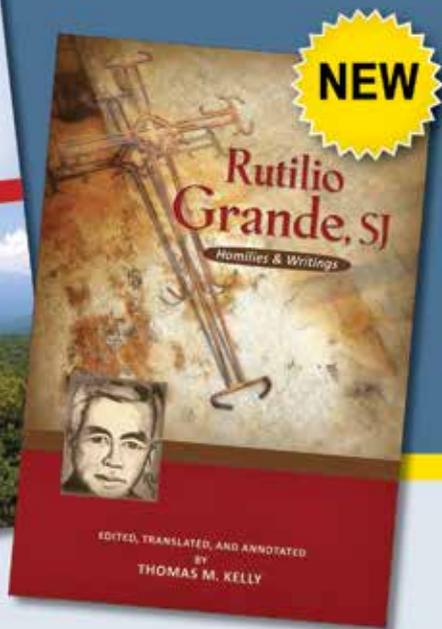
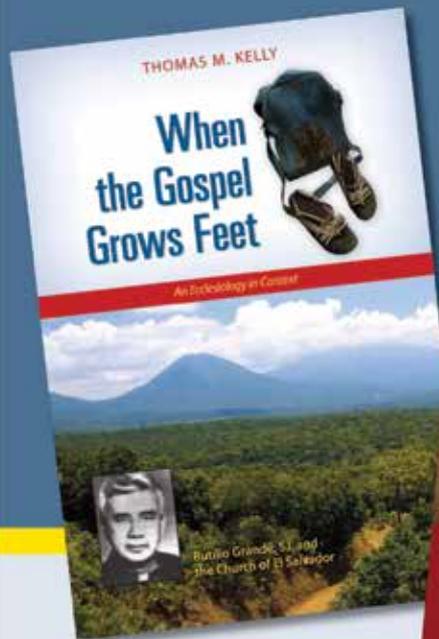
I am discovering more and more that people are looking for God in their lives where they are. We church folk often sound as if we want people to abandon their lives and

embrace God’s grace in a different existence, in a safe bubble detached from the evil of the world. But, again, as John the Baptist proclaims: the Lamb of God walks among us. The challenge of all Christians is to reveal the love of God in the midst of our messy, clumsy, hectic lives. As St. Teresa of Avila counseled her sisters: “God walks among the pots and pans.”

That is certainly the challenge the millennial generation in the United States is posing to us. Every demographic and sociological profile of millennials—the 80 million strong born between 1980 and 2000—shows a generation that is pragmatic and realistic, neither dreamers nor romantics. Are they self-centered? Some. But what drives them? Purpose. They want their lives to mean something. They do not care about establishments and institutions; they are more interested in relationships. They are not impressed by power. They seek joy and authenticity.

We in church ministry should take note of what the Time magazine reporter Joel Stein told us in his cover story on millennials in May 20, 2013: “They’re not into going to church,

“BECAUSE AFTER HIM [ROMERO] THERE IS...”  
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even though they believe in God, because they don’t identify with big institutions; one-third of adults under 30, the highest percentage ever, are religiously unaffiliated. They want new experiences, which are more important to them than material goods.”

That is our present and future challenge: to make the church a place where they can do good and meaningful things, where they can love others, where they can experience God in relationship and community. I have come to understand that the most important thing pastors and ministers, teachers and parents can do is to reveal the love of God in the midst of the good we do and are: God in our families, God in our work, God in our school, God among our friends, God in our community. Even as I have taken on the role of an ordained minister in our church, I have learned to look beyond the church walls for the presence of God—in my life with Ann and my family, in my teaching, in my writing, in my parish.

As a student of mine said to me, “Show me where God is in my life. Help me see the possibilities for good and meaning in the real life I’m living.” And that is what makes every one of us disciples: being aware of God’s love in the ordinary messiness of our everyday lives. God is present not only on the parish table in bread and wine but at our own dinner tables, when we share simple meals with family and friends.

This is what I have learned over the past six years, studying and praying about the diaconate and making my way through my first year of ministry, with the help of a generous and patient pastor, parish staff and community. It has been a wonderful experience, but a profoundly humbling one, and I am grateful for that gift of humility.

So please continue to pray for the ordained in your parish and community: that we may always be good and selfless waiters, that we may not walk around or trip over God on our way and that we never, ever get too comfortable in our albs and stoles.



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# TV Comes of Age

In 1961, when the chair of the Federal Communications Commission, Newton Minow, declared television a “vast wasteland,” he could not have foreseen that the medium would be transformed into something more like a huge rainforest, so fertile that it’s impossible to count all its species. Minnow was speaking when almost all programming was produced by three commercial networks. ABC, CBS and NBC claimed to give people what they asked for—copycat Westerns, ridiculous sitcoms and the occasional bit of mindless violence, later in the evening, for the dads of America. But that was a form of circular logic, for Americans were still fascinated enough by television itself that they were willing to watch whatever they were given.

An episode of the sitcom “The Beverly Hillbillies,” in which Granny mistakes a kangaroo for a “giant jack-rabbit,” set a viewership record on Jan. 8, 1964, and legend has it that Americans wanted a bit of escapism after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. But in much of the country the only alternatives that evening were the ponderous medical drama “Ben Casey” and an NBC special on Pope Paul VI’s visit to Bethlehem and Jerusalem. (The latter was the kind of program the networks would sprinkle across their schedules when they feared the government might take away their licenses for not serving the “public interest.”) At a time when families watched television together, and parents somewhat guiltily used the “idiot box” as a way to pacify

the kids, it is no surprise that a comedy was the popular pick of the evening.

Nothing like “The Beverly Hillbillies” could be produced today. Maybe the idea of a dirt-poor family in the Ozarks becoming millionaires would result in a truly inventive animated series, or a drama in which Jed Clampett questions what his new riches say about his purpose in life, or a reality series that explored sex and drugs in Beverly Hills. But a show that attempted to entertain everyone in the family and stayed away from politics, religion and anything controversial would be pointless in 2015.

Today’s audience has been splintered by hundreds of cable networks and websites like Netflix. It’s a cliché to compare the style of contemporary TV dramas to novels, but the comparison also applies to *how* people view television series today—when they want and at their own pace. Thoughtful programs can slowly find an audience through word-of-mouth or through their inclusion on college syllabuses, as has been the case with HBO’s drama “The Wire.”

“The Wire”—which began as a look at the war on drugs in Baltimore and zoomed out to cover city politics, public education and journalism—is the most prominent example of a TV series informing public debate in the same way a novel like “The Grapes of Wrath” or a nonfiction exposé like “Silent Spring” once did. We’ve also seen nuanced depictions of American politics on this year’s miniseries “Show Me a Hero,” which dramatized the fight to desegregate public housing in Yonkers,

N.Y. Even a more comedic series, like “Orange Is the New Black,” can provoke debate about our prison system.

Other series tackle the big question of what makes a fulfilling life, with “Mad Men” questioning consumerism and the blind drive for status. In the 1980s, that AMC series would not have attracted enough teenage viewers to last more than a few episodes, but now a show that merits repeated

viewings by a small audience can be profitable. There have been even smaller audiences for such programs as “Enlightened,” about the paradox of a self-absorbed social activist, and “Rectify,” which centers on a man released from death row and poses tough questions about faith and forgiveness.

Journalism has not necessarily benefited from this splintering of the TV audience. News divisions operate by the old rules of getting large numbers of viewers now, not in a few years on Netflix. Often the result is sensationalism and appeals to partisan prejudice. The trend toward niche programming may also limit subject matter on dramatic series. “Friday Night Lights” was lauded by critics, but few blue-state viewers were interested in a show about high-school football in Texas. “The Wire” gave little attention to churches in Baltimore’s black community, perhaps because it would be a turn-off to upscale HBO viewers. The vast wasteland is gone, but there is still room for growth.

**ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN**

**ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN** is a freelance writer and editor living in the Boston area. Twitter: @RobertDSullivan.



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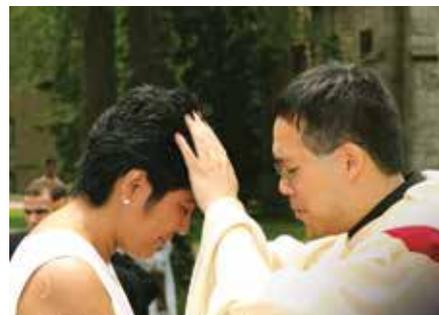
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# On Their Shoulders

## The pallium in American Catholic history

BY GERALD P. FOGARTY

**T**he news that Pope Francis has changed the procedure for the reception and imposition of the pallium probably struck most Catholics as a relatively insignificant alteration in a ceremony restricted to very high members of the hierarchy, archbishops with metropolitan provinces—and therefore virtually unknown to most of the faithful. The change in the ceremony means that although each year the newly named metropolitans will go to Rome to receive the pallium from the pope on June 29, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, as they have done in the past, the pallium will actually be imposed on them only later, in the cathedral of their home diocese.

The pallium, made of wool and worn around the neck, was originally used only by popes, symbolizing that the pope was a good shepherd carrying a lamb on his shoulders. By about the sixth century, the pallium was granted also to metropolitan archbishops to indicate their ties to the see of Rome and their jurisdiction over a metropolitan province, which consists in a major diocese or metropolitan see and several suffragan dioceses. (It should be noted that prelates may have the rank of archbishop without being metropolitans, like nuncios to governments or apostolic delegates to national hierarchies or secretaries to Roman curial congregations.)

As the practice of conferring the pallium on a metropolitan developed, it came to symbolize his full metropolitan authority. Citing earlier legislation, the Code of Canon Law of 1917 specified that a new archbishop had three months after being consecrated or taking possession of his see to seek the pallium from the pope either personally or through a representative. Only after the pallium was imposed could he exercise his authority in the province. This canon was repeated in the revised code of 1983.

In the United States, getting the pallium was sometimes difficult. In 1808 Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore was named the first archbishop in the United States, with



**SPECIAL DELIVERY.** Boxes containing palliums ready in St. Peter's Basilica for delivery to new metropolitan archbishops on June 29.

the suffragan sees of Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Bardstown. But the official bulls and pallium had been entrusted to Bishop Richard Luke Concannon, O.P., who was consecrated in Rome as the first bishop of New York. Unfortunately, he was unable to obtain passage on a ship to the United States because of the Napoleonic wars and died in Naples. Only on Aug. 18, 1811, did Archbishop Carroll receive the pallium, delivered by the British minister to the United States and imposed on him by Bishop Leonard

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**GERALD P. FOGARTY, S.J.**, is the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Religious Studies and History at the University of Virginia.

Neale, the coadjutor bishop who would succeed him as archbishop.

Immigration was the single greatest cause for the increase of the Catholic population and, therefore, for the increase of archdioceses. In 1846 St. Louis was elevated to metropolitan status, as was Oregon City, which was in the Oregon territory, then disputed between the United States and Britain. Three years later, the bishops of the province of Baltimore, which included all the United States except for St. Louis, which did not yet have suffragan sees, met for the Seventh Provincial Council. Independent of the conciliar legislation, the bishops, who included Archbishop Peter R. Kenrick of St. Louis, met to petition the Holy See to elevate to metropolitan sees the dioceses of New York, Cincinnati and New Orleans. When Pius IX received the petition, he must have seen a glimmer of hope in the expansion of the church across the Atlantic, for in Europe the church seemed shrouded in darkness. At the time, he had been exiled from Rome by the forces of the Risorgimento, which would finally end papal temporal power, and was living in Gaeta, near Naples. From there, he sent the necessary bulls and palliums to establish the new archdioceses.

## A Growing Church

But the American church continued to expand. In 1875 Pius IX, nearing the end of what remains the longest pontificate

in church history, named the first American cardinal, John McCloskey, archbishop of New York, and established the four new provinces with a metropolitan and suffragan sees: Boston, Philadelphia, Milwaukee and Santa Fe. The Holy See appointed Msgr. Cesare Roncetti to bring the red biretta to Archbishop McCloskey and the palliums for the new metropolitans. Boston was separated from the Province of New York, Philadelphia from the Province of Baltimore, and Milwaukee and Santa Fe from the Province of St. Louis. The growing metropolis of Chicago was temporarily bypassed because the bishop, James Duggan, had gone insane and was in a mental hospital in Hanover, Mo.; so for the time Chicago remained part of the Province of St. Louis. Duggan had a coadjutor, Thomas Foley, who died in 1880, at which time Chicago also became an archdiocese. Santa Fe was elevated to the status of archdiocese, but its suffragan sees were not canonically dioceses but vicariates apostolic, missionary territories under the jurisdiction of bishops with delegated authority from the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, the missionary arm of the Holy See, in Rome.

In April 1875 Monsignor Roncetti presented the red biretta to Archbishop McCloskey in Old St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. The new cardinal-elect still had to go to Rome to receive the official red hat from the pope at a consistory. Monsignor Roncetti then undertook a tour of the United States to attend the celebrations of the imposi-

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tion of the pallium in Boston, Philadelphia and Milwaukee. He described the ceremonies and the Gregorian chant in Boston and Philadelphia as equal to anything in Europe. He then took a train to Pittsburgh and then to Chicago, where he boarded a steamboat to go up Lake Michigan to Milwaukee. There he reflected on the ethnic pluralism of the American church, as he described the reading of the bulls in Latin, English and German.

He then told his Roman superiors that he abandoned his original intention to proceed to Santa Fe to confer the pallium on Archbishop John Baptist Lamy. He had learned from Cardinal McCloskey and others that the distance from New York to Santa Fe was almost equal to that of an ocean-crossing to Italy, with about 400 miles of the journey by stage coach or on horseback, with “the danger of encountering the Indians, who entertain themselves by taking from the foreigners they encounter the hair on top of the cranium.” The monsignor commented that “although because of my baldness I would not have to fear becoming the victim of this act, nevertheless I think it well not to venture on this journey,” so he entrusted the brief and the pallium to Bishop John Baptist Salpointe, the vicar apostolic of Arizona, who was passing through New York on his way to his post.

### The Imposition of the Pallium

Monsignor Roncetti’s account of the conferral of four palliums in four widely separated new metropolitan sees is one of the most colorful, but it also indicates the importance that the conferral had for the local church over which the new archbishop would exercise his authority. Not every such ceremony, however, was a sign of harmony. On April 12, 1939, Francis Spellman, then auxiliary bishop of Boston, received a telegram informing him that he was named the archbishop of New York. He had been ordained a priest for Boston but had several conflicts with the diocesan bishop, Cardinal William Henry O’Connell. He managed to get a position at the Vatican, where he was the first American to work permanently in the Secretariat of State.

In 1929 he befriended the newly appointed secretary of state, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli. In 1932 he was named auxiliary bishop to Cardinal O’Connell, who had not asked for an auxiliary, much less for Bishop Spellman. Cardinal O’Connell had risen to his position through his friendship with Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val, the secretary of state under Pius X. Now, his auxiliary of seven years had a yet more powerful patron in Rome, for Cardinal Pacelli was the new pope. Bishop Spellman was installed as archbishop at a Mass in New York on May 23, 1939, but he had to wait until the following March for the imposition of the pallium. In an effort to overcome past enmity and display some sense of unity, he had succeeded in having Cardinal O’Connell agree to impose the pallium, only to have the cardinal no-

tify him less than a week before the ceremony that he had a sore throat. Cardinal Spellman then had to phone Cardinal Dennis Dougherty in Philadelphia, who had earlier declined an invitation to attend, to take the train to New York to preside over the ceremony in which the symbol of metropolitan authority would be conferred on him.

The wool for the pallium is taken, at least in part, from two lambs blessed by the pope on the feast of St. Agnes, Jan. 21. During the summer, the lambs are shorn, and religious sisters then use the wool to weave the palliums, which are then stored in an urn close to the spot thought to be the tomb of St. Peter. In times past, the presentation of the pallium was frequently informal, especially when a delegate of the archbishop was dispatched to fetch the garment. Sometimes, even if the new archbishop actually visited the pope, an assistant would simply take him to the urn containing the palliums and hand him one of them to take back to his archdiocese.

The change made by Pope Francis in the way the pallium is presented and imposed is a minor one, but it does reintroduce the time-honored involvement of the local church without surrendering the special relationship to the Holy See represented by the pallium. The former imposition by the pope of the pallium on newly named metropolitans presented the danger of deepening the erroneous belief of too many Catholics that archbishops and bishops are delegates of the pope. ▲

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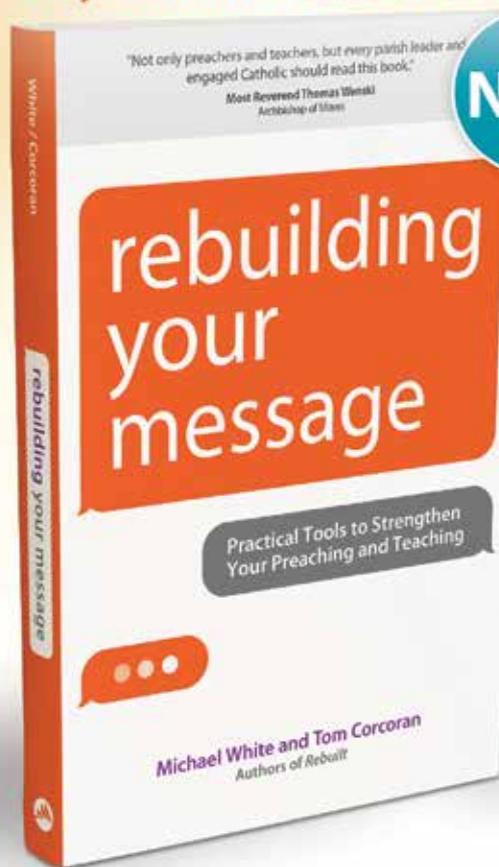
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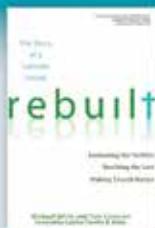
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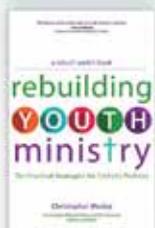
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# A Deeper Mission

Making short-term service more effective

BY MICHAEL SIMMELINK



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**H**ere is some good news about young adults in the church: They interpret the words of Jesus to “go and make disciples” to mean they should spend their time and resources helping those who are less fortunate.

And here is some not-so-good news: For many, the deeper meaning of such actions remains uncertain. As Paul Borthwick says in his book *Western Christians in Global Missions*, “although globally aware, these young people seem unclear on what the Gospel is beyond just ‘doing good.’”

Mission work has become synonymous with good deeds, and that conflation is at the heart of the current crisis in missiology. A good deed can be defined as a singular, often spur-of-the-moment act that is not meant to establish any sort of long-term partnership. Holding the elevator for a man who has his hands full, for example, or lending change to the woman who is a little short at the cash register. They

say, “Thanks,” you say “You’re welcome,” and you walk away feeling good about what you just did.

But these passing exchanges are not at the heart of mission work. The work Jesus was urging people toward when he said “go” is rooted in a long-term commitment to preaching the Gospel while serving other children of God. It is not often quick, and it is rarely easy.

The trouble begins when short-term projects prioritize the positive vibes of good deeds over true ministry. And believe me, these projects are popular. In 2005 Princeton released a survey that found 1.6 million Americans participated in mission trips that were less than two weeks long, at a cost of \$2.4 billion. The trend suggested those numbers will grow annually.

Americans see the world is hurting and want to help, but too often these efforts come in short bursts and seek immediate results. Parishes or schools see people in poverty in Harlem, Guatemala, Libya, Houston, Russia or China, so they gather a small group from their church to go to those places and try to help.

But problems arise when the needs of the community be-

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MICHAEL SIMMELINK is a recent graduate of Northwestern College, where he earned degrees in journalism and biblical studies.

ing served are not considered. Too often, the people to whom these works or donations are directed do not need what is given. Roger Sandberg, who was the country director in Haiti for Medair, an international humanitarian aid agency, says aid should be divided into three stages: relief, rehabilitation and development. Relief is given only for a few months, and usually only after a crisis when basic needs have to be met. Rehabilitation is the process of turning over aid-provision into the hands of the community. Development is what most long-term missions are interested in, and that means creating self-sustaining outposts where missionaries, it is hoped, work themselves out of the job.

Western Christians want to help so badly that they sometimes end up doing things for the people they are helping even when the people could be doing these things for themselves. As Robert Lupton, who has served in inner-city Atlanta for 40 years, puts it in his book *Toxic Charity*, "Giving to those in need what they could be gaining from their own initiative may well be the kindest way to destroy people."

Americans looking to help can focus too much energy on what is lacking. Intelligent and affluent Christians come into the downtrodden places of the world with grand ideas of reform and change. But these projects are likely to fail if the helpers do not take into account what the community itself feels it needs. Is it not logical that each community knows its own strengths and weaknesses better than anyone else?

Too often, we look only at what the needs of a person are and do not bother to ask them what they can offer. Carrying out God's mission is not about bringing our plans to the corners of the world; it requires acknowledging the gifts of a person and partnering with them so their gifts may be tapped for God's glory. Once they are empowered, we hope that the assets of a person can provide self-sustaining means.

## Practical Commitments

So what does this mean for people (like myself) who are planning for upcoming short-term projects? What about the professionals who cannot make a commitment to lifelong missions like the saints of yesteryear or some courageous souls today? What about all the positive dimensions of being involved in these trips? I feel most of the positive outcomes of short-term mission trips (appreciation of new culture, relationships, feelings of accomplishment, new perspective on life, etc.) will not be compromised by some changes.

First, short-term volunteers should work hard to do projects that are in partnership with long-term volunteers or aid agencies. Ideally, they can pair up with someone who has made at least a two-year commitment to be in the thick of a situation. Many missionaries are in it for the long haul, and it is both arrogant and ignorant not to trust them and use their connections. They have heard God's call to serve in a special way, and we should respect that.

Second, mission teams need to consider the type of aid they are giving and think hard about whether or not it is appropriate for the setting. Food and clothing donations may be appropriate at one time of year or location, but not others. If working with long-term missionaries, it is a safe bet that aid for development work may be the greater need.

Third, the community that is being served must be included in the plans. This can be scary for people who have focused on policies, agendas and improvements. It requires humility to ask a group of people for suggestions, because it gives them governance, ownership and control. As Ron Blue, a professor in world missions and intercultural studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, says, "It appears to me that those of us in the North America empire are rather slow to yield control to others." That loss of control is essential to effective mission work.

We should not be discouraged from taking these life-changing trips, but rather encouraged to do them smarter. I sincerely think a cross-cultural project of any kind is essential to gaining a wider perspective on the world, and my personal experience with this kind of work has resulted in dramatic shifts in how I view poverty. But it is time to look hard at the results and decide if we are tangibly making a difference in the world. Let us be the hands and feet of Christ in this world, working tirelessly and lovingly to build the Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. ▲

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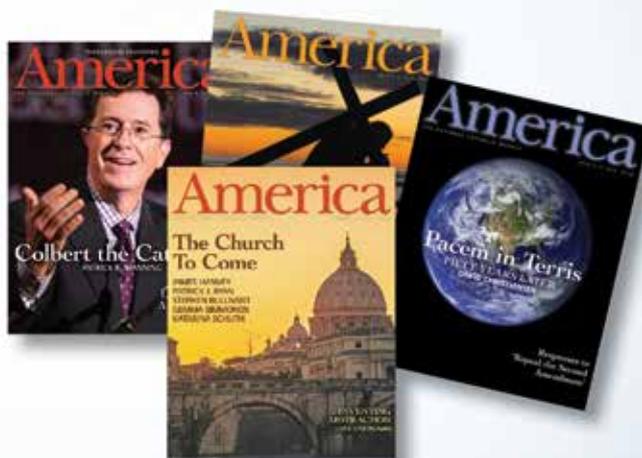
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# The Poetry of Catholicism

The daily struggle between absurdity and faith

BY JOHN SAVANT

**T**he phrase “poetry of Catholicism” is the late Andrew Greeley’s, whose writing often revealed the poet in the social scientist. Interesting as it may be, it presents a topic of questionable relevance in this age of major challenges facing the Catholic Church—worldwide scandal, looming and significant structural changes and major reassessments of traditional teachings and practices. It is an age that reveals the old coziness of pre-Vatican II culture shaken beyond recovery. We have become accustomed to topics like “Why I Remain a Catholic” or “Why I Can No Longer Remain a Catholic” or “The Rediscovery of Radical Catholicism.” We find ourselves looking for solid intellectual and theological footing as we address the issues of change and identity, conscience and obedience, science and faith, church and state and more.

In seeking this solid footing, it may at first blush seem fanciful, if not irresponsible, to turn to something so ethereal as the “poetic” quality of American Catholic culture. We point with pride and assurance to quantifiable phenomena—including our leadership in matters of social justice, our patriotic service in the battle against totalitarianism and our public contributions to health and education—areas in which our women religious especially have been regarded with affection and admiration by persons otherwise indifferent or hostile to things Catholic.

Beyond such concrete evidence of Catholic participation in American life, however, we may still ask to what extent that presence distinguishes the individual Catholic in American culture and, indeed, modern society. We can, of course, point to the sentimentalizing of Catholic culture in popular entertainment—including stereotypes of the innocent (and often pretty) novice whose appealing simplicity wins over the cynical financier and saves St. Pericula Academy from ruin; the tough-talking prison chaplain who reaches the soft spot in the heart of the death-row killer; the touching pieties, sometimes bordering on superstition, of immigrant populations. Our comedians can feast, lightly or otherwise, on Catholic schooling, Catholic guilt and Catholic sexual anxieties.

Surely, in assigning a poetic quality to Catholic culture,



Father Greeley, a respected sociologist, had something more substantial in mind than sentimentality or cliché. His use of the term assumes a reality, and we are provoked to ask whether this “poetic” dimension of Catholicism renders it a distinct force in American culture. Does it provoke public interest or response? Is “Catholic” as resonant a social marker as “puritanical” or “consumerist” or “neoconservative”? Does it evoke a distinct response when applied to an individual?

In addressing this question we ought not to equate Greeley’s “poetry” with such heightening but limited usages as “the agony of defeat” or “the bliss of a hole-in-one.” We must here understand “poetry” as Aristotle seems to have done—as an action of intuition and imagination taking form in aesthetic expression, and (most important) doing so because the truths, cautions and wisdom that formal actions convey cannot be communicated in any other way! Where concepts and language fall short of feelings, intuitions or musings beyond empirical reach, the formal structures of art and mysticism strike a provocative resonance, as a wordless

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ART: ANNI KISSANE ENGELHART

cry in a dark cave may rouse a reassuring echo.

## Representing All the Arts

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle uses poetry to represent all the creative arts. He argues, in effect, that while history and physical sciences may deal with tangible particular facts, the arts



Most important, the poetry of Catholicism embraces the physical world—not as an enemy of the sacred but as a locus of the divine.

reach beyond the particulars of time and place to universal truths that abide for all time. One formulation of this idea goes: While history records what happened, art resonates with what happens—always. These universal truths, moreover, are conveyed not through philosophical concepts or clinical explanations but through their resonance with our human sensibilities, moving us to recognize their validity in our own lives. And it does this through the formal actions we call the play, the dance, the sculpture or the poem. The importance of the aesthetic sensibility, which the arts require and inspire, is caught in the striking observation of the American poet and business executive Wallace Stevens, who said, “We have imagination because we do not have enough without it.”

Understanding poetry in this sense, we can then explore what might be meant by “the poetry of Catholicism” in American culture. Apart from the phrase’s conventional suggestion that there is something sublime or spiritual or beyond ordinary language, what is there in American Catholicism that, like poetry, strikes a meaningful resonance

in our daily lives, civic and private? What is there, for example, at an Irish wake in Boston or San Francisco that, with both prayer and whiskey, celebrates triumph over despair, hope over absurdity? What comfort in the clutch of mystery finds beauty in the sundown of a loved one’s life?

What is there in our forgiveness of the killer that redeems the killer latent in all of us? What justifies our donning the Mardi Gras demon mask, even as we renounce the demon? What music of image and sound embraces the mystery of loss in Hopkins’s autumnal lament, “though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie”? What is it in the daily feast of the Eucharist that assumes our woundings and our blessings into a community of sharers, into a common “Thank you” that honors the gift of life more than it regrets the evil of suffering? In a society whose fascination with health threatens to turn label reading into a genre, what moderating grace and countercultural intuitions move us to fret more over income disparity or bullying than over carbs or sagging jowls? What sacramental earthiness disposes us to act more out of a habitual compassion than out of an anxious propriety?

## In the Shadow of Mystery

Catholicism, of course, shares many of these dispositions with other traditions, but wherever the church has taken root, they take on a distinctive character born of our grounding in the pre-eminence of mystery. Robert Frost spoke of our need for “a mind of winter” in the face of darkness. Catholics espouse “a mind of mystery” that often seems indifferent to secular paradigms; that, for example, regards virtue-for-itself with a dismissive arching of the brow that laces compassion with humor, that seeks solutions as much in wonder and contemplation as in knowledge. Walking thus in the shadow of mystery and in a certain poetic openness to surprise and the discovery of value in simple things, Catholics may be less susceptible to the distractions of consumerism, the lure of popular trends, the narcissistic narrowing of self-realization systems that isolate our crosses from the Gethsemanes of a suffering world. In the sacramental grounding of our Jewish heritage, what Father Greeley called “the Catholic imagination” seeks, more than immediate resolutions, the lasting wisdom that trial and suffering effect in those who affirm life even in its darkest manifestation—not in dour resignation to bad news but in rejection of Pollyannish solutions indifferent to our history of fallibility—solutions latent with the possibility that “the last state shall be worse than the first.”

Most important, the poetry of Catholicism embraces the physical world—not as an enemy of the sacred, but as a locus of the divine. Inspired by the ever emerging evidence of cosmology and evolutionary study, many Catholic theologians regard the unceasing evolution of the cosmos as a

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template for an ongoing revelation and renewal in the life of the church. For believers, it is a template marked by ambiguity (we see now "as in a glass, darkly") and, at times, by uncertainty and confusion; but it is also a template that urges openness to what is new, prayerful discernment and human creativity. It is a template consonant with an old description of the church as "always herself, never the same." This interplay of change and identity pervades all human culture and its arts. Contemplating the last of all temporal changes, Wallace Stevens, in his great poem of religious questioning, "Sunday Morning," exclaims, "Death is the mother of beauty." He is not the only poet to conclude that change—death to rebirth, suffering to wisdom—is the fundamental concern of poetry.

Sharing this same poetic intuition, the church has espoused and influenced the arts over the centuries—clearly in the very nature of the sacraments as external signs and vehicles of spiritual reality—but also in her prominent contribution to the aesthetic history of Western civilization. Granted, the formal poem (or statue or song) is something distinct from the poetic quality of a culture; still, a society's art and culture do indeed interact profoundly. In both ecclesial and cultural lore, the aesthetic represents a moral energy that affects behavior and effects identity. The enormous changes in every aspect of our lives today and the sustaining images of our Catholic tradition are the everlasting stuff of drama and poetry: images of the unknown, of journey and pilgrimage, of suffering and transformation, of blindness and vision, of fall and redemption, death and rebirth; evolutionary images of violence and loss engendering ever greater beauty and complexity—the list goes on. And all this, in one way or another, the poetic energies that challenge, sustain and transform us!

When I am asked, in the face of current scandals and accusations leveled against my church, why I remain a Catholic, it is this very earth—turbulent, horrific and unspeakably beautiful—that is my referent. As one who justifies his addiction to sports as a cathartic form of ritual, I find, in the whirlwind of cosmic change, the great drama and challenge of this earth become conscious of itself in the human person—that same person so perversely and elegantly tragic and divine. This drama enacts the daily struggle between the absurdity of evil and our mulish, Job-like persistence in faith—and this against the glorious, frightening freedom to choose between these. And it is, finally, the trump card of hope that you slam before the fiercely humorous face of the divine, as you cry out, "Take that!"

If we can manage this pilgrimage—a miracle of grace beyond our merit—we can count upon an army of celebrants, here and departed, marching, in fact or figure, away from our wakes, glasses raised on high, reciting poems more beautiful than any we can imagine. ▲



# In China, Fear of Faith

China is hard to decipher. This is true not only in the field of politics and economics but also in that of religion and, in particular, Sino-Vatican relations.

Since he became pope in March 2013, Francis has extended the hand of friendship to the Chinese leadership, seeking to reopen communications. He has never once criticized China for its (mis)treatment of religion or the Catholic Church, but instead prayed for all the mainland's believers and citizens and extended solidarity in moments of national tragedy. Furthermore, he appointed as secretary of state Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the man who almost reached an accord with Beijing in 2009 on the crucial question of the nomination of bishops and now oversees the China brief. As a result of Francis' approach, Sino-Vatican talks reopened in Rome in June 2014, and a second round is expected to be held in Beijing in the coming months.

China, for its part, gave clearance to Francis' plane to fly through its airspace on his journey to and from Korea in August 2014. And its media have constantly reported on the pope in a neutral, even positive way, and never using negative tones. Earlier this year, the Chinese language broadcaster Phoenix TV, based in Hong Kong but close to Beijing, presented a program on the Vatican and the appointment of bishops that included an interview with Vatican spokesman, Federico Lombardi, S.J. And in August, in an unprecedented move, the same TV outlet broadcasted Francis' words of solidarity following the Tianjin disaster.

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Then, for the first time since Francis' election, a bishop was ordained in China on Aug. 4, 2015, with papal approval. This was greeted with relief in the Vatican and widely interpreted as a signal that Beijing is willing to work with Rome. But Cardinal Joseph Zen in his blog queried this positive interpretation, raised some incisive questions and said the Vatican accepted an ordination totally controlled by Beijing.

Besides all this, some events over the past two years have raised fundamental questions as to how Beijing really views religion, Christianity and Catholicism ("The Western religion").

At one level, it has become increasingly clear that some high ranking members of China's Communist Party fear religion in general, especially Christianity but also Islam. This fear is also expressed in the "Blue Book" released in Beijing on May 6, 2014, by the University of International relations and the Social Science Academic Press, which identified religion as one of the four "severe challenges" to China's national security. It claimed "the infiltration of religion has constituted a threat to Chinese identification with socialist belief" and said "Western hostile forces are infiltrating China's religions in a more diverse way and in a wider range; deploying more subtle means either openly or secretly; and are strongly seditious and deceptive in nature." It affirmed that "foreign religious infiltration powers have penetrated all areas of the Chinese society."

Next, President Xi, in a widely publicized speech, May 20, 2015, told top officials of the United Front Work

Department that religions must be independent of foreign influence, and domestic religious groups must pledge loyalty to the state. "We must manage religious affairs in accordance with the law and adhere to the principle of independence to run religious groups on our own accord," he stated. "Active efforts should be made to incorporate religions into socialist society," Xi added.

Some observers charge that with the May 2014 national security alert and Xi's speech Beijing contributed to, if not stoked, a backlash against Christians and the growth of Christianity in China, and against Islam too. That crackdown against Christianity has taken various forms, some reminiscent of the cultural revolution, including

## The crack-down against Christianity has taken various forms.

detention of clergy, re-education programs, church demolitions and the removal of 1,200 crosses from churches in Zhejiang Province, an event that brought public protests from Christians and the two Chinese cardinals, Zen and Tong.

Over the past three months, two excommunicated Chinese bishops ordained priests in their dioceses in defiance of church law. Some blame local, not central authorities for the cross removals and priestly ordinations but offered little evidence for this thesis.

Then, on Sept. 4, UCA News, citing an unnamed source close to the Vatican, reported that the second round of Sino-Vatican talks are expected to be held "in a few months." It noted, however, that Cardinals Zen and Tong differ on what might result from this. Stay tuned.

**GERARD O'CONNELL**

# Good Fruit

A parolee readies for life beyond prison.

BY VALERIE SCHULTZ

The thing I remember best about Louie is that he said he hadn't had a peach in 30 years. Louie (not his real name) was a lifer; he was in his 50s and had been in prison for over three decades. On the day he told me this, as he was hanging out in the library where I work, a couple of landscape workers were ripping out two trees in the chapel courtyard. The trees in question had grown from saplings and had turned out to be fruit trees, suspected peach trees, and so had to be removed from the prison grounds before they bore any fruit. This is because fruit can be fermented into alcohol by inventive inmates. Which explains why Louie had not had a peach in 30 years.

Louie had recently been found suitable for parole at his hearing with the parole board, a ritual that inmates with life sentences endure every so many years. A typical board hearing used to end in an almost certain denial, but because of a sea change in public attitude from a preference for punishment to an interest in rehabilitation, along with a federal court order to reduce the state prison population, now prisoners are sometimes emerging from their hearings with a dazed look and a piece of paper that reads "Parole granted." A waiting period of 120 days follows the

board's decision, to allow for review. For a murder conviction—not all life sentences are for murder—an addi-



tional 30 days are tacked on, during which time the governor can reverse the board's decision. Past governors had almost always taken this route. More and more, however, the governor has been upholding the board's suitability findings.

The new normal of the parole board has prompted many lifers to take their hearings seriously for the first time in decades. They come to the library to organize their paperwork, make copies of favorable work reports and letters of support, write letters of remorse to their victims and/or their victims' families, look up addresses of helpful entities on the outside, formulate practical parole plans and network with lifers who already have been found suitable and were somehow living through the

waiting period, wanting only to stay out of trouble for their blessedly finite days of captivity. The library has become a little hub of hope for inmates who had never expected to feel such an emotion. They suddenly had work to do.

So Louie was spending a lot of hours in the library, killing time, talking about the past and the future and helping some of his fellow lifers whose board dates were approaching. He talked about his family, his daughter who was now an adult, the grandkids he had yet to meet, the house his dad had left him, the work he hoped to do with at-risk young gangbangers. He had been a gang member in his day, deviant and up to no good, until he'd been convicted of murder along with his partner in crime, or *crimee*. It was hard for me to imagine Louie as a young and ruthless hoodlum because I knew him as a thoughtful intelligent, serene presence on the yard. He'd obviously put his years in prison to good use. He had become educated and enlightened and rehabilitated. His crimee had been released from another prison the year before. Now it was his turn.

Louie's thoughts were full of family and freedom and peaches. He talked about looking forward to having a burger at Carl's Jr., whose television commercials were relentless on the prison screens. I reminded him that he might be better satisfied at In-N-Out Burger, the iconic burger place of California. He'd forgotten about In-N-

Out Burger, the iconic burger place of California. He'd forgotten about In-N-

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VALERIE SCHULTZ, a freelance writer, is a columnist for *The Bakersfield Californian* and the author of *Closer: Musings on Intimacy, Marriage, and God*.

ART: SEAN QUIRK

Out. He was almost dizzy with the anticipation of such good fortune as to be able to walk into a fast-food restaurant and order whatever the heck he wanted. Such freedom was almost unimaginable after 30 years. "That's the first place I'm gonna go; the first thing I'm gonna do," he said. "In-N-Out. Where's the closest one?"

As his release date drew closer and the governor did not reverse the board's decision, as he was finally called in to sign his final parole paperwork and find out the day of his physical release, Louie became philosophical. "I'm looking forward to the burgers," he said, on one of the last days he came into the library, "but really, the first thing I'm probably gonna do when I go through that last gate is fall on my knees and cry like a baby."

Louie has been gone for about three

months now. The last time I went to In-N-Out, I pictured Louie in his parole clothes, with his cry-like-a-baby tears dried on the car ride, walking through the door, grinning when a teenager with a chipper voice asked to take his order, pulling his gate money out of his pocket and paying with cash for the first time in 30 years. The thought made me appreciate my French fries like never before.

I picture Louie's grandkids teaching him how to use a smartphone, or how to Google. I picture him with peach juice on his chin, with a big bowl of peaches and pears and grapes and melon and berries on the table in his home.

Some people might say that Louie does not deserve to be out of prison, that the life he took should be paid for with his own. No one knows better than a murderer that he can never give

back or fully atone for the life taken, or erase a family's grief. But if we believe in God's redemptive love, we have to believe that every single one of us can change, can be forgiven, can be redeemed. The power of God's compassion is so much greater than ours, after all. Louie may very well alter the course of some young man's life by sharing his story, by offering his guidance, by giving the benefit of his journey of remorse and renewal. His presence may save some other precious and holy life. I will never know.

I will quite probably never see Louie again; indeed, as long as I work in the library of a state prison, I am not allowed to have any contact with parolees. But I think of Louie every time I eat a peach, and the world seems a more hopeful place with him out there somewhere.

# Cafeteria Prayers

## Mass at an immigrant detention facility

BY MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY

Last winter I traveled to Florence, Ariz., to a federal detention facility one hour north of Tucson, where we celebrated a liturgy with 50 men who rarely have a chance to attend Mass and who are separated from their families and friends. We sang hymns together, prayed together and exchanged the sign of peace. I tried to follow along in Spanish.

We were unable to bring cameras or cell phones into the facility, so I will try to give a picture of an event that was very moving for everyone involved.

The Mass was celebrated by Kevin White, S.J., of Jesuit Refugee Service. J.R.S. has a contract with the govern-



ART: BOB ECKSTEIN

MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY is an executive editor of *America*.

ment to provide chaplains to federal detention centers, and as a new board member I traveled with them to visit some of their ministries near the border. Sister Lynn Allvin, a Dominican, is the chaplain at the Florence facility and helped to organize the liturgy. She celebrates a weekly Communion service for the detainees and assists with counseling.

There are currently 15 immigration detention centers in the United States. Some, like the facility in Florence, are run directly by the government, under the aegis of U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement. Others are operated by private contractors. The government is also opening separate facilities for women and children to cope with the influx of families and unaccompanied minors from Central America in 2014. In a recent report, the U.S. bishops called for an end to the detention system in favor of community supervision and support programs for undocumented immigrants.

The facility in Florence is tidy and well maintained, with an outdoor soccer field and common rooms where detainees can gather and watch television. The director of the facility takes pride in its appearance and pointed out, during a tour, how meticulously the trash is disposed of and how the cooling system recirculates air to cut down on odor. But it still looks like a prison, with barbed wire fences, bathrooms with no doors or curtains and dormitories with dozens of bunk beds under harsh fluorescent lights.

We celebrated Mass in the cafeteria. Many of the men who attended were from Central America, others from Mexico, at least one from Haiti. Some of them were picked up trying to cross the border, but others had lived in the United States for years. A simple traffic stop led to their arrest and pending deportation. Some men would be in the detention center for only a few days. The government runs planes to Guatemala from Phoenix every week,

and buses travel daily to the border town of Nogales in Mexico. Others would be there longer as they appealed their detention or sought asylum. The average stay is three weeks.

The men looked very young. They were on the short side, and all wore the same government-issued slippers. The facility is only for adult males, but determining the age of a detainee can be difficult. Dentists are brought in to look at their wisdom teeth to try to figure out their age. The men were dressed in blue or orange uniforms, the color designating their security status in the facility. There were no inmates dressed in red, which indicates a high-risk detainee.

We were given stapled-together songbooks and a pamphlet with the readings and responses in English and Spanish. Sister Lynn hung a cross from the wall and designated the songs on a banner using felt numbers. A man played guitar and he and two others led us in song. One of these men, we later

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learned, has been in the United States for more than 10 years and was now separated from his wife and children.

The readings were recited by the detainees, one in English, one in Spanish. The Gospel for the day told the story of Jesus' return to Capernaum, where he was soon discovered at home by the crowds. To the paralytic, who was lowered through the roof to be near him, he said, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home." In his homily, Father Kevin White acknowledged that the men before us were on a difficult journey, but he assured the detainees God is with them. I don't remember if he used the word "accompaniment," but it was the principal theme of our trip. We could not do anything for these men but be with them.

One man spent most of the Mass on his knees, his hands held up in prayer. Other men looked distraught, but some were smiling—more than I would have expected.

I sat to the left of the detainees, next to the soda machines, with staff and board members from J.R.S. We were greeted with applause upon our arrival, and a few men made their way over to us during the sign of peace to give us their hands. I wondered what they knew about us and why we were there.

The Mass lasted about an hour. The microphone didn't always work, and at the end Sister Lynn asked who in the congregation was celebrating a birthday this month. A few men raised their hands. There were at least two guards in the room. Occasionally we could hear their radios go off.

At the end of Mass, some of the men came up to us again, said hello and shook our hands. We did not learn their names. Many of them are known to staff only by their "alien number." Sister Lynn tries to learn their names and on occasion will call them Mr. García or Mr. Pérez.

The men often leave the facility abruptly. One day they are there, the next they are gone. The chaplains often don't get to say goodbye, but sometimes they do. Sister Lynn tells them that they will see each other again in heaven. 



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## TRAIL BLAZERS

*Stories of recovery and rebuilding*

Some people reach a crossroads in their spiritual life and go on a religious retreat. Others accelerate their drinking. Others still might change jobs, mates or majors or buy a gym membership (and even use it). The thing is, the moment for a psychic tune-up doesn't come on any schedule. It arrives when it must, whether we are 16 or 60.

Keeping that in mind, *A Walk in the Woods*—which, as has been noted, is a road movie without a road—should have universal appeal, despite the fact that the guys who carry us through it can barely carry themselves and are on the distant side of 60.

Robert Redford has been a major movie star at least since 1969 (“Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid”). He is an Oscar-winning director, producer, ardent environmentalist, film festival masher and, lest we forget, actor. (“All Is Lost,” the 2013 drama that featured his virtually wordless, one-man performance, was a reminder that he has always had chops.) Nick Nolte has enjoyed a long bout with stardom, too, probably since TV’s “Rich Man, Poor Man” (1976), and thanks to having led an apparently more libertine lifestyle than Redford’s, is easily the older actor’s match in wheeziness. (If Nolte wandered into your campsite at night,

you might instinctively reach for the bear repellent.)

It should be noted that the central activity of “A Walk in the Woods,” ably directed by Ken Kwapis (“The Office,” “Big Miracle”) and majestically shot by the veteran cinematographer John Bailey, is no stroll around the park. Based on travel writer/humorist Bill Bryson’s memoir of 1998, it involves the author’s post-midlife crisis and his decision to hike the Appalachian Trail—a glorious piece of real estate that stretches nearly 2,200 miles through 14 states, from Georgia to Maine, requires six months to travel in its entirety, is visited by three million people annually and was completed in 1937 (and is part of the National Park System, just FYI). Redford had been trying to bring the book to the screen since 2004 and originally intended it to be the third collaboration between himself and Paul Newman

(who died in 2008). He is considerably older now than Bryson was when he made the trek. The trek probably seemed like a crazy idea in the '90s. It certainly does now.

Mrs. Bryson agrees. Played by Emma Thompson with her English propriety, she thinks the whole idea is horrifying and gets her husband to agree that if he is going to do it, he is not going to do it alone. Which is a shrewd move, because Bryson gets turned down by everyone he invites along (it’s a six-month commitment, c’mon). Enter Stephen Katz (Nolte), someone



**ROAD WARRIORS.** Robert Redford and Nick Nolte on the Appalachian Trail in “A Walk in the Woods.”

Bryson never even thought to call, but who heard secondhand that Bryson was looking for a traveling companion. A recovering alcoholic, untrimmed, unfit and generally unpresentable, Katz had a falling out some decades earlier with the well-put-together Bryson, who seems close to his temperamental opposite. As a road show, however, they click.

While Nolte plays a sort of mournful reprobate (Philip Roth fans might be reminded of Mickey Sabbath), Redford's performance is more complicated. At the beginning of the film, whether the Bryson character is doing an uncomfortable TV interview or just walking around his suburban house (he's a recent ex-ex-pat who's been living in the United Kingdom), he seems clearly unsettled, out of his element, at loose ends. The

decision to walk the Appalachian Trail is a desperation move, perhaps, but not unwise: As soon as Bryson gets outdoors and away from a particular strain of civilization, he relaxes. So

the way, and whom, make for the same kinds of episodes that traditionally constitute any picaresque, or buddy movie, or road film. (This includes Emilio Estevez's 2010 film "The Way," about pilgrims on El Camino de Santiago, a film with thematic similarities to "Walk" but fewer jokes.)

Bryson's preparations for the hike involve a trip to an outdoor store, where the hiking "pro" (the consistently funny Nick Offerman) knows so much about the minutiae of camp gear it's comically absurd, and drives home just how in over his head Bryson really is. Very early on, after he and Katz hit

the trail, they encounter a know-it-all hiker ("Daily Show" regular Kristen Schaal) whom they can neither get away from nor get to shut up. Can they ditch her? Only in the most awkward manner possible. Katz has a run-in



Chris Pine, Chiwetel Ejiofor and Margot Robbie in "Z for Zachariah."

does the viewer.

You can't escape people entirely, though, and since "A Walk in the Woods" has almost no story—two guys basically walk from here to there—what they encounter along



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with the jealous boyfriend of a woman he hits on at a laundromat; Redford has a flirtation with a motel keeper (Mary Steenburgen), whose mother is suffering from dementia and who seems trapped in her little bubble of hospitality, watching the world hike by.

It's not heavy; it's not wildly significant. But "A Walk in the Woods" has a redemptive tone, a gentle lesson about aging and limitations and never giving up despite any required climb, uphill or otherwise. It's also intended to serve the allegedly underserved audience of people over, say, 40 (50?) and who should really think twice before deciding to embark on any 2,200-mile constitutional, no matter how beautiful this movie makes it look.

A different kind of quasi-bucolic landscape provides the backdrop to **Z for Zachariah**, a post-apocalyptic scenario mercifully free of zombies but rich in intellectual stimuli and biblical allusions. The setting serves as a miniature Eden, a valley that, for meteorological reasons or elevation or whatever, has been spared the radiation that seems to have destroyed much of the world outside. The only survivor we see, at first, is Ann (Margot Robbie), who has grown up on the farm where she lives (the setting seems to be West Virginia) and makes resourceful use of what has been left behind by the dead and missing. She plays a small organ in the church her father built and where he preached. The others in her family left to help during the crisis. They never came back.

Directed by Craig Zobel and based on a generally fine screenplay by Nissar Modi, "Z for Zachariah" begs our indulgence about a lot of things, as most films in its genre do. Robbie, who made such a splash in "The Wolf of Wall Street" and might have gotten typecast because of it, is an entirely different character here, absurdly good and ridiculously beautiful. A friend of this reviewer always poses the same question to the simple, small-town

girls on screen, namely, "Didn't anyone ever tell you to leave town and try your luck in Hollywood?" Robbie's presence is a little like that, but she overcomes it to a great extent through what is an almost old-fashioned portrayal of a girl who's lost everything but her faith.

Arriving on the scene in what looks like a spacesuit is Loomis (Chiwetel Ejiofor), who as luck would have it is a research engineer who happened to be in a government bunker when the blast (or whatever it was) took place. Loomis knows how to get things back in working order: he needs to create a huge water wheel to pump from a nearby falls and generate electricity. He just needs additional muscle, which arrives courtesy of Caleb (Chris Pine), who happened to be in a coal mine when the disaster took place. Caleb is white, Loomis is black; both are attracted to the fair-skinned Ann. The conflicts to be might as well be posted on a billboard.

At the same time, "Z" is dramatically

sound—Robbie, in particular, is wonderfully understated and gentle and Ejiofor ("12 Years a Slave") is consistently one of the best actors currently working. And the story is the kind that tries the soul, forcing the viewer to question what he or she would do if, heaven forbid, such a fate would befall them. We needn't imagine disasters, they are all around, from civil wars in Central America to 3-year-olds washing up on Turkish beaches. But the prospect of such an epic calamity as occurs in "Z for Zachariah" poses different kinds of questions. Would our belief system be reinforced or demolished? Would the tasks, not just of surviving but of rebuilding, be more than one could stand? "Z for Zachariah" is an entertainment, of course. But there's nothing wrong with entertainment that also probes the mind and heart.

**JOHN ANDERSON** is a film critic for *The Wall Street Journal*, *TIME* magazine and *Newsday*.

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# DATA-DETERMINISM

‘Amazon is in the vanguard of where technology wants to take the modern office: more nimble and more productive, but harsher and less forgiving,’ said a report in *The New York Times*, on Aug. 15.

It was difficult to read *The Times*’s recent investigation of Amazon’s workplace culture and not be reminded of Thomas Hobbes’ description of mankind’s state of nature. “Nasty, brutish, and short” didn’t seem all that different from the reality of many workers at the online retail giant.

In the controversial piece, details emerged from current and former employees about Amazon’s “purposeful Darwinism,” in which practices like offering employees official channels for giving “secret feedback to one another’s bosses” is encouraged. One former employee said he had seen nearly everyone he worked with cry at their desks. An oft-repeated phrase at headquarters was that “Amazon is where overachievers go to feel bad about themselves.”

Sadly, this troubling characterization didn’t surprise me. In the age of Big Data, metrics and efficiency have become the lifeblood of our technocracy. Amazon’s culture is simply the evolutionary result of this 21st-century ethos.

“Data creates a lot of clarity around decision-making,” said one Amazon division head; it is “incredibly liberating.” I have no doubt that it has been liberating but it is also limiting in ways we do not yet fully comprehend.

In the information age, we have embraced the language and priorities of technological intelligence to the ex-

clusion of more visceral and emotional ways of understanding human existence. Remember when the world spun on the axis of two polarities: Marxism versus capitalism? Today, the Marxist view of mankind through an economic lens has been replaced with the meritocratic vision of Technological Man. This vision rewards particular skills and I.Q. and can be hugely profitable. In the abstract it is immensely seductive. In reality it can reduce human beings to abstractions with breathtaking ease.

That reality was put in sharp relief last November in a private talk I attended given by Eric Schmidt, executive chairman of Google, hosted by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg at the U.S. Supreme Court. The event was sponsored by the Salzburg Global Seminar, which has worked for 70 years as a catalyst for engagement around the world on issues of education, health, environment, economics, peace etc. The subject of the talk was privacy, free speech and technology; the message that came across, however, resonated in ways that I’m sure were unintended.

In a room filled with highly accomplished lawyers who were deeply concerned with issues of social justice, Mr. Schmidt seemed blithely optimistic. He possessed a bourgeois confidence that the harsh realities of the world beyond that august chamber would be solved by the smart, “crazy” and “really, really arrogant” engineers he works with. Our challenge is to continue to “build your culture around under-

standing these entrepreneurs.”

“We’re now in a knowledge view of the world,” he said. “Most of the problems in the world could be solved by more access to information and more critical thinking.” For those who are not gifted in that department, Schmidt said, “the technology that I’m describing improves the dumb people’s opportunities, too.” He closed by saying that he hoped he had given us “a sense that we’re busy building a future that’s even better than the good future we have right now.”

I was astonished at his utter faith in technological progress. If Pope Francis viewed the church as a field hospital offering healing after a battle, Schmidt clearly viewed the world as a series of problems to be solved from a software engineer’s brain. I wondered what metrics could be

applied to the compassion, mercy and empathy Francis spoke of? What sort of “intelligence” was that? And would I really want to live in a world without it?

Jobs, Gates, Bezos and Zuckerberg are the 21st century’s Edison, Bell, Carnegie and Morgan. They are inventors and digital industrialists who have changed the modern world. Through their innovations we have rediscovered fire. As we continue to navigate our way through this era of profound change, the critical task will be to ensure that this fire is used to warm and illuminate and not to burn and destroy. Making those distinctions however will require qualities that can’t be measured on an I.Q. test.

Metrics  
and efficiency  
have become  
the lifeblood  
of our  
technocracy.



**BILL MCGARVEY**, a musician and writer, is the author of *The Freshman Survival Guide*, owner of *CathNewsUSA.com* and was the longtime editor in chief of *BustedHalo.com*. Twitter: @billmcgarvey.

# A JESUIT BOY'S QUEST

## FRANCIS Pope of Good Promise

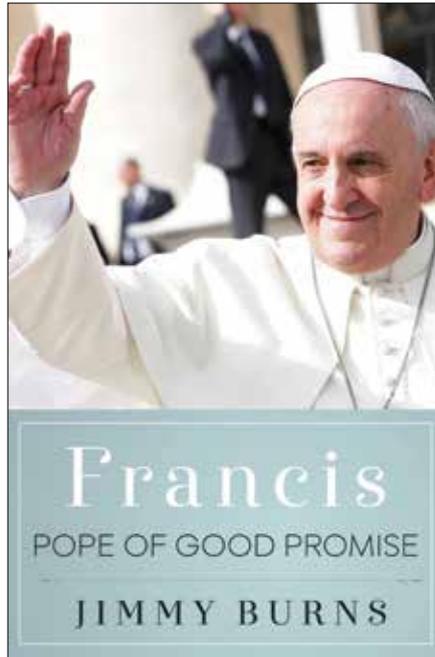
By Jimmy Burns  
St. Martin's Press. 432p \$28.99

*Francis: Pope of Good Promise* has the contours of a picaresque tale mixed with a journalist's quest. Jimmy Burns, the prize-winning author of books about the Falklands War and international soccer, goes in search of the Argentine Jesuit become pope. Burns establishes his bona fides: Born of an Anglo-Spanish family, with its consequent variations on Catholicism, he is educated at Stonyhurst College in England where he is introduced to Jesuits and Ignatian spirituality. In this, he recognizes an affinity between Jorge Bergoglio's spiritual world and his own experience as a "Jesuit boy." A pilgrimage to Ignatian sites and various shrines from France to Spain and eventually Rome brings Burns into conversation with Jesuits and others, who have various opinions about the new pope. Closing Chapter One, Burns spots another affinity with Bergoglio, love of soccer.

There is a brief stop-off in Chapter Two to reflect on the election of Benedict and his resignation. Finally, in Chapter Three, we have "Habemus Papam Francisco" with post-hoc observations about the inevitability of Bergoglio's election. Not only picaresque but sprawling, *Francis* repeats much that we have heard before and probes events that raise doubts about Francis' courage, if not integrity.

At some point, we will know all there is to know about Bergoglio: the Italian immigrant family, the happy childhood, the beloved grandmother, the soccer fan, the lung infection, seminary, ordination, Jesuit rector and provincial, auxiliary bishop and final-

ly archbishop of Buenos Aires. Burns retells it all, and then some. Eventually this Argentine background will fade and the papacy of Francis will take front and center in assessing him. Until then, Burns reprises Bergoglio's conflicted history with the Argentine Jesuits, his opaque relations with warring Peronist political factions and the oft-repeated charges that he grievously failed in his responsibilities during



Argentina's dirty war (1976-83).

None of this will be news to readers of Paul Vallely's *Pope Francis* or Austen Ivereigh's *The Great Reformer*. Burns's multiple, and often anonymous, sources leave open rather than resolve the charges brought against Bergoglio after the dirty war ended, repeated again after he became archbishop of Buenos Aires and revived once more when he became pope. Who are the sources of these parting shots? Interlocutors whom Burns "met on this journey but asked not to be named." If anonymous sources have plausible reason to mask

their names, the reader has plausible reason to question the retelling of events long over while spinning them to cast doubts.

The account of the two Jesuits, Francisco Jalics and Orlando Yorio, imprisoned and tortured in 1976 by the military is repeated with emphasis on Yorio's claim that Bergoglio betrayed them. Jalics has told another story (that it was a local catechist who gave their names while being tortured). Of this version we hear little. Emilio Mignone, who early on naïvely urged his daughter to cooperate with the military and never saw her again, later claimed that Bergoglio did nothing to save the Jesuits or others. In spite of witnesses to the contrary, Burns generalizes these charges to what he sees as Bergoglio's failure to rescue the "disappeared." In a peculiar aside, he argues that the Jesuit could have followed Oskar Schindler's example in saving Jews during World War II by putting them to work in his factory. (As it happens Schindler moved to Argentina, where he died in 1974.) Bergoglio's ultimate failure, in Burns's judgment: He did not become a martyr in a long Jesuit tradition. (This gave me pause: What is Burns's theology of martyrdom?) Is there a secret fifth vow for Jesuits?

An outsider to these events and their conflicting accounts can understand the stress and regrets of those terrible times (even Mignone's harsh judgment), but still ask why Bergoglio's account isn't as credible as his accusers': He asked the two to leave their mission; he warned them of trouble; when he found out where they were imprisoned, he, along with others, worked to have them freed. When they were freed, he got them out of Argentina.

The Kirchner presidencies (Nestor, 2003-7; Cristina, 2008-15) highlight the convoluted role of Argentine church-state relations, formal and informal. If Bergoglio, by then archbishop of Buenos Aires, held private meetings to reconcile warring Peronist factions,

was that duplicitous or prudent? If his predecessor enjoyed warm relations with President Menem, is Bergoglio picking a fight with the Kirchners or asserting episcopal independence? Is there really a secret tunnel connecting the presidential palace and the chancery? Gossip about Argentina's tortuous politics allows Burns to raise suspicions about Bergoglio's political views and Peronist leanings, whether to clarify or cast aspersions is never clear. Thus ends part one.

In Part Two, assessing Francis' first year in office, walking and talking, as he says "among the faithful," Burns offers impressions of a shanty town, World Youth Day in Brazil, the Vatican banking scandal, Catholic women, the sex abuse scandal, etc. How is Francis doing? At the end of his quest from Jesuit prep school to pope-watching, Burns suggests, "promising" (signaled in the subtitle, "Pope of Good Promise"). Promising? Perhaps the same conclusion Stonyhurst Jesuits came to about young Jimmy Burns.

Do I sound underwhelmed? For all

the facts, factoids, gossip and opinion gathered on this journey, the tale lacks coherence, chronology, footnotes and a credible bibliography. Even Bergoglio seems to fade in the hustle and bustle of the "Jesuit boy's" quest. Perhaps the papal visit to the United States prompted a rush into print when greater discernment (another Jesuit practice) was in order.

In one more peculiar aside, Burns dismisses Austen Ivereigh (*The Great Reformer*) as "a Catholic author who holds his subject in unwavering reverence." Yet Ivereigh delivers a clearly written and chronologically coherent story without Burns's score-settling (and holds his subject in wavering reverence). If the title, *The Great Reformer* seems too enthusiastic before the event, then "Pope of Good Promise" seems a bit stingy after two years. Perhaps even now, there is another pilgrim writing yet another book, "Francis: A Breath of Fresh Air."

**MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS** was editor of *Commonweal* and co-director of the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture.

Meanwhile, media and government reports focused on why: The hurricane was an act of nature (or God, as a few thundering zealots claimed, wreaking vengeance on a Babylonian river city). But human error caused the flood: the flawed design and oversight of levees by a federal agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

That information set in motion a grinding process by which Congress and federal agencies eventually sent tens of billions of recovery dollars to the city's slow recovery—\$70 billion from FEMA alone, which shows in the widespread infrastructure work presently underway.

In the recent tenth anniversary media coverage, New Orleans stood robust with clean streets, cranes dotting the horizon, a booming digital economy and a film industry creating a city of the young. The town still has deep poverty, and nightly news is a show on urban homicide.

The New Orleans comeback was never guaranteed, as Gary Rivlin reports in his account of the political machinations in this textured and intelligent book. Most of the narrative focuses on the two years after the storm, far less on the role that Mitch Landrieu played after winning the 2010 may-

oralty, at which point the federal money flow gained momentum and rebuilding accelerated. A New York Times reporter who covered the Katrina aftermath, Rivlin became a freelance, kept coming back, and in a fair-minded way captures the struggle of ordinary people remaking their lives, or losing what they had, amid the complex politics.

Rivlin's account of the blunders by Mayor Ray Nagin (now holding an endowed chair in a

JASON BERRY

## NEW ORLEANS, BORN AGAIN

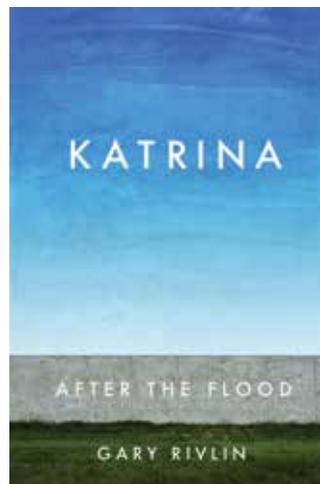
### KATRINA After the Flood

By Gary Rivlin  
Simon & Schuster. 480p \$27

For most Americans, Hurricane Katrina was a disaster story with saturated coverage that ran for several weeks, starting Aug. 29, 2005, when the levees surrounding New Orleans broke under Gulf of Mexico storm surges driven into outlying lakes. Video loops of people on rooftops, squalor in the Louisiana Superdome and a good-times city reduced to a broken mud town left lasting images on the national psyche.

Katrina wrecked George W. Bush's

second presidential term. A superpower battling in Iraq and Afghanistan was incapable of rescuing people in a flooded city. This was the country that sent rockets to the moon? A more complex story began after floodwaters drained in an area seven times the size of Manhattan Island. Eighty per cent of the city had taken water, at an average level of four feet: tens of thousands of homeowners began battling insurance adjustors.



federal penitentiary, for shaking down contractors) is restrained. He faults Nagin for relying on President George W. Bush to deliver recovery money, while Bush's handlers waited for Nagin's plan. Although Rivlin cites the crimes Nagin committed, he avoids saying outright the lesson of Katrina: that the big-person theory of history prevails. Bush was incompetent, Nagin a narcissist whose racial demagoguery secured his 2006 re-election, following which he betrayed his black political base with corruption on top of incompetence.

In contrast, L.B.J. flew straight to New Orleans in 1965 after Hurricane Betsy and told people in a darkened school that he and the country were behind them. One can imagine Bill Clinton or the elder George Bush or former Mayor Moon Landrieu (Mitch's dad) using their formidable skills to ignite a strong response. Electing substandard people is a mirror on national or local character. Heraclitus was right: character is fate.

Rivlin uses a deft hand orchestrating a *dramatis personae* of politicians, planners, activists, policy advocates and grassroots change-agents across the narrative stage. I could betray a bias, as a New Orleanian who came back (blessedly) to a dry house, in saying that Rivlin fails to capture the profound role of musicians and tradition-bearers who brought the culture back—Wynton Marsalis arguably did more to save New Orleans than Nagin—but Rivlin casts a wide net without losing focus on the deep injustices borne by poor blacks, particularly those with valid leases in well-built housing projects the city chose to demolish.

The Congressionally funded Road Home program with an initial \$7.5 billion outlay allowed tens of thousands of homeowners to make repairs that insurance did not cover.

Meanwhile, as Rivlin writes, the city under Nagin's chief planner, Ed Blakely,

chose a MidCity neighborhood, where homeowners with the federal grants had returned and rebuilt, to provide acreage for building a hospital-medical complex. "The city needed sixty-seven acres," he writes, "which meant tearing down or moving 250 homes, 150 of which had been deemed 'historically significant' by the National Trust for Historic Preservation." The Veterans Administration was relocating its hospital on the new site. "Blakely promised them \$75 million in HUD disaster money to offset their construction

costs—one-fifth of the city's precious flex dollars."

Decisions like that made it harder for many people to return and rebuild. Yet another strand of the Katrina narrative is how certain people with means saw the wounded city as an organism worth helping. Barnes & Noble's chairman, Len Riggio, and his wife, Louise, provided \$20 million from their family foundation "to create energy efficient homes elevated above the flood plain." Bruce Springsteen donated \$100,000 to the Common Ground project, a

## C 49

You can't tell from these clouds  
why this afternoon was set on fire  
is burning through some lullaby

you're singing to yourself  
by gathering a few leaves, some twigs  
for the gentleness falling out your mouth

—you dead know how it is, each hush  
must be buried on the way back  
with lips that bleed when rinsed in rainwater

leaving a sky that no longer takes root  
is drifting into its hiding place  
and each night listens for the word after word

returning as the small stones around you  
that warm your hands, that listen the way smoke  
reaches out from ashes and step by step.

**SIMON PERCHIK**

*SIMON PERCHIK is an attorney whose poems have appeared in Partisan Review, Poetry, The New Yorker and elsewhere. His most recent collection is Almost Rain, published by River Otter Press (2013).*

small activist army led by a former member of the Black Panthers.

In any nonfiction narrative with a large cast, a small number stand out by virtue of what an author sees in them. Rivlin manages the considerable feat of making a black banker and his wife, Alden and Rhesa McDonald, into three-dimensional figures who capture an arc of New Orleans history since the civil rights era. Having never met them, I found myself wondering what new surprise or revelation of personality would unfold each time they appeared.

The couple lost their home in the New Orleans East suburb; McDonald threw himself into reconstructing banking records and got the business back into service. He practiced lending to reliable, often working-class clients on careful terms. When the 2008 housing bubble broke, few of his clients suffered; he had avoided subprime loans.

When the actor Brad Pitt, who has a large house in the French Quarter, sank several million dollars into the Make It Right project to build houses of cutting-edge architecture in a devastated Lower Ninth Ward area, the banker broods. McDonald appreciated that the utility bills for one of Pitt's Make It Right homes were a fraction of what a resident would pay in a traditional home—a huge saving in the warm months. But the banker within couldn't square the idea of spending a few hundred thousand dollars to build a home that would be worth half that amount on the open market. "He had the money to put a lot more people in homes," McDonald said.

Rivlin, the reporter ever searching for balance, then quotes Malik Rahim, the ex-Black Panther and leader of Common Ground, who considers Pitt "the hero of the Ninth Ward.... We couldn't save it. But Brad Pitt, an actor, this white dude—did."

Well, a small part of the Ninth Ward came back because of that white dude. And as Rivlin reminds us in the

coda to his moving tale of trauma and recovery, large swaths of that sprawling ward have abandoned houses like a tropical ghost town. In the end, the people who made it back were the ones with the means to do so. Some of the

poor managed to return; many more did not.

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JASON BERRY's books include *Up From the Cradle of Jazz* and *Render Unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church*.

FRANKLIN FREEMAN

## A CREATIVE RING

### THE FELLOWSHIP

**The Literary Lives of the Inklings: J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams**

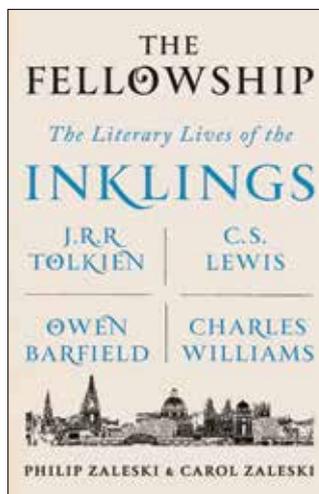
By Philip Zaleski and Carol Zaleski  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 656p \$35

The last major work about the Inklings, the group of Oxford writers centered around C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, (there has been a plethora of minor works, most not worth reading, in my opinion) was Humphrey Carpenter's *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Their Friends* (1978). This was a delightful book, well-told, trailing scents of the very tobacco the Inklings, or most of them, smoked, and the taste of the beer and port they imbibed. The Zaleskis—Philip Zaleski is the editor of the Best Spiritual Writing and Best American Spiritual Writing series; Carol Zaleski is a professor of world religions at Smith College—have written a more scholarly book, plunging deeper into the philosophies and lives of their subjects, but they admit Carpenter's reconstruction of an Inklings' meeting, "the centerpiece of his entertaining 1978 study *The Inklings*" is "vivid" albeit "rather a patchwork, assembled from numerous published and unpublished

memoirs and letters." Carpenter's book is a good introduction to the subject; the Zaleskis' book is for those who want to go deeper.

One Inkling who thought Carpenter's reconstruction of an Inklings' meeting was "surprisingly successful" was Owen Barfield, who had a lesser role in Carpenter's book. In *The Fellowship* he comes into his own and shows that the Inklings, traditionally thought of as a Christian group, allowed for other philosophies; they were more about friendship than about a literary program (though they did, loosely, have one). For Barfield was an anthroposophist, [a spiritual philosopher] and although he was baptized as an Anglican in middle age (partly, at least, to please his wife, who detested his anthroposophy), he always revered Rudolf Steiner as perhaps the "key thinker" in the history of consciousness.

The latter is what Barfield was interested in and what he wrestled with all his life. He fought in letters what he and Lewis called "The Great War" about anthroposophy, which Lewis respected but considered deeply flawed. Unlike Lewis and Tolkien, Barfield struggled as a writer and worked in his father's law office most of his life, not succeeding until late in life, when



he became a popular lecturer in the United States and an almost guru figure for people as different as the poet Howard Nemerov and the Nobel-winning novelist Saul Bellow. The Zaleskis include a fascinating section about the friendship between Barfield and Bellow, which, on Bellow's part, followed the typical path from idealism to disillusionment.

There is really nothing new in here about Lewis and Tolkien, the most prominent Roman Catholic of the group, or at least nothing major. They were very close friends, and without Lewis's encouragement we might not have had *The Lord of the Rings*. Which would have pleased, it appears, another Oxford scholar, also an Inklings and, ironically, along with Tolkien, a major player in Lewis's conversion, Hugo Dyson, a disruptive force among the Inklings who, the Zaleskis imply, might have been a large factor in the break-up of the Thursday night meetings (although the Inklings' Tuesday midday meetings at an Oxford pub, continued for many more years). Dyson is famous among Inklings fans for loathing Tolkien's work and belittling, "Not another f—g elf!" when he saw Tolkien pulling manuscript pages from his overcoat.

The Zaleskis do a fine job toning down some of the sentimental excesses of some Inklings' fans and perhaps, at times, Carpenter. They quote Max Beerbohm about his disappointment with Oxford ("Here, in a riot of vulgarity, were remnants of beauty") and do not flinch from portraying Charles Williams's sadomasochistic (think: ruler and bottom) yet "platonic" outings with "followers."

They end their book, after a glance at the "grinding of teeth" with which some thinkers, notably Germaine Greer and Philip Pullman, treat the Inklings, and admitting that "the Inklings never achieved the formal brilliance of the greatest of their contemporaries, such as Joyce, Woolf, Nabokov, Borges, or

Eliot," (which will in itself cause more teeth grinding among some Inklings' devotees), with what I think is a fair appraisal of the group:

Literary revolutions leave many in their wake; but some of those who excoriate the Inklings may come to see that Tolkien, Lewis, Barfield, Williams, and their associates, by returning to the fundamentals of story and exploring its relation to faith, virtue, self-transcendence, and hope, have renewed a current that runs through the heart of Western literature, beginning with Virgil

and the Beowulf poet; that they have recovered archaic literary forms not as an antiquarian curiosity but as a means of squarely addressing modern anxieties and longings. From our present vantage point this looks like a signal and even unprecedented achievement; but what permanent place the Inklings may come to occupy in Christian renewal and, more broadly, intellectual and artistic history, is for the future to decide.

**FRANKLIN FREEMAN** writes from Saco, Me., where he lives with his wife and four children.

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# Little Children of the Word

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), OCT. 4, 2015

Readings: Gn 2:18–24; Ps 128:1–6; Heb 2:9–11; Mk 10:2–16

*“Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” (Mk 10:15)*

In his teaching on divorce, Jesus claims that the circumstances that allowed for divorce in the Mosaic law were due to the “hardness of heart” of human beings after the fall. These laws were conditional, Jesus says, not God’s intent “from the beginning of creation.” Jesus cites passages from Genesis that reflect the human condition prior to the fall from Paradise. In the Garden, “God made them male and female,” reflecting Gn 1:27, with the intent that “a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gn 2:24).

In his teaching on marriage, therefore, Jesus is directing us to the beginning, what is called in German theology the *Urzeit*, the time prior to human sin. What are the grounds for Jesus’ statement that his followers are once again in the time of the beginning? What are the signs that it is Paradise now? Jesus himself, the Word made flesh, “who for a little while was made lower than the angels,” is the sign.

The German biblical scholar Lutz Doering writes that in Jesus’ teaching “what we encounter...is a model of restoration of paradisiacal conditions in the kingdom of God, an *Urzeit-Endzeit* correlation” (158). For with Jesus comes the inauguration of the kingdom of God, the beginning of the *eschaton*, or *Endzeit*, when God will make all things new. It is only with the coming of the Messiah that we can hope to be transformed into people of the kingdom, capable of following God’s intent “from

the beginning of creation.”

It is true, of course, that we do not live in the Garden of Eden now. Every sin of our own wayward hearts, every sign of sin and destruction in the world makes that obvious to us all. And yet Jesus tells us that the conditions have changed. The *Endzeit* has been inaugurated with the coming of the kingdom, because the Messiah came to live among us and to allow us to follow his way, established by Jesus to bring “many children to glory...for the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.” Jesus, our brother, has come to bring us to our true, native home, but also to show us how we must live there.

The pathway home was not obvious to Jesus’ first disciples, who asked Jesus “again about this matter” of marriage and divorce. Jesus instructed them further regarding these things, but one might argue he instructs them more significantly by indicating the change of heart necessary to enter the kingdom and to live according to the ways of the kingdom. The kingdom is about transformation, about conversion of intellect, heart and soul.

At the end of the discourse about marriage and divorce, the disciples want to send away people who were bringing children to Jesus, “and the disciples spoke sternly to them.” This, however, is not the way of the kingdom

but of the fallen world. Jesus “was indignant” with the disciples, saying “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

What it means to “receive the kingdom of God as a little child” is surely complex. Or is it? Is Jesus’ point that as little children accept Jesus, and the ways of God, with vulnerability, openness, freedom, inno-



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

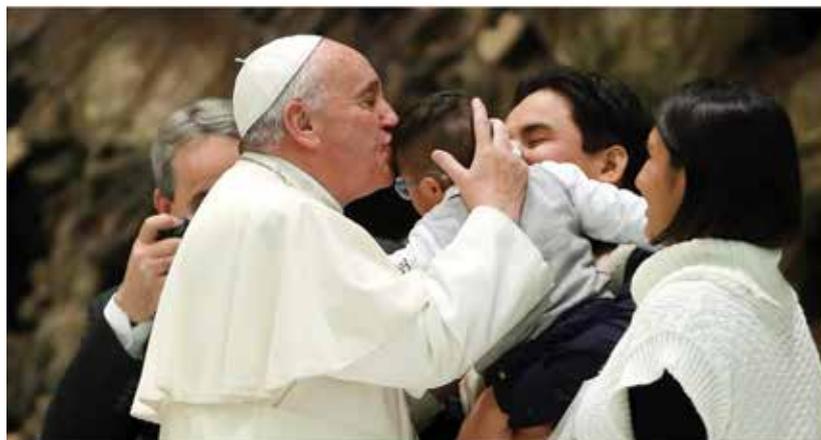
Not just marriage, but many relationships can break down because of our own fallen ways. How can we, by allowing ourselves to be transformed, help to restore our relationships? How can we become like “little children” as we grow in the ways of the kingdom?

cence, guilelessness, not to gain anything, not to calculate wins and losses, but simply to accept the kingdom for what it is, so we must accept the kingdom? If we are being taken back to the *Urzeit*, to Paradise restored in the *Endzeit*, then we are being taken to a time of primal innocence, in which the love of the other, in marriage as well as all of our other relationships, is grounded in God’s perfection. Surely none of us is perfect now; but the kingdom calls for transformation, to become like a “little child,” and the one who calls us will surely bring us home.

**JOHN W. MARTENS**

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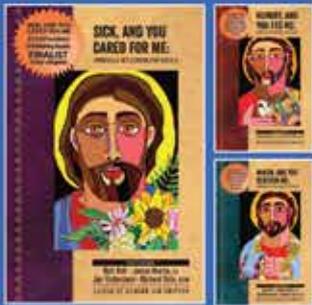


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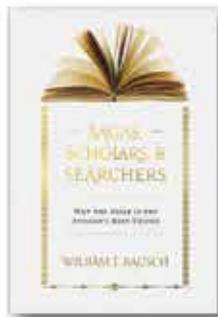
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