

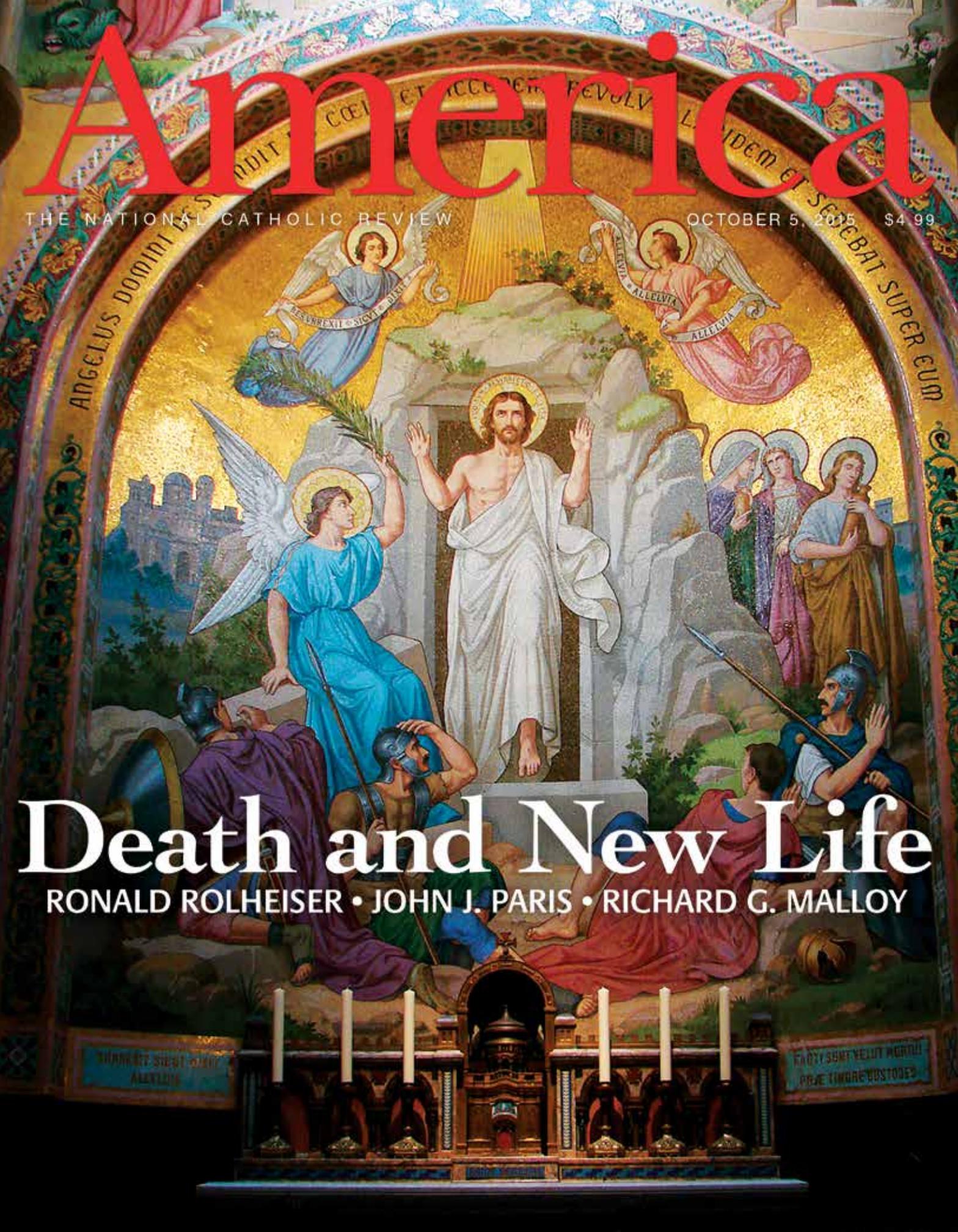
America

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Death and New Life

RONALD ROLHEISER • JOHN J. PARIS • RICHARD G. MALLOY



On a sweltering morning this past August, my husband and I sat in folding chairs in St. Peter's Square hoping to meet Pope Francis. Surrounding us were about 100 other couples, almost everyone dressed in either wedding dresses or tuxedos, as part of the *Sposi Novelli* celebration. Italian for "new spouses," the weekly ceremony allows newly married Catholic couples a brief meeting with the pope following his Wednesday audience.

After a prayerful audience and hours in the sun, our group, a sea of tulle and taffeta and ties, was escorted onto the steps of the basilica, as Francis drew closer. And then—finally!—there he was, within feet of us. One by one, each couple grinned and shook the pope's hand or embraced him. I had rehearsed over and over what I would say in Spanish, but, when the time came and Francis reached out his hand toward me, I only managed to squeak out, "Thank you for your example of mercy," in English, while barely holding back tears. In this brief and mildly embarrassing meeting with the pope, I felt what Francis has been proclaiming all along: a personal encounter is a powerful thing.

This September, millions of Americans had the chance to encounter Pope Francis during his trips to Washington D.C., New York and Philadelphia, including world leaders, prisoners and eager pilgrims. Prior to this visit, Pope Francis had never been to the United States, yet his words and message have been with us almost daily. For more than two years now, news of Francis' papacy and personality has inundated many American Catholic households. His accessible, merciful, pastoral tone and the authenticity of his faith have clearly come across in both Catholic and secular media, and many Americans, Catholic or not, feel close to this man who lives thousands of miles away in Rome. For many his arrival felt

less like an official visit and more like a homecoming.

Of course Francis cannot make it to every U.S. city, and so we at America Media have worked hard to keep Catholics across the country connected with Francis' comings and goings in Cuba and here in the United States. Our reporters were on the ground throughout, bringing stories not just of Francis—as he canonized Junípero Serra, chatted with schoolchildren in Harlem and celebrated Mass in Philadelphia, among other events—but also of the people who came to see him. We welcome you to engage with this content at papalvisit.americamedia.org and to be a part of the America Media community during this exciting time for our church.

In the end, the story of Francis' visit is, at its heart, a story of community. It has challenged American Catholics to acknowledge connections to those who may hold differing political views or those who may be on the periphery of society. It has reminded us that we should put as much effort and attention into welcoming our neighbor—the poor, the suffering, the dying, the imprisoned, those without a home or family or nation—as we have in welcoming Francis into our midst.

It is a fact not lost on our nation's vice president. "I'm excited quite frankly, as a practicing Catholic.... The whole world is getting to see what are the basic essential elements of what constitutes Catholicism." Vice President Joseph R. Biden told Matt Malone, S.J., president of America Media, in an exclusive interview a few days before Francis' visit.

In other words, the papal visit has put the spotlight not just on Francis the man, but on the Gospel message he proclaims and lives: Mercy. Always mercy. Over and over again, Francis directs us back to Christ, who guides us in our own journeys and whom we must recognize in all those we meet along the way.

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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 for commentary, photos and a timeline of the papal trip.



Open Doors, Open Hearts

In more than two years as pontiff, Pope Francis has not yet found the time to take a break at the famed papal vacation home in the hills of Castel Gandolfo. But that does not mean others cannot enjoy it. Francis recently opened the doors of the papal summer residence to tourists, who can reach the botanical and architectural beauty of the gardens and buildings there by taking a chartered train that runs between Vatican City and Castel Gandolfo.

Reporters on the inaugural journey on Sept. 11 rode a 1915 coal-powered steam locomotive, but everyday travelers will ride a more eco-friendly electric train. Visiting the attractions will not only offer a chance for visitors to experience a part of Catholic history; it will also help the merchants in town, who in the past have relied upon an influx of tourists arriving to pray with popes in the summer months.

The decision to literally open the doors to church structures is one that Francis has emphasized throughout his papacy and encourages both transparency and community. “Empty convents are not ours, they are for the flesh of Christ: refugees,” Francis said in 2013. He again emphasized this last month, when he called on “every” parish and religious community in Europe to take in a Syrian refugee family. This is a model that can be followed in more peaceful times, as well. We must ask: What church spaces can be made more welcoming to people in need? Are there empty rooms that could be filled with young volunteer groups or intentional communities? The church must make sure that we offer both open hearts and open doors to all who knock.

Death in Yemen

“I saw a bomb exploding in the air and pouring out many smaller bombs,” said Muhammad al-Marzuqi, a villager in Malus, Yemen. It was a cluster bomb—a particularly vicious weapon banned by a 117-nation agreement that neither the United States nor Saudi Arabia signed—which sends thousands of bomblets and metal fragments over a broad area. Thrown to the floor, unconscious, with burns and wounds all over the left side of his body, Muhammad woke up in the hospital. For over six months a coalition including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan and Morocco, along with Egypt and Sudan, has been waging war against the Houthis, rebels who drove Yemen’s president into exile.

The bombings, which have become random and daily, have devastated a country that is among the poorest in the world, destroying cities, roads, neighborhoods, hospitals, a

refugee camp and food and water supplies. A hospitalized 20-year-old man with bandages covering burns on 65 percent of his body told *The New York Times* (9/13), “They are targeting the whole population,” which included seven members of his family. The dead now total 4,500.

The civil war reflects the region’s Shiite-Sunni split and a rivalry between the Islamic State and Al Qaeda. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have described the bombing as a war crime. The Obama administration has declined to publicly chide Saudi Arabia, an important ally in the Iran nuclear pact. But the United States has a clear moral obligation to cut off any arms sales to the Arab coalition until this slaughter stops and to use its power to stop this terrible little war.

Civility Course

Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont is used to drawing big crowds. But the 12,000 students who packed Liberty University’s auditorium on Sept. 14 were not his typical audience. The self-described democratic socialist candidate for president had accepted an invitation from the evangelical Christian college, well known for its conservative politics, to give its fall convocation.

Mr. Sanders did not hide the fact he and many in the crowd likely did not see eye to eye on abortion and same-sex marriage. But that did not keep the senator from seeking common ground. Mr. Sanders touched on many of his usual talking points but asked those listening to “put this in the context of the Bible.” He quoted the Book of Amos and the Gospel of Matthew when condemning income inequality. He said that none of “God’s children” should die because they lack health insurance. And Mr. Sanders appealed to his family values in making the case for paid family and medical leave. The response to his speech was respectful, though not enthusiastic.

This is the type of civil discourse our country desperately needs. Instead of denigrating those with different beliefs, Mr. Sanders asked them to take their faith seriously. For their part, the students and administration of Liberty University should be commended for welcoming a voice that was sure to challenge and even offend many listeners. There is an unfortunate trend on campuses today to retract invitations from “controversial” speakers of every ideological stripe, from Bill Maher to George Will, if enough students find their views disagreeable. Bernie Sanders and Liberty have demonstrated that respectful dialogue is possible. The presidential campaign will be much more fruitful if others follow their lead.

Family Matters, Part 2

Last month Pope Francis surprised the Catholic world with two decrees aimed at streamlining the annulment process in the church. The pope's decrees did nothing to change church teaching on the indissolubility of marriage, but they should mean that Catholic couples who seek an annulment will not have to face what many had come to perceive as an unnecessarily onerous, costly and even punitive bureaucratic process.

We hope these reforms will encourage Catholics to reconsider the healing potential of the annulment process and perhaps open a path back to the church for many who thought an annulment was impossible for them. Only time will tell if that ambition is achieved. The current figures are not encouraging.

According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, about eight in ten of the U.S. Catholics who began an annulment case eventually received a decree of nullity. But CARA reports that only about 15 percent of divorced Catholics in the United States were willing to give the process a try. Many couples believe their marriage has broken down beyond repair but cannot accept the idea that their union was broken from the beginning. What to do about those who have no intention of availing themselves of the annulment process, or for whom it is not appropriate but who wish to remain connected to the church, will surely be among the priorities of the second meeting of the Synod of Bishops on the family in Rome this month.

But also on the agenda are a number of other challenges to contemporary family life that have not received as much media attention. Nonetheless, they represent acute threats to the family that require the church's attention, wisdom and even, at important junctures, advocacy. Since the synod's first meeting in 2014, Pope Francis has dedicated his weekly general audience to catechesis on marriage and the family, and has spoken frequently of the deleterious effects of poverty, social exclusion, war and migration on these institutions.

In an address on family and work on Aug. 19, for example, the pope spoke of a "dangerous tendency" in modern organizations "to consider the family a burden, a weight, a liability for the productivity of labor." In the United States this tendency and its devastating impact on working families are clearly evident in policies toward new mothers. An investigative report by *In These Times* (Aug. 18) tells the

stories of women, mostly working and middle class, who had no choice but to return to work just weeks after giving birth. Natasha Long recounts crying as she pumped breast milk in the parking lot of the factory, which had no lactation room, to which she returned three weeks after her child was born. In a country where only 13 percent of workers have access to paid family leave, there are too many women like Ms. Long, who in the words of Pope Francis, are held "hostage" to work. Surely the church should be on the forefront of the fight to reclaim this sacred time of bonding between mother and child.



Beyond this country's borders, threats to the family are even more immediate. The civil war in Syria and chaos across the Middle East and Africa have torn children from parents and husbands from wives as those who are able to flee seek refuge in Europe. Pope Francis has called on "every parish, every religious community, every monastery, every shrine of Europe [to] house a family." As important as such immediate acts of charity are, it is equally necessary for the church to continue to take a stand against those who would deny refugees their moral and legal right to flee persecution, whether at the U.S.-Mexico border or at the gates of Europe.

Catholics and people of good will all over the world will be watching the deliberations of the synod with hope as it grapples with these socioeconomic and political issues. We also hope that the relative paucity of references to these problems in the synod's working document is not a sign that the synod will give little attention to these important matters.

Finally, there is another force assailing contemporary Catholic families that calls for careful consideration. While some perceive the growing public acceptance of same-sex unions as a grave threat to marriage, mere apathy may be doing far more harm to married life in America. CARA reports that in 1965 there were 352,458 marriages celebrated in the Catholic Church in the United States. In 2014 only 154,450 were celebrated, a decline of 56 percent.

The steep decline in sacramental marriage suggests that many couples do not see the need for spiritual support and strengthening of their family life. Along with the external challenges to family life, the church must also find a way to encourage deeper recognition among the faithful of the sacredness of marriage and the family.

REPLY ALL

The Missing Half

Mention of the ordination of women to the priesthood was conspicuously absent from the letters that were chosen to deliver to the pope, or at least the topic was not mentioned in “Dear Pope Francis,” by Elizabeth Groppe (9/14). I am certain Pope Francis is not so foolish as to think that women have abandoned the idea so that it does not need to be continuously addressed. The patriarchal arguments put forth to continue this blatant discrimination against more than half of the human population is abominable.

I am certain that if Jesus Christ were walking the streets today, he would have several women among not only his disciples but his apostles. The fact that women are “allowed” to be nuns, to teach, to counsel, to do most of the things priests do except celebrate the Eucharist and forgive sins is, frankly, ridiculous. I am amazed sometimes that, despite this blatant refusal to lis-

ten to the voice of God speaking with a female timbre, I remain a staunch and happy practicing Catholic.

VERONICA MEIDUS-HEILPERN
Online Comment

Needed Change

“Our Segregated Schools” (Editorial, 8/31) properly sets the vision for Christian education in the United States. In order to realize that vision, we need to acknowledge certain realities. First, the fact that inexperienced teachers are sent to inner-city schools is a reflection of union seniority preferences and union work rules. These union practices have done more to keep inner-city children from receiving a quality education than any other factor. Second, look at the reality of the performance of (nonunion) charter schools in New Orleans (the Recovery School Districts) in the past 10 years, since the time of Katrina. Graduation rates have increased to 73 percent from 56 percent and standard test results for third to eighth grade have increased to 63 per-

cent from 33 percent. Are the charter schools perfect? Of course not: People complain about a strict, disciplinary environment and high expectations, but change is difficult and these types of changes are needed.

KEN BALASKOVITS
Park Ridge, Ill.

Canonization Contradiction

Re “Serra’s Sainthood,” by Jeffrey M. Burns (8/31): At this time in American history, when the debate about racism rages again, it is disturbing that **America** would publish an article so wishy-washy about the colonizer-in-chief Junípero Serra, O.F.M., as a proposed saint.

The California missions are to the Native peoples what the Confederate flag is to blacks—they conjure up all the pain and trauma that haunt the Indians to this day. As for the argument that we cannot judge the past by today’s standards, what is a canonization for except to propose emulation of someone from the past? Even in his own day, Serra was criticized for his cruelty (including by fellow Franciscans). This canonization contradicts Pope Francis’ strong words about the “sin” of destroying indigenous cultures.

MATTHEW FOX
Online Comment

A Sullied Tribute

Perhaps other readers were as mystified as I was as to why Matt Malone, S.J., felt the need to spoil the well-earned and excellent tribute to Mr. Carter with the snarky rhetoric of “ethically-im-poverished imperial presidency” and “B-movie Hollywood blockbuster” in reference to two former Republican presidents (Of Many Things, 8/31).

If the invidious comparisons were irresistible to Father Malone (better left edited out, frankly), then he should have considered at least also contrasting Mr. Carter’s high standards of morality and governance in relation to Democratic President Clinton’s low moral bar, based on the relative definition of is,

f STATUS UPDATE

On Sept. 8, Pope Francis issued two papal documents that aim to make the annulment process quicker, simpler and less costly in certain cases. Readers respond.

I have great admiration for the Holy Father, but the church’s process for an annulment will continue to result in a growing number of people leaving the church. To isolate divorce as seemingly the most grievous of all sins is beyond misplaced. So, a murderer can simply go to confession to confess his sins, as can a child molester, a terrorist, a drug dealer and more. If a family is breaking up, the church needs to be there to support the family, not to destroy their faith. I recognize that divorce is a serious matter, but let’s allow the conscience of a divorcing party in consultation

with a priest through confession to resolve the matter, so that the church can be part of the healing process and keep the family in the faith.

EMMET DELANY

One of the blessings to come out of an annulment is the opportunity for both parties to do a reflective “autopsy” on that relationship. What was my or my prior spouse’s understanding of marriage? Did we really understand what it means to be married? Were there obstacles to that understanding? And in doing that autopsy you allow a person to have a better understanding going into that next relationship. Annulment was never intended to be punitive, but sadly our limited experience or understanding of annulment often skews our perspective of the gift that can be found there.

MARTHA BYRD BROYLES

and President Obama's governing principle of "my pen" over the constitutional distribution of checks and balances of powers of governance (also both better left edited out, but fair play should level the goose-gander playing field of modern-day politics).

JOSEPH W. BELLACOSA
Ridgefield, Conn.

Education Encounter

Re "Unplugged but Connected," by Mike St. Thomas (8/31): Thanks for a thought-provoking article that gets to the heart of the dilemma facing our Catholic schools. There are many in the world of education (not to mention Silicon Valley) that seem to believe the world was recreated on Jan. 1, 2000. It is necessary for Catholic educators to think critically about the place of technology in our schools.

While an over-use of technology can diminish human relationships, this is not always the case. It is now possible for American children to interact with children in Peru and French children with their counterparts in Ivory Coast. I concede that these experiences are never the same as genuine personal interactions, but they do offer opportunities for children of different countries, cultures and even religions to learn together and share their ideas about the world. Given the universal nature of our church, this brings tremendous opportunities for our Catholic schools. The words of Pope Francis, quoted by the author, stress that "encountering others" is at the heart of our human experience; this must be something that Catholic educators are conscious of and promote continuously.

ADRIAN SCARLETT
Online Comment

Judging the Deal

Re "Diplomacy Deficit," by Margot Patterson (8/17): Chas Freeman is a brilliant statesman and gifted writer and speaker. He served our nation well. We used his book on diplomacy and statecraft when I taught at the

U.S. Army War College. His brilliance, however, has little to do with the flaws of the Iran deal. Verification, the critical element in any arms control deal, is the big problem. There is a 24-day delay before inspection of nuclear facilities can be done. The delay would allow Iran to hide evidence. Moreover, the United States cannot inspect unilaterally. It requires majority approval by the joint commission of eight members. Americans are right to question the deal.

GABRIEL MARCELLA
Carlisle, Pa.

Beyond Homo Economicus

The editors make a very good point in "Economy for the People" (Editorial, 8/3). Though Adam Smith himself saw the economy as an element of a broader moral context, too often that connection is lost. But it seems to me that this is only half the picture. If the observation that economics is a facet of broader moral philosophy is correct, we should expect that individual conversion is as important as proper macroeconomic policies. Too many Christians in particular have, I think, come to accept the lack of connection as a given. If profit maximization is the only value, we can and do create great wealth, but we also create great social costs. And these social costs eventually interfere with those very markets, not to mention the damage to the earth and its people. If we do not begin to rediscover the interconnection of economic and other values in each individual human heart, it is hard to see how we will policy our way out of the box we are putting ourselves in.

BRYAN VINCENT
Baton Rouge, La.

Touch of Love

I so appreciate in "A Sense of God" (8/3)

John W. Marten's focus on our senses as a pathway to seeing, feeling and connecting with spiritual realities. I've been a hospice volunteer for many years. Often, especially with people of advanced age who have hearing, sight and cognitive deficits, the only way to communicate one's concern and love is through touch—hugging, massaging, soothing sounds. The tactile, especially, is paramount. The frailty and utter dependence that the very old and very ill experience and the anxiety and fear these generate can be assuaged by a loving, tender touch, just as it is for infants.

WINIFRED HOLLOWAY
Online Comment

A Pastoral View

America's interesting and scholarly series of comments on "Laudato Si" ("Praised Be Creation," 7/20) left me with a feeling that something—or someone—was missing. I would have welcomed the views of what might be called a "pastoral theologian," someone whose theology is grounded and inspired by long and intimate contact with women and men who live on the peripheries of this world. There must be many out there like the late Dean Brackley, S.J., who constantly walk the "villas miserias" of this world, as Jorge Bergoglio did in Buenos Aires, and can articulate their theology from that privileged place.

JOSEPH NANGLE, O.E.M.
Washington, D.C.



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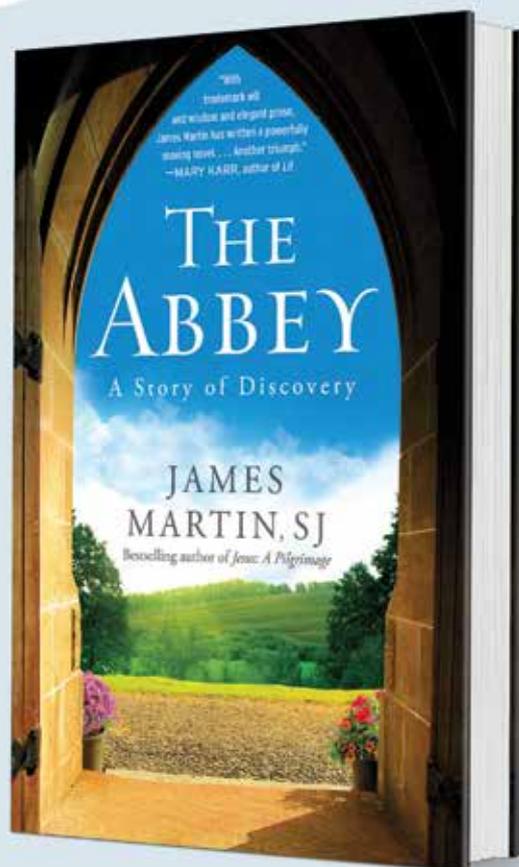
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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

PAPAL VISIT

In Cuba, Pope Urges Young to Be Signs of Hope



THE POPE'S CUBAN "DREAMERS." Young people cheer as Pope Francis arrives at the cathedral in Havana, Sept. 20.

Minutes after arriving in Cuba on Sept. 19, Pope Francis hailed “the process of normalizing relations between the two peoples of Cuba and the United States” after more than 50 years of estrangement as “a sign of the victory of the culture of encounter and dialogue” that “fills us with hope.”

He urged the political leaders on both sides “to persevere on this path of peace and to develop all its potentialities as a proof of the high service that they are called to carry out in favor of peace and the well-being of their peoples, of all America, and as example of reconciliation to the entire world.”

In a lengthy welcome speech, President Raúl Castro said he believed Pope Francis’ visit would be “a transcendental and enriching experience for our nation.” By the time the pope departed on Sept. 22, Castro’s expectation seemed well fulfilled.

“Service is never ideological, for we do not serve ideas, we serve people,” Pope Francis said in his homily at Mass on Sept. 20 in the Plaza de la Revolución in Havana. Wearing green vestments, he began by recalling the embarrassing question Jesus put to the disciples who were discussing which of them was the most important. Francis said this question—“Who is the most important?”—is one that surfaces many times during our lives and to which we must respond. Indeed, “the history of humanity has been marked by the answer we give to this question.”

Jesus provided an answer that opened “a new horizon” for the disciples then and for us today. He sets before us “the logic of love” that brings with it “a mindset, an approach to life, which is capable of being lived out by all, because it is meant for all”, and is “far from any kind of elitism,” even of a spiritual kind.

Pope Francis concluded his first full day in Cuba on Sept. 20 with an inspiring encounter with Havana’s young people in a park near the city cathedral. Abandoning his prepared text and indifferent to the soaking rain, he urged Havana’s young to remain “dreamers.”

He told them that a Latin American writer said we have two eyes: one of flesh and one of glass. With the first we see what we see, but with the glass we dream. “We need to have the ability to dream. A young person who does not have this ability is closed in on himself or herself.”

He urged them: “Dream that with you the world can be different. Dream that if you give the best of yourself, you’ll help to make the world a different place. But please dream, and dream big. And share your dream with others!”

One of the event’s speakers had talked about the differences that exist among Cubans because of ideologies and religion. Pope Francis urged Cuba’s young people to seek the things that unite them. “Let’s dare to talk about what we have in common, and then we can talk about the differences,” Pope Francis said. He urged them to commit themselves to cultivate the culture of encounter.

The pope was by now very wet from the rain, but he had one more word to share: hope. He told them,

“Young people are the hope of a nation; they are its future.” He said hope knows how to suffer, to turn a project into reality.

He then asked them to pray for him, and “if you are not a believer, then

please wish me well. And I will pray for you!” He then gave them his blessing, and to a mighty cheer from the young people he walked to the pope-mobile—drenched!

GERARD O’CONNELL

POVERTY

Catholic Charities Launches New Campaign to Assist U.S. Poor

Seeking to create awareness about poverty in the United States and to stand in solidarity with Pope Francis’ commitment to the poor, Catholic Charities USA has launched a new national campaign. Donna Markham, a Dominican sister, discussed the effort on Sept. 10 in her first address as president and chief executive officer of the organization during its national convention in Omaha. The campaign, called #End45—Raise a Hand to End Poverty in America, reflects the 45 million people in the United States who live in poverty. “That’s scandalous,” said Sister Donna, the organization’s first female president.

The campaign is appearing online nationwide on member websites, Facebook, Twitter and other social media accounts, with videos of people who have been helped by Catholic Charities. In addition, people are encouraged to show support by taking a picture of their hand with “End45” written on their palm and post it to their social media channels using the hashtag “End45.”

“We are asking our country to work with us to end 45,” said Sister Donna.

John Griffith, executive director of Catholic Charities of Omaha, said the local agency has long partnered with other organizations locally and na-

tionally. The new campaign can help increase awareness about their efforts and allow them to help more people, he said.

Looking ahead to the Year of Mercy that begins in December, Sister Donna said, “We’re ready to stand with [Pope

Francis] as missionaries of mercy across this country and beyond.”

At a news conference at the National Press Club on Sept. 17, less than one week before the pope was scheduled to arrive in the United States, Sister Donna said Pope Francis “serves as a powerful catalyst” for the change American society needs in its regard and treatment of the poor and vulnerable. Her remarks came one day after the Census Bureau issued its annual assessment of U.S. poverty. The new numbers are not only disheartening; they could mean Catholic Charities will have to recast its “#End45” branding.

The number of poor people in the U.S. in 2014, according to the Census Bureau, was 46.7 million, up from the previous year’s figure of 45 million, which Catholic Charities used for its anti-poverty campaign. The 2014 number includes 15.5 million children. The Census Bureau said the size of the increase is not statistically significant.

Catholic Charities served nine million individual Americans last year through its 177 affiliates in the United States and its territories. As to how the other 36 million or more might have been helped, Sister Donna said, they may have been served by other agencies, but she suggested many merely fall through the cracks, unaware that help is available to them.

Sister Donna said she expected Pope Francis’ address before a joint meeting of Congress on Sept. 24 to be “disturbing to everybody” sitting in the gallery, regardless of political party. “I have no idea what that man’s going to say. It’s going to be honest,” she added, noting, “I’m sure he’s going to make everybody a little uncomfortable.”

It is possible that from that sense of discomfort policy solutions may arise to give the poor a genuine boost, Sister Donna said.

In the meantime, Sister Donna indicated that some corporate leaders had approached Catholic Charities about what they could do. Part of the solution lies in getting people through the day-to-day; she said 54 percent of Catholic Charities clients who visit for the first time do so because they are hungry.

But the second part of the equation is to give them a start that will allow them to shake off their poverty. Sister Donna cited the food and horticultural sectors of the economy as two that have a continual call for trained workers.



October Is Respect Life Month

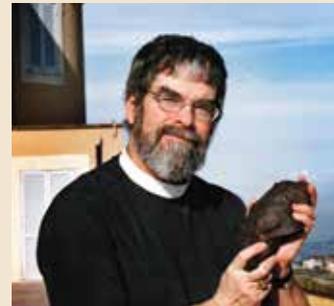
People discover their worth when they discover their true identity as created in God's image and called to an eternal destiny with him, said Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, O.F.M.Cap., archbishop of Boston and chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in the conference's annual Respect Life Month statement. Catholics and all people of good will in the United States are invited to participate in Respect Life Month. Observed in October, it begins the year-long cycle of the Respect Life Program. The theme of the 2015-16 program is "Every life is worth living." In his introductory statement, Cardinal O'Malley writes: "Whether it lasts for a brief moment or for a hundred years, each of our lives is a good and perfect gift. At every stage and in every circumstance, we are held in existence by God's love." Nothing can diminish a person's God-given dignity or the worth of his or her life, he said, only that others may fail to respect human dignity.

Parliamentarians Meet On Religious Freedom

In the face of rising religious persecution of people on the grounds of faith or belief, over 100 parliamentarians from almost 50 countries met in New York City on Sept. 18 and 19 to discuss ways to advance freedom of religion or belief. The event was co-sponsored by the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, a network launched last year in response to the rising crisis of religion- or belief-based persecution by both terrorist groups and authoritarian governments. "There is a global crisis for freedom of religion or belief," said Baroness Elizabeth Berridge of

NEWS BRIEFS

Pope Francis named Brother **Guy Consolmagno**, a Jesuit from the United States, to be the new director of the Vatican Observatory on Sept. 18. • The Archdiocese of Cincinnati is one of the latest U.S. dioceses to heed the call of Pope Francis, announcing that **annulment fees would be eliminated** effective Sept. 14. • Philippine church leaders warned the faithful on Sept. 12 against **making money out of reported "miracles"** and "apparitions" of Mary after stories of weeping images of Jesus' mother surfaced in local media. • Embracing Pope Francis' request to sponsor a refugee family, St. Anne parish in Vatican City welcomed a **family of four from Damascus, Syria**, on Sept. 18, sponsoring the Melkite Catholic family in a Vatican apartment near St. Peter's Square. • The **Diocese of Lincoln, Neb.**, announced on Sept. 10 that it will take part in the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' audit of sexual abuse by clergy, the first time the diocese has done so since the audits began in 2003. • Calling himself "a bit feminist," **Pope Francis praised women religious** on Sept. 17 for always heading to the "front lines" to bring the church's tenderness and motherly love to those most in need—which he called "a beautiful witness."



Guy Consolmagno

the United Kingdom, a member of the I.P.P. steering group. "An international problem requires an international response.... Collective action is needed now more than ever."

The U.S. Church Gets an App

The leadership of the Catholic Church in the United States has introduced its first mobile application, called "USA Catholic Church." Designed to draw Catholics closer to their faith by providing access to church information on all screens and devices, this is the only app that brings together information from all Catholic sources: parishes, dioceses, the U.S. bishops and even the Vatican. Not only will the app include religious news, daily Scripture readings and local parish

content; it will also feature exclusive, in-depth coverage of events like Pope Francis' visit to the United States in September. "This is the most comprehensive virtual connection to the Catholic faith available," said Bishop Christopher Coyne, chair-elect of the Committee on Communications of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which created the app. "We understand many people are looking for more ways to connect with the church and incorporate Catholic living into their busy lives—that's exactly what this app is designed to do." The "USA Catholic Church" app is free to download from Google Play and Apple iTunes in English and Spanish or visit www.USACatholic.church from a smartphone or tablet device.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

DISPATCH | MIAMI

Worth the Investment

President Obama wants to earmark a billion dollars to aid Central America—specifically, the isthmus’s “northern triangle” of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

The U.S. military’s Miami-based Southern Command has labeled the northern triangle the “deadliest zone in the world” outside Afghanistan and Iraq. And for good reason. It is plagued by some of the world’s highest murder rates, thanks to the bloodthirsty, tattooed *maras*, or street gangs, that control whole swaths of territory there.

Combine that with the region’s destitution—almost two-thirds of Hondurans live in poverty—and it is small wonder the United States has seen a surge in undocumented Central American migrants in recent years, including the more than 60,000 unaccompanied children who showed up on our doorstep in 2014.

But there is a third factor that merits far more attention than we outside Central America give it: corruption. In fact, the region’s epic venality—and the way it bleeds national economies—plays a large role in generating the region’s poverty and violence. This is why folks in the northern triangle seem to have finally lost all patience with it—and why a president was not only thrown out of office this month but thrown behind bars. Meanwhile, the head of state next door faces street protests demanding the same.

Guatemala’s President Otto Pérez Molina resigned on Sept. 3 after

Congress stripped him of his immunity from prosecution. It did so to make him face charges that he took part in a scandal in which high-ranking Guatemalan officials allegedly pocketed tens of millions of dollars in bribes from importers wanting to evade customs duties.

What’s more remarkable: In a country whose history is synonymous with dark lawlessness, Pérez, a former army

The region’s epic venality plays a large role in its poverty and violence.

general and military intelligence chief, went straight to a lock-up and then a court hearing. Pérez denies the charges against him, but most Guatemalans seem convinced he is guilty.

What outrages them most about the import duties scandal is that Guatemala already has one of the world’s highest tax evasion rates. That has reduced its public revenues to just a tenth of its gross domestic product, making it impossible to provide meaningful social and security services—in other words, making the country ripe for economic and criminal misery.

The situation is even more appalling just to the south in Honduras. For months now, Hondurans—not a people known for taking to the streets—have railed against a bribery and embezzlement scheme that has gutted more than \$300 million from their country’s public health and social security system. Their marches feature skulls on pikes to symbolize the deaths likely to result

from that larceny.

President Juan Orlando Hernández’s National Party admits it took hundreds of thousands of dollars from companies involved in the crime. Hernández denies he knew about it, but few Hondurans believe him. Calls for his resignation are widespread.

“Corruption like this, if it’s met with impunity, creates a fatal sense of national hopelessness,” Wilfredo Mendes, one of the protest leaders who recently went on hunger strikes, told me in Tegucigalpa last month.

So are we watching a Central American Spring unfold? That is still unclear. But the United States, whose chief aim is to stem the flow of desperate Central American migrants, is taking the trend seriously. The U.S. ambassador to Honduras, James Nealon, has met with protest leaders there to facilitate a reform dialogue with the government.

“The protest movement is a positive thing,” Nealon told me. “We’re going to help [Hondurans’] efforts to confront the problem of impunity and corruption.”

Which brings us back to Mr. Obama’s billion-dollar plan, one of the largest foreign aid requests for fiscal 2016. Instead of focusing on conventional security assistance, like military helicopters, it emphasizes more effective strategies like police and judicial reform—not to mention enhanced job and education opportunities and, perhaps most important, promoting more transparent governance.

There is a dilemma involved here, of course. Dropping a billion bucks into a region as corrupt as the northern triangle is risky—but it’s also urgent. Either way, it reflects Washington’s long overdue realization that the place to address illegal immigration is not at our border but at its sources.

TIM PADGETT

TIM PADGETT, *Latin America editor for NPR affiliate WLRN, is America’s Miami correspondent.*

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Faith on the Stump

I have been searching in vain for an earlier column of mine in which I predicted that Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders would surge, Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush would be in trouble and Ben Carson would show unexpected strength in the race for the White House.

The way faith is playing out in the campaign is also a surprise. Donald Trump says he is Presbyterian, part of a New York congregation, which said he is not an active member. He admitted the Bible is a better book than his *The Art of the Deal* but could not identify any verses that guide his life. He cannot remember asking God for forgiveness but added “when I drink my little wine...and have my little cracker, I guess that’s a form of asking for forgiveness.” This thrice-married former supporter of Planned Parenthood and single-payer health care who attacks immigrants and women who dare to challenge him is the Republican front-runner.

Five Republican candidates are Catholics. Mr. Bush has fallen back and Marco Rubio has failed to gain. Mr. Bush deserves credit for resisting Mr. Trump’s nativist polemics, but he responded to Pope Francis’ environmental encyclical by saying, “I don’t get my economic policy from my bishops or my cardinals or my pope” and added that religion “ought to be about making us better as people and less about things that end up getting into the political realm.” He had a different message at Liberty University, where

he called upon Christians to oppose abortion and support religious liberty.

Bobby Jindal and Rick Santorum are at the back of the pack. Chris Christie is also far behind, but volunteered “I’m a Catholic, but I’ve used birth control. And not just the rhythm method.”

Ben Carson says he got into the race to answer God’s call and is gaining in Iowa. Governor John Kasich is doing well in New Hampshire and defends his Medicaid expansion by saying that St. Peter is “probably not gonna ask you much about what you did about keeping government small, but...what you did for the poor.”

Mike Huckabee and Ted Cruz are offering fire and brimstone homilies. Carly Fiorina and Ron Paul talk a lot about “Hillary’s failures” and little about faith. Scott Walker, a preacher’s son, has faded as he echoes Mr. Trump without his persona. Republicans speak of their faith but rarely about “welcoming the stranger” or a priority for the poor. Rick Perry’s best moment was his departing comment: “Demeaning people of Hispanic heritage is not just ignorant, it betrays the example of Christ.”

Among Democrats, Hillary Clinton returned to thank her Methodist congregation in Washington but is struggling to overcome the perception that she has a problem with the Eighth Commandment about bearing “false witness.”

The candidate who most quotes Pope Francis is not Martin O’Malley, a Jesuit-educated Catholic who barely registers in the polls, but Bernie

Sanders, known more for his socialist label than for his Jewish identity. Democratic candidates seem to worship at the altar of “reproductive rights,” reflecting liberal orthodoxy more than a consistent ethic of life.

The most compelling discussion of these matters came on “The Late Show.” Stephen Colbert and Joe Biden talked about faith and family, personal loss and public service. The vice president anguished over whether he could fully commit himself to a presidential race after the death of his son Beau. Colbert asked, “How has...your faith helped you respond?” Biden replied: “My religion is just an enormous sense of solace.... I go to Mass and I’m able to be just alone even in a

crowd.... I say the rosary. I find it to be incredibly comforting.

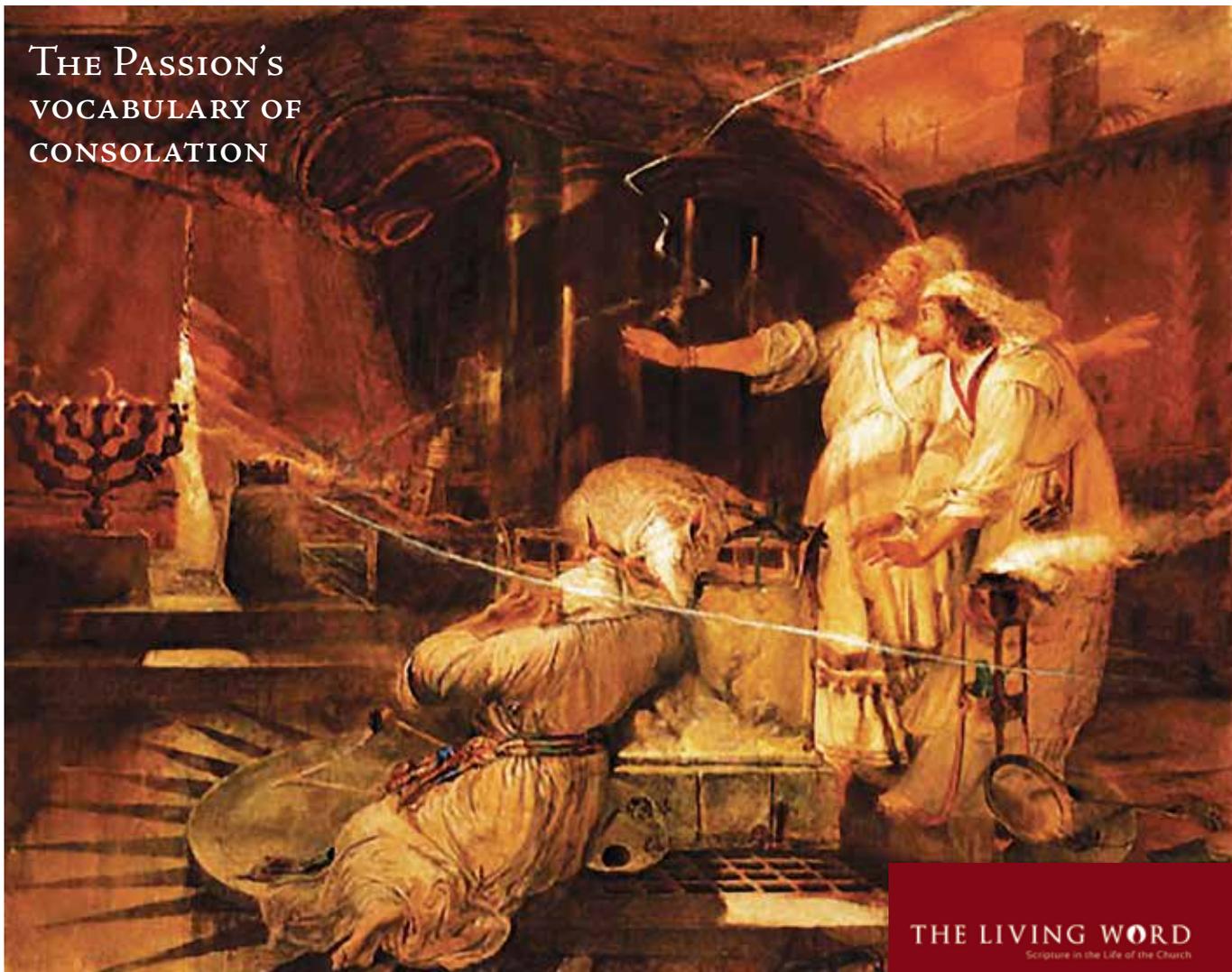
“What my faith has done is it sort of takes everything about my life with my parents and my siblings and all the comforting things and all the good things that have happened...around the culture of my religion and the theology of my religion, and I don’t know how to explain it more than that. But it’s just the place that you can go.”

I differ with Mr. Biden and Mrs. Clinton on abortion, with Mr. Bush on the death penalty and with Mr. Trump on deporting immigrants. But on religion in public life, I believe both faith and politics are better served by the honesty and anguish of Mr. Biden than the cynicism and glibness of Mr. Trump.

The candidate who most quotes Pope Francis is Bernie Sanders.

JOHN CARR

THE PASSION'S
VOCABULARY OF
CONSOLATION



ART: RENDING OF THE VEIL BY WILLIAM BELL SCOTT. 1869. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/SHAKKO

Bringing New Life

BY RONALD ROLHEISER

There are certain things we know deeply, risk our lives upon, but can never adequately explain to ourselves or others. This is particularly true of the death of Jesus and how that death washes us clean of sin, opens the gates of heaven for us and teaches how to give our own deaths away as he did.

That Jesus' death does these things is a core truth that underlies most everything within our Christian faith. We celebrate it in the liturgy. We define it in dogmas. We depict it in icons. We risk our lives upon its truth. But only at some gut level do we inchoately grasp its meaning. We have certain words for its substance, but we do not have a full vocabulary to describe it, and we will never fully find one since the redemptive val-

RONALD ROLHEISER, O.M.I., is the author, most recently, of *Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity*. This article is part of *America's* series, "The Living Word: Scripture in the Life of the Church," cosponsored by the American Bible Society.

ue of Jesus' death is, in its depth, a mystery beyond normal understanding. But the theological, catechetical, spiritual and human task is still to search for that vocabulary. We can understand only partially what Jesus' death means, but that partial understanding is badly needed.

How do we enter that understanding? How can we begin to unfurl the mystery of Jesus' death in a way that we can explicitly grasp more of its meaning? The Gospels, of course, are our best entry, particularly the Passion narratives. These narratives are not intended as a literal recording of Jesus' death. Rather they tell us how those around Jesus, that first Christian community, experienced his death and its aftermath. With this in mind and for the purposes of this short article, I would like to focus on two passages given in the Gospels wherein the Evangelists describe the effects of Jesus' death.

'Torn in Two'

The first of passage is found in Mt 27:51-53, where we are told that at the exact moment of Jesus' death "the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two, from top to bottom, the earth quaked, the rocks split, the tombs opened and the bodies of many holy people rose from the dead." What happens here?

My imagination has always been able to picture this moment. What comes automatically to mind is an image of it growing dark in the middle of the day and then, at the second of Jesus' death, as if by lightning, the temple veil is ripped from top to bottom while everyone looks on stunned, convinced now, too late, that the person they have just mocked and crucified is the Christ. But, spontaneous imagination aside, what is really meant by that phrase?

Biblical scholars tell us that the veil of the sanctuary was precisely a veil, a curtain, which hid from the ordinary worshipper the "holy of holies." It shielded persons from seeing into the holiest part of the temple where, in a manner too awesome for normal sight, God was understood to dwell. Thus, when Matthew says that at the moment of Jesus' death the temple veil was ripped apart from top to bottom, the point he is making is not that God shredded what was most precious to those who crucified Jesus to show them how wrong they were. Instead, the point is rather a positive one.

The temple veil was, as just mentioned, a curtain that physically separated the people from that part of the temple that was considered "the holy of holies" and that was always beyond the sight of the ordinary people. Only the priests,

to perform sacred ritual, ever went behind the curtain and saw what was there. What Matthew tells us, then, is that the death of Jesus took away the veil that prevents us, the ordinary people, from seeing into the true "holy of holies," that is, the inner heart of God. In Jesus' death we get to see right into the heart of God. There is no longer a veil between us

and God's heart. We can now see what God really looks like.

To understand the richness of this image, it can be helpful to compare it to a parallel image in the Jewish Scriptures, namely, that of the rainbow. Scripture tells us that God is "light"; but, paradoxically, we cannot see light. We see by light, but we cannot see light itself, except in one instance,

the rainbow. When light is shone into a prism, the prism refracts that light, literally breaking it up so that we can see it inside. And the result is stunning. We see that the inside of light is spectacularly beautiful, seven magnificent colors (the basis of all color). In a rainbow, in a manner of speaking, we physically see the inside of God and we see that God's inside is spectacularly beautiful.

The death of Jesus, how he died in love, forgiving his executioners, forgiving all the ignorance and malice that brought about his death while he remained faithful to truth and love in the face of their opposites, is a prism that refracts God's moral interior; it breaks open God's heart and tears away the veil that prevents us from seeing inside God's heart. It is a moral rainbow. And what we see there, like the colors in a physical rainbow, is spectacularly beautiful. The moral heart of God also breaks down into spectacularly beautiful colors (the basis of all morality): unconditional love and its various manifestations. The death of Jesus is the ultimate icon of the Trinity and the ultimate revelation of God.

And what does it reveal? It reveals how we are washed clean by Jesus' blood. By dying as he did, Jesus did not pay off some debt to God that humanity incurred through original sin and that we personally incur through our personal sins. God does not keep a scorecard and does not need a bank balance. Rather Jesus' death washes us clean by revealing the heart of a God whose love is faithful enough to not let us die, to open our graves and empty our cemeteries, even when in ignorance or malice we go on killing God and each other. The death of Jesus reveals a God who sheds his own blood to cover up all the blood we are shedding in our ignorance, jealousy and sin. As our creedal formulae and icons so beautifully depict it, in Jesus' death we are being washed clean by the blood of the lamb. Among other things, this is a moral metaphor that we can spend our lifetime contemplating.

The death of Jesus is the ultimate icon of the Trinity and the ultimate revelation of God.

Blood and Water

A second text within the Passion narratives sheds light more specifically on how Jesus' death was experienced by his contemporaries as a cleansing, a blessing and a new empowerment to live.

The Gospel of John tells us that at the moment of Jesus' death "blood and water" flowed from his dead body (Jn 19, 33-34). This image has several levels of meaning. First, the image is clearly one of birth; blood and water accompany a newborn out of the womb. Jesus' death was experienced as giving birth to something in the world. What is being born? Cleansing and empowerment. That much is clear in the image.

What is blood? Blood is the life-principle inside us. We are alive so long as blood flows through us. What is water? Two things: Water quenches thirst and it washes us clean. When we combine these concepts, we get a sense of what John is trying to teach us. In the face of Jesus' death, his initial disciples felt an outpouring of blood and water, that is, they felt a deeper and richer flow of life within themselves and a sense of being nurtured and cleansed in a new way. They felt something flow out from Jesus' death that made them feel freer, less guilty and more open to life than ever before.

This might sound quasi-magical, but it is something very concrete. We have that same experience whenever someone we know dies with the same trust, forgiveness and graciousness that Jesus exhibited at his death. If someone were to ask me, "What have been the singularly most joy-filled occasions that you have been present to within the last 10 years?" my answer might seem curious. The most joy-filled occasions that I have been present to over the last decade have been a number of funerals of both women and men, who, in the way they died, figuratively set off a flow of blood and water from their caskets.

Here is one example. A couple of years ago, I went to visit a man who was already in palliative care, dying of cancer. He was a young man, still in his 50s, but he was dying well because he was dying the same way he had lived his life, without bitterness and without enemies. He spoke to me of the intense loneliness of dying and then added: "I've had a good life and I've no regrets. I don't think I have an enemy, at least I don't know of one. And I want to do this right. I want to die with a dignity that makes my wife and kids proud of me. I want to do this right for them and for everyone else."

He died some days later, and his family and everyone else who knew him were deeply saddened. But inside that sadness there was also something else: an outflow of blood and water. After his funeral, as we walked out of church to a small reception, there was not one person who knew this man well, including his grieving wife and children, who, at a level deeper than the sadness of the moment, did not feel freer, less guilty and more open to life than ever before. He

The Revelatory Body

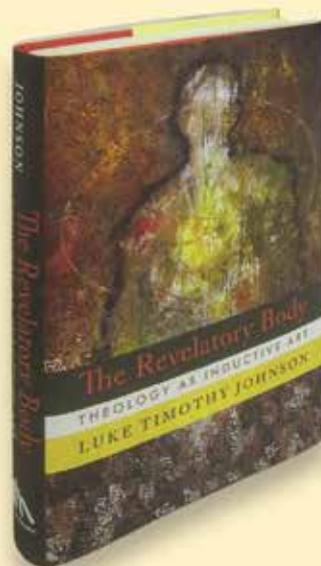
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wanted to do his death right, and he did, and that reinforced everything good he had done in his life, so that what he wanted to leave us stayed with us, his love and the goodness of his life. They flowed from his casket, like blood and water.

How We Live and How We Die

Less happily, we sometimes experience the opposite; not every death is a gift to those who knew that person. All of us have also been to funerals where, because of the manner in which the person lived or died, we did not feel freedom and cleansing flowing from the casket but rather felt as if the very oxygen was being drawn out of the room. Instead of feeling freer, less guilty and more open to life, we felt guilty about the very act of breathing.

How we live and how we die leaves behind a spirit after we have gone, a happy blessing or some unhappy unfinished business. Our caskets will either emit a flow of life-giving and guilt-freeing blood and water or they will suck some of the oxygen from the rooms and the hearts of those who knew us.

Jesus, by the way he lived and by the way he died, set forth a flow of “water and blood” from his dead body. His death was experienced by his contemporaries as bringing them new life. And this is more than something we should admire. Rather, as the First Letter of Peter puts it, it is an example for us to imitate. To the degree that we die as Jesus did, without bitterness and without holding anyone hostage, our dead bodies too will give off, to all who knew us, a flow of blood and water. This is a moral metaphor that we can spend a lifetime contemplating.

And, admittedly, all of this is partially a mystery, Jesus’ death as well as our own. There is more here than can be grasped in purely human terms. In the end, we do not have the vocabulary to adequately express this. Dogmatic formulae and icons are perhaps still our richest avenues for understanding since they simply hold the mystery up for us to meditate upon. With this in mind, I leave you with a meditation from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., on death, Jesus’ death and our own, and the connection between the two:

When the signs of age begin to mark my body (and still more when they touch my mind); when the illness that is to diminish me or carry me off strikes from without or is born within me; when the painful moment comes in which I suddenly awaken to the fact I am losing hold of myself and am absolutely passive within the great unknown forces that have formed me; in all those dark moments, O God, grant that I may understand that it is you (provided only my faith is strong enough) who are painfully parting the fibres of my being in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my substance and bear me away within yourself.... Teach me to treat my death as an act of communion. 

The Hour of Our Death

Contemporary approaches to end-of-life care

BY JOHN J. PARIS

The contemporary American approach to end-of-life care is captured in an essay by Atul Gawande, M.D., in *The New Yorker* (8/2/10) entitled: "Letting Go! What Should Medicine Do When It Can't Save Your Life?" Dr. Gawande, a surgeon at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital and a professor at Harvard Medical School, regrets what is occurring in medical practice. Yet he feels helpless to resist.

In his beautifully written essay, Dr. Gawande tells the story of Sara Monopoli, a young woman who was eight months pregnant with her first child when doctors diagnosed her lung cancer. Her husband assured her, "This is going to be O.K. We are going to work through this." The next day she delivered a healthy baby. That same day her oncologist informed Sara that the non-small cell lung cancer had metastasized. Her condition was non-operable. There was, however, the possibility of chemotherapy. She was started on an experimental drug that targets a gene

mutation found in females with lung cancer.

Tests subsequently revealed Sara did not have the mutation that drug targets. She was then changed to a more standard drug. That drug also failed. A third regimen was tried, but it too failed to slow the tumor. All known interventions, including the use of a drug in a Phase I trial, had been utilized without success. Dr. Gawande then asks: "What do we do now?" The question was not about science or medicine. It was, "What does the patient want?" Patient autonomy, for weal or woe, has become the fundamental value in American medicine. It trumps all other values. Gone is the tradition that prevailed from the time of Hippocrates until the middle of the 20th century that the physician determines what should be done in the face of an overwhelming disease.

How did we get to this state of affairs? The late Edmund D. Pellegrino, M.D., described in an essay in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* what he labeled "three eras of medicine:" Hippocrates to 1960; 1960 to 1990; 1990 onward. In the first era physician paternalism prevailed. The doctor decided what was to be done. In later centuries the physician was readily identified by his small black bag. It contained everything the physician needed to practice—

JOHN J. PARIS, S.J., *the Michael P. Walsh Professor of Bioethics at Boston College, is currently a visiting professor at the Center for Biomedical Ethics at Stanford University School of Medicine.*



A FAMILY VIGIL. Leo King's sister, left, and his wife at his bedside at the Center for Compassionate Care in Pittsburgh on Sept. 7. Mr. King died the next day.

IGNS PHOTO/NANCY PHELAN WIECHEC

very little. Little could be done and little was attempted. Most people succumbed to death at an early age from an intractable infection. In that era, the rules for the practice of medicine were relatively simple. They were laid out as far back as the Hippocratic Corpus: Alleviate suffering, treat disease where possible and do not impose treatment on the patient “overmastered by disease,” because in such cases medicine proves powerless.

Three developments occurred in the years 1960 to 1990 that changed medical practice: technology, third-party payment and loss of trust in institutions. That final factor led to the rise of rights language. The predecessor of the emphasis on the rights of patients is found in Justice Benjamin Cardozo’s opinion in the landmark *Schloendorff* case in 1914 that “every human being of adult years and sound mind has the right to determine what shall be done with his own body.” The *Schloendorff* ruling recognized the competent adult’s right to refuse an unwanted medical intervention. It did not confer on a patient the right to determine or demand a treatment, nor was there an obligation on the part of the physician to honor such requests.

Dr. Pellegrino noted that the rise of autonomy transformed the doctor-patient relationship from a joint venture of trust and dependency into a commercial model in which the patient (or proxy) alone determines what is to be done. The furthest reach of “autonomy” is found in several recent cases in which parents requested and physicians continued life support on an infant born with anencephaly, a condition in which the infant has no brain, or congenital dwarfism such that the child’s small rib cage prevented lung expansion, thus causing suffocation. The most extreme cases were those of a brain-dead child whose parents refused to accept the diagnosis and insisted on continued ventilator support of the child. In all of these cases the treating physicians believed, much like Dr. Gawande, that absent a court ruling to the contrary, they had no option but to follow the treatment decision of the mother.

The morphing of the right of the competent patient to decline an unwanted medical intervention into the right to be provided whatever medical intervention—indifferent to efficacy or cost—the patient (or proxy) demands results in what Dr. Pellegrino described as “the chaos” of present day health care delivery in the United States. It also led doctors like Dr. Gawande to lament the fact that when physicians today confront patients and families like Sara and her husband, who believe that there is a technological fix for every medical problem, they feel powerless to resist their demands.

The Catholic Mindset

The assessment that patient autonomy is the dominant value in medical practice as well as in bioethics is correct. The Catholic approach to bioethics operates out of a different mindset. Richard McCormick, S.J., the most influential Jesuit moral theologian of the late 20th century, noted in an essay entitled “Bioethics: A Moral Vacuum” (*America*, 5/1/1999) that in our age autonomy has consumed the entire range of bioethics. In doing so, he argued, we have excluded from consideration those goods and values that make choices right or wrong. But those are precisely the factors that make bioethics a moral enterprise. When the rightness or wrongness of a decision is reduced to an individual’s choice, the result is autonomy run amok.

This is captured in a statement by Jack Kevorkian, M.D., (sometimes called Dr. Death) on physician assisted suicide: “In my view the highest principle in medical ethics—in any ethics—is personal autonomy, self-determination.” His approach gives no consideration to the impact of individual choice on family and friends, the medical pro-

fession or society.

When contemporary bioethics talks about patients as autonomous persons, it is mostly talking of a pipedream. Such talk leaves the impression that desperately ill and dying patients are in Olympian control. But as we have all experienced, even with something as minor as the flu, illness inevitably means dependence. We rely on others for whatever we need. This is all the more true of the seriously ill.

Lost in the clutter of clinical details are the “big-picture” issues that concern the patient. Medical costs, for example, have an enormous impact on the sick. But that issue is generally passed over in silence. What are the patients’ fears, hopes and doubts? These rarely appear in the medical chart. Clinical details are noted, but to paraphrase T. S. Eliot, do we measure out our lives in data?

An emphasis on bioethics that reduces the patient to medical details or to the patient’s desires—ignoring big-picture issues like the common good, distributive justice and the spirituality of the patient—misses an understanding of who the patient really is. To achieve that big picture, Catholic moral theology insists we focus on the patient viewed in all his or her complexity—physical, financial, social and spiritual. Patients are not reducible to organ systems, like the heart, liver, lungs or kidneys or, worse, to biochemistry. Rather, we ought to look at what Paul Ramsey famously called “the patient as person” (2002).

A Catholic approach to bioethics begins not with the patient’s autonomous will but with a theological understand-

**When the rightness
or wrongness of a
decision is reduced to
an individual’s choice,
the result is autonomy
run amok.**

ing of “the meaning, source and goal of life.” This is seen in Father McCormick’s landmark article in *America*, “To Save or Let Die” (7/7/1974). Although the essay was published simultaneously in a medical journal (JAMA), it is replete with theological presuppositions, language and conclusions. The article is a commentary on a legal case in which Judge David Roberts of the Maine Superior Court ruled that if a patient has a medical need and there is a medically feasible response, that medical treatment must be provided. In Judge Roberts’s words, “The most basic right enjoyed by every human being is the right to life itself.” That pro-life stand might be taken by many as the orthodox Catholic approach to life-death decisions. In utterly unflinching language Father McCormick rejected that reading of the Catholic moral tradition. In his words, such a standard is nothing short of “idolatry.” Human life, he tells us, is a gift of God given for a limited purpose. Its *raison d’être* is not our earthly life but eternal life. As Father McCormick understood the Catholic moral tradition, it is an attempt to formulate a balanced middle ground between “medical vitalism” that acts to preserve life at any cost and “medical pessimism” that kills when life seems frustrating, burdensome or useless.

Both alternatives, in Father McCormick’s view, are idolatries. In support of that opinion he quoted Pope Pius XII’s famous allocution to the International Congress of Anesthetologists, entitled “Prolongation of Life” (Nov. 24, 1957), stating that we are normally obliged to use only ordinary means to preserve life. In over 500 years of consistent Catholic moral thought, the terms ordinary and extraordinary refer not to hardware or technique but to moral obligation. Ordinary are those things one is obliged to do. Extraordinary are those things one may do but is not obliged to do in order to save one’s soul. Failure to act appropriately is a sin. The punishment for such failure, if not absolved, is eternal damnation. The question then put to the moral theologians was, What exempts an individual from the obligation to undergo a medical technique? The response was that one would be exempt if the treatment were too costly, too burdensome or too painful or if the procedure did not offer a reasonable expectation of benefit to the patient.

A Cog in a Machine

The 1980 Vatican “Declaration on Euthanasia,” aware that today the terms ordinary and extraordinary are confused, misused and abused, proposed substituting “proportionate and disproportionate” burden and benefit to the patient. The opening statement of Part IV of the declaration applies that analysis to end-of-life care: “Today it is very important to protect, at the moment of death, both the dignity of the human person and the Christian concept of life against a technological attitude that threatens to become an abuse.” An example of such abuse would be the intensive care unit described in Dr. Gawande’s “Letting Go,” where a patient, tethered to a venti-

lator with tubes coming from every orifice, is reduced to little more than a cog in a machine.

More morally problematic in today’s world of high tech medicine is the notion that “once we start, we cannot stop.” It is believed by some that while it might be acceptable to withhold certain treatments, once they have been initiated it would be unethical to shut off a ventilator, stop dialysis or withdraw artificial nutrition and hydration. In the now famous 1973 Quinlan case, for example, both the attorney general of New Jersey and the local district attorney denounced the proposal to withdraw a ventilator from the patient in a persistent vegetative state as state-sanctioned murder.

In the subsequent case, Barber (1993), the Los Angeles district attorney brought first degree murder charges against the chief of surgery and the chief of medicine at Kaiser Permanente Long Beach Hospital for removing, at the request of a patient’s wife and seven children, a ventilator and then a feeding tube from a man for whom the physicians had no realistic expectation of restoration to cognitive functioning existence. After a preliminary hearing, a judge dismissed the charges. The district attorney appealed. The California Court of Appeals upheld the dismissal. It framed the question before it thus: “Does a doctor have a duty to keep his patient alive through forced respiration and nutrition?” It responded “No.” In doing so the California Court of Appeals determined as a matter of law that artificial respiration as

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well as artificial nutrition and hydration—are extraordinary means of medical support. Further, it ruled that the decision to withdraw support should be determined in terms of a benefits-versus-burdens analysis as seen from the patient's perspective. Since the patient had indicated he did not want to be maintained by extraordinary means, the court ruled the physician had no duty to provide such measures.

A Jesuit Approach

The Catholic approach to these cases is “back to basics.” We reflect on such fundamental questions as “Who are we?” and “Why are we here?” The answer to these questions is found in the old *Baltimore Catechism*, a standard Catholic school textbook from 1855 to the late 1960s. The responses found there are: “God made us” and “God made us to know love and serve him in this world and to be everlastingly happy with him in the next.”

Unpack those penny catechism statements. What do they imply with regard to use of medical interventions to prolong the life of a dying patient? The purpose and goal of life is not the mere prolongation of biological existence. It is rather the attainment of everlasting life with God in heaven. How is that goal achieved? Scripture tells us it is based on “love of God and love of neighbor.” Father McCormick's insight in his now classic 1974 essay is that to achieve that goal one must have the capacity to relate. That capacity is severely

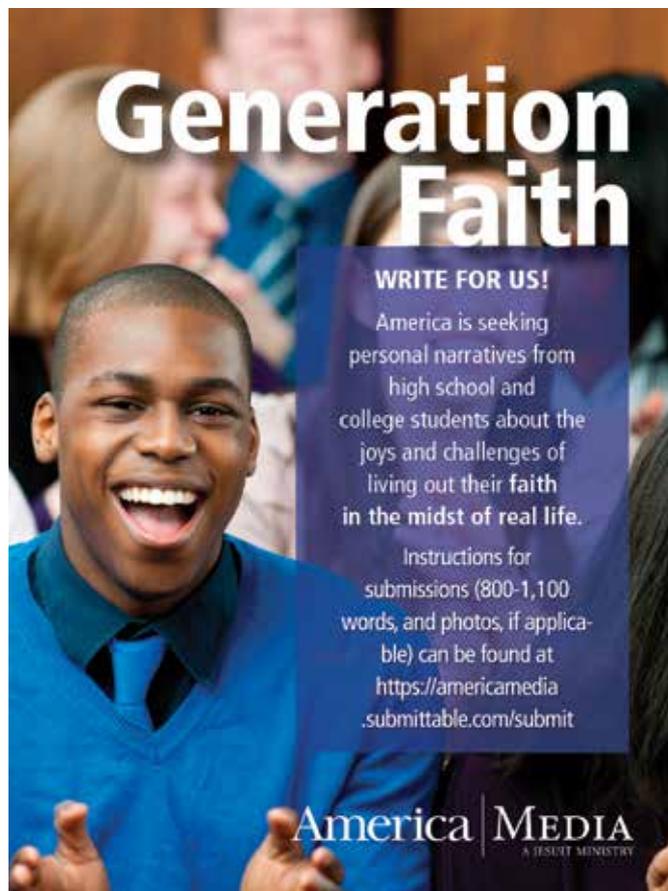
truncated if all one's energy is expended on clinging to life in an intensive care unit.

When, one might ask, do life-supporting technologies become so burdensome as to cease to be a moral obligation? The use of an I.C.U. makes sense if it serves to restore the patient to a cognitive functioning, integrated existence. It makes no Christian or human sense when it functions as a high tech hospice. Such a practice, in the words of Ivan Illich's *Medical Nemesis*, is “a world gone mad.”

The Jesuit approach to bioethics goes by the sometimes pejorative term casuistry. As Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin demonstrate in *The Abuse of Casuistry*, casuistry is not, as Pascal characterized it, a sly way in which Jesuits twist things to get whatever result is desired. Rather, it is the application of basic theological or philosophical principles to cases or actual situations to discern whether there is a way out of an apparent dilemma.

An example will suffice to see this application in practice. A 75-year-old patient had a recurrent, large cancerous growth on his tongue. The tumor was surgically removed, but it reoccurred. The patient declined further surgery. The problem was that with a tumor the size of an orange on his tongue, if the patient lay on his back and fell asleep, the tumor would block his trachea, which would cause him to cough and wake up. As a result the patient was always sleep deprived. The patient and his family asked if there was anything that could be done to relieve the patient's distress. The medical resident caring for the patient recommended morphine to keep the patient pain free so he would be able to sleep. With the medication the patient was able to sleep even with the tumor blocking his trachea. But in that position his air supply was inadequate and he died. The nurses believed the resident had “caused” the patient's death. They wanted to call the police to report a homicide.

In an age in which there is widespread public support for patient autonomy, even to the point of physician-assisted suicide, some argue that the patient's or proxy's request for sedation is warrant enough to end the patient's life. That view contradicts the long tradition in medicine to “do no harm” and the tradition of society's high barrier against one individual terminating the life of another human being. A Catholic approach to the problem would be to apply the traditional principles of medicine and moral theology to the patient's situation. Do we accept with utter indifference the suffering of the dying patient? That would not only be inhumane; it would violate the physician's obligation to “do no harm.” Using the traditional Catholic principle of “double effect,” relief from pain and distress may be provided even if one can foresee, but does not intend, the possible foreshortening of life. Respect for God's design for life and the God-given dignity of each human being, not deference to the “autonomy” of the patient, is the norm in a Catholic approach to such cases. 



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Still Seeking Hope

Dealing with the aftermath of suicide

BY RICHARD G. MALLOY

Try so hard to hold onto pleasant images of Tim, but all I can see is him hanging there in the garage.” So said my sister a few months after our older brother died of suicide. That was one comforting linguistic suggestion, that he “died of suicide,” not that he “committed suicide.” But there is little comfort when a family member dies at his or her own hand.

At the funeral, Sister Rosemarie, the Franciscan who has served so many years in Camden, N.J., with grace, courage and compassion, told me: “You have to write about this. You need to help people who suffer this.” I learned a long time ago to do whatever the sisters tell you. Still, this is a difficult writing assignment.

At the funeral I tried to address the “elephant in the room” as Maureen, my sister-in-law, put it. Here is what I said:

None of us want to be here today. Least of all Tim. And the last word is really the word we all have for Tim: love. We loved him. He was lovable. He was funny and fun. But he was also tortured and hurting, much more than we ever knew. To read the notes he left reveals a soul in searing pain.

Several years ago, at the university where I work, a first-year student’s dad committed suicide. I had to break the news to the kid. His mother was out of town and the local police hadn’t been able to contact her. They didn’t want the young man getting the news by text or Facebook. It was not easy to tell him, but at least we got the young man through that evening.

A few days later, the priest who preached at the man’s funeral sculpted an image that helped me understand a bit about those who take their own lives. “Think of 9/11 and the people atop the towers,” he said. “They had the choice to be fatally burned by the fires climbing up the building or jump to their death. People who take their own lives have fires burning inside them, flames we can’t see. And sometimes they jump rather than continue to suffer their internal torture.”

I take some consolation in the fact that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* clearly teaches that “we should not

despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives” [No. 2238]. By ways known only to God they can be helped and healed. We cannot give up hope for Tim. As the Gospel attests, God searches out and saves the lost.

The hard but true reality is that no one can stop someone who decides to die by suicide. When my brother died, part of me, part of all of us, was hurting and angry and confused and wishing we could have done something to prevent his act. But in my more prayerful moments, I hear how much hurt was howling in my big brother. And I realize there is nothing anyone could have done to stop this.

As much as I’m shocked, stunned, angry, hurt and sad at how he ended his life, to put ourselves in his skin provides another perspective. Fires burned within him. Searing flames scorched his soul. He was in deep distress: long-term psychic pain, years of struggling with feelings of failure, days and days in the depths of depression. What many of us saw in public were the highs. His wife, Maureen, and my mom were witnesses to his lows. The notes he left revealed the depths of his agony.

All his friends and family, especially his three boys, loved Tim. But we couldn’t save him. Now we must depend on God to save him, heal him, transform him and make him happy and healthy and holy and free. That’s the promise of our faith. That God can and will save and transform us.

Most important, let’s not let the last six minutes of his life make us forget the previous almost 60 years. Keep your favorite images and memories of Tim present in your mind and heart.

That is some of what I said that day. In the months since, I’ve learned some more.

Healing Through Faith

Suicide causes a particularly pulverizing pain. Like all death, suicide stings. Yet there is something about suicide that hurts more acutely. Suicide stuns and scars us. Suicide of a loved one is a particularly painful cross to bear. There is a welling up of agony and despair that, for me, can only be held off and eased by prayer.

Our faith tells us we will see again our loved ones who have

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died. We hope God will achieve in the next life what was not able to be achieved in this one. Jesus finds and saves the lost sheep. We hope and wait with endurance for God's saving grace and mercy in our lives. This is our hope. This is our faith.

Many factors predict that a person may be at risk for suicide: mental illness of many kinds, especially depression and severe hopelessness; alcohol and drug abuse; family history of suicide; and previous suicide attempts. Job loss, divorce or the

you love than it does of harming an intruder). Male suicides outnumber female suicides four to one. More women attempt suicide than men, but men are more likely to complete suicide. While 80 percent of those who seek treatment for depression are treated successfully, many who complete suicide never sought professional help.

The depressed and mentally ill often become so distorted in their thinking that they convince themselves that the world will be better off without them. They believe their suicides will stop them from being burdens for those who strive to help them.

About 20 percent of people who frequently attempt suicide eventually complete it. My brother had checked himself into a suicide prevention unit five years before he finally ended his life. One common phenomenon is that those who struggle for years can all of a sudden seem fine. You often hear, "I just saw him last week. He seemed really good." Experts

loss of a loved one are often too much for someone contemplating suicide. My brother took his life less than two weeks after we buried our mother.

The phenomenon of suicide contagion is well known. If a suicide occurs in a high school, the principal and counselors immediately begin to monitor closely other troubled kids. About 10 percent of all suicides in the United States are contagion or copycat events.

Each year some 35,000 to 40,000 Americans die of suicide. In 2010, there were 38,364 suicides reported in the United States. That is one every 13.7 minutes. There are more suicides—the 11th leading cause of death in the United States—than homicides, the 15th leading cause. For young people ages 15 to 24, it is the third leading cause of death. Suicide among young adults has tripled in recent decades. More than 50 percent of suicides are by men between the ages of 25 and 65, and more than 50 percent of suicides are by firearm (a gun in your household has a much higher chance of killing someone

theorize that such persons have finally decided to end their life. They know their pain will end. They relax because they know it will soon be over.

There are many options available for individuals considering suicide. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention provides helpful information. If people speak to you of being suicidal, ask if they have a plan and/or means to carry out the act. If so, get them help. Do not leave them alone. If someone you know is feeling suicidal, or if you are feeling suicidal, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255).

As Catholics, we believe that transformation comes through the crosses of life. There is no resurrection without the cross, which means there is no cross in life that does not contain within it the seeds of resurrection. Let us pray for hope and for the grace to trust in the promise of resurrection for all our loved ones "who have gone before us marked by the sign of faith," especially those so troubled and tortured that they took their own lives. **A**

SUICIDE: 2015 FACTS & FIGURES

Suicide is a preventable public health problem and a leading cause of death in the United States. More investment in suicide prevention, education and research will prevent the untimely deaths of thousands of Americans each year.

SUICIDE – BASIC FACTS

An American dies by suicide every **12.95 minutes**ⁱ



Americans attempt suicide an estimated **1 MILLION** times annuallyⁱⁱ

90% of those who die by suicide had a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of their deathⁱⁱⁱ



In 2012, firearms were the most common method of death by suicide, accounting for **50.9%** of all suicide deaths, followed by suffocation (including hangings) at **24.8%** and poisoning at **16.7%**



For every **woman** who dies by suicide, four **men** die by suicide, but women are 3x more likely to attempt suicideⁱ

Over **40,000** Americans die by suicide every yearⁱ. Suicide is the **10th leading cause of death**ⁱ in the United States

- **2nd** leading cause of death for ages 10-24
- **5th** leading cause of death for ages 45-59
- The suicide rate among American Indian/Alaska Native adolescents and young adults ages 15-24 is **1.8 times** the national average



Veterans comprise **22.2%** of suicides^{iv}

SUICIDE – THE COST

\$44 BILLION

The combined medical and work loss costs in the United States each yearⁱ

More than **1.5 MILLION** years of life are lost annually to suicideⁱ

i Data obtained from CDC's Web Based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS)

ii National Center for Health Statistics for the year 2006

iii Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Suicide – Facts at a Glance

iv Department of Veterans Affairs 2012 Suicide Data Report



A Synod of Solutions?

Some 250 bishops from all over the world will gather in synod in the Vatican from Oct. 4 to 25 for what many consider to be the most important assembly of this kind since the Second Vatican Council. They gather exactly 50 years after that council to focus on the family and, in the words of Pope Francis at the end of the 2014 synod, “to find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families must confront; to give answers to the many discouragements that surround and suffocate families.”

This synod has raised great expectations on the one side and many fears on the other such as we have not seen since Vatican II. Cardinals, bishops and lay commentators have expressed their hopes or fears in books, articles and interviews over the past two years, and this has revealed both the recognition of the importance of the synod and the existence of a divide among them—also evident in the 2014 synod—that can be presented as two camps.

For one camp, the primary pastoral responsibility is to convey with unwavering fidelity the doctrinal articulation of Catholic faith regarding marriage, in the full recognition that this risks alienating many from the life of the church. Advocates of this perspective view two dangers from a failure in this pastoral responsibility. The first is that it would probably send the message, to young people in particular, that patterns of life that reject key elements of

the Catholic marriage are morally acceptable and can be mainstreamed into the life of the family and the church. The second, perhaps graver danger, is that of an erosion in the content and integrity of the Catholic theology of marriage. Those who belong to this camp believe that Catholic teaching on sexuality and marriage is an integrated whole, philosophically, theologically and pastorally. It cannot be shaved at the margins to attain pastoral objectives without sacrificing its structure and integrity.

The opposing camp views this approach as imprisoning the pastoral outreach of the church within such narrow limits that it is cut off from the realities of marriage and family life as they exist in the world today. They view the primary pastoral challenge of the church on issues of marriage and family life as the call to offer real accompaniment to men and women as they confront the central decisions of their lives.

This can only be effective if it includes an embrace of the good and grace-filled elements of life choices that men and women are making, even when those choices are embedded in actions and relationships that do not conform to major elements of the church’s theological and philosophical vision. Accompaniment is not reconcilable with a doctrinally oriented suspicion that can see only the gap between the lived reality and the church’s vision, without acknowledging profoundly the goodness of heart and will and action that are already present.

This divide is not merely a part of the discussion of the coming synod. In its essence, it encapsulates the choice that confronts the church in every facet of its teaching and pastoral outreach at this time in history. That fundamental choice can be framed as follows: Should the church concentrate more on pointing to the gap between the Catholic moral vision and the lived reality of people in the modern world, or should it concentrate more on walking with men and women precisely in their lived reality, accompanying them and pointing to the moments of grace already present in their lives as the foundation for moving toward the Christian ideal?

The synod’s answer to this question, through the solutions it comes up with, could have far-reaching implications for how the church will to carry out its mission in the 21st century.

Looking ahead to the synod, Francis reminded new cardinals on Feb. 15 that throughout the church’s history “two ways of thinking are present: casting off and reinstating.” There is “the thinking of the doctors of the law, which would remove the danger by casting out the diseased person, and the thinking of God, who in his mercy embraces and accepts by reinstating him.” From the time of the Council of Jerusalem, he stated, “the church’s way has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement.”

This synod has raised great expectations on the one side and fears on the other.

GERARD O’CONNELL

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

The Joy of Another Day

Finding God in cancer

BY MARY F. BLEHL

Five years after my first battle with breast cancer, a new one struck. There it was: a dime-sized tumor, spotted by my doctor even though the rest of my right colon was difficult to see. “How presumptuous of me to think that because I had cancer once there would never be another,” I thought after the initial shock. Later, after the surgery, I was concerned I would have to have another colonoscopy right away. “It’s good news,” the surgeon told me. “You don’t have a right colon any more!”

As a child I heard the nuns say that when something doesn’t go your way, you should offer it up for the poor souls in purgatory. This approach worked well when my mother bought me colored socks instead of the more expensive white ones I preferred. Or when I had to give a bath to four of my nine younger siblings instead of reading a Nancy Drew novel about the girl whose housekeeper did all the chores.

But the first surgery for the breast cancer had been so painful I created an alternative system to give it value. Whenever I felt a pain I would turn it into a prayer for someone. I must have said thousands of prayers those first few months! I called it transformational prayer.

During that time I attended a luncheon where a Catholic author gave

MARY F. BLEHL teaches college writing courses and has written about her experience as a cancer survivor for *curetoday.com*. She lives in Hackensack, N.J., and is the grandmother of Avery, Cameron and Graham Walsh.

me one of his books. When I told him of my diagnosis he advised, “Look for God.” So I decided to look for signs of God in ordinary events. I found plenty.

First it was in the operating room. I was so nervous my heart was racing. The anesthesiologist said, “You’re very nervous.”

“Yes,” I agreed.

“I often have that effect on women,” he replied.

“Well, you are pretty cute,” I observed.

“Oh, don’t say that,” the nurse shot back. “Don’t make his head any bigger than it already is.” Then she put her hand on my arm. I will never forget how that simple human touch made the nervousness wash away.

My 89-year-old dad was able to visit the hospital twice, thanks to the efforts of his home health aide, Phil. Then my son Erich showed up four times within one week. I think my three grandsons were shocked to see Grandma walking down the hallway of the hospital holding a bag of urine. The following week they went to work on my lawn, another small source of joy.

There was the beauty of my own bed after sleepless nights in the hospital where the nurses came in to ask the woman in the bed next to me, “Are you comfortable?” And I never went hungry. In fact, the refrigerator was always packed with every type of good food. My neighbor Joan turned out to be an angel in disguise, doing laundry, walking the dog and bringing good cheer.



God is in the lawn work.



God is in the laundry.



God is in the dishes.



*God is in the tulips.
God is in today.*

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One Day at a Time

But I must admit I was not too pleased when I learned about the new cancer; this time I knew well what the side effects of the chemotherapy would be. It wasn't going to be pretty. That constant feeling of "blah" is hard to take. How was I going to find the value in this cross?

There's the effect called "chemo brain." The mind gets jumbled. Six years ago during chemo I couldn't find the phone. Hours later I opened the refrigerator, and *voilà!* There it was. Chemo patients all understand this. At a meeting one day, I said, "I'll see you next Wednesday," although the meetings are on Thursday. The group laughed. I am convinced that being able to laugh is a huge chunk of finding God in the ordinary.

But before the chemo was barely in swing, an extraordinary event occurred. My sister Connie and I were talking one day about second opinions. "You have to get one for the colon cancer," she said, so I went to Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. A month later a call came, to tell me there was something odd about my ovaries. It was a third cancer.

I joked that God heard of my dislike of chemo, so this time he sent me a cancer that did not require it. The news also spurred another attitude, to have fun regardless of where I was. Outside the operating room, the nurse putting in the I.V. told me to clench my fist. But the arthritis in my hand made it impossible to get the middle finger down. We were cracking up.

The day after my hysterectomy I was walking around the block. There's something very therapeutic about walking, even when your body is telling you, "I can't do it." It brings a refreshment of the soul and an energy that endures beyond that half-hour of moving, regardless of the treatment you're in.

It also seems God is especially present in nature. As I was riding in a car after being trapped at home for several

days, seeing the spring flowers for the first time that season lifted my spirits incredibly. Every day now I sit outside and look at the clouds in their never-ending variety.

Any treatment certainly encourages humility, and maybe some other benefits as well. Perhaps God uses suffering for his own purposes, and the secret is to find out what that purpose is. If it is greater patience (perhaps that's why we are called *patients*), that too is a good.

But what about the suffering that goes on and on? I think of the 23-year-old nurse I met who will be on chemotherapy for the rest of his life because of a rare condition. We can only assume that God has some purpose for such hardship, which we cannot understand. It is often said that people who have endured enormous suffering are very close to God. But as the Carmelite martyr Father Titus Brandsma said about Auschwitz, it is not the kind of thing one longs for.

During the first cancer I had lost all my white blood cells several times and had to stay home for five days each time, waiting for them to grow back. I called the counselor at a cancer support service.

"I just can't take it," I said. "There are so many things I want to do, and I can't do any of them!"

He replied, "Just live today. Don't bother thinking about tomorrow, or yesterday. Focus on just one day. And keep saying this mantra. 'I'm right where I belong. I'm right where I'm supposed to be.'" He was right. The mantra works when I'm emptying the dishwasher or taking the dog out for the thousandth time. I will keep saying it during my recuperation from the lung cancer surgery that's coming soon, another reminder of how important it is to try to live in the moment. Detecting this, my fourth cancer, was another extraordinary event. I try to be thankful that we caught it. And I will continue to look for the resurrection after the cross. 

TELEVISION | JAKE MARTIN

SMART, CLEAN, FUNNY

'The Jim Gaffigan Show' delivers



CATHOLIC DAD. Jim and Jeannie (Ashley Williams) spend quality time with the kids.

I must admit I approached the “The Jim Gaffigan Show,” now airing on TV Land, with much fear and trembling. I wanted the show to be funny, but I was afraid it would be, well, *funny*. There is the funny that is of the immediate, visceral kind, the kind that makes us laugh instantly and does not tiptoe around our personal relationships, ethical standards and religious convictions. And then there is *funny*.

Funny is the sort of humor (and that term is used loosely) that, whatever its source, brings with it an obligation to laugh, either because it’s said by a loved one, or it favors our religious, ethical or political stance. Whatever the reason, there becomes a sort of Kantian imperative to laugh, regardless of wheth-

er it is actually funny or not. And we do laugh, but not instinctively, not viscerally, because *funny* is the kind of funny that requires a bit of effort on our part. With *funny*, laughter isn’t a destination, as the saying goes, but a journey, as there usually has to be some sort of mental gymnastics involved to get to there.

We get to the laugh through a process of apologetics and justifications. We feel we should laugh, we *want* to laugh. We *want* to laugh oh so very much, because the laugh isn’t about us, and it isn’t about the content, it’s about so much more than that, it’s about who we love, what we believe in, who we are. And because of this deep existential investment, we feel we owe it to our ethical stance, our loved one, our

religion, our gender or what have you. We owe it for the sake of justice and all things good to laugh, even if, even though, it isn’t very funny. And we do laugh, and then we say “It’s *funny*,” with equal parts doubt and hope.

I approached “Gaffigan” with the fear that it was going to be *funny*, because, well, the red flags were there. The show has been in development purgatory for three years, having been picked up and then dropped before ever seeing the light of day by more than one major network. It went through a couple of cast and writer changes along the way before finding a home at TV Land, a network whose original fare has consisted of primarily supplying work to Betty White and a seemingly endless chains of TV has-beens.

But I wanted “Gaffigan” to be funny, because Jim Gaffigan is one of the few stand-ups these days who is both clean *and* funny, and then there’s the matter of his faith, because, let’s not beat around the bush, the man is Catholic and so am I, and I root for the home team. Gaffigan is unapologetically Catholic (or as unapologetic as a comedian can be) and along with Stephen Colbert has given the faith two of its most media friendly, likable public representatives since Pope Francis. So I wanted to like “Gaffigan,” but the doubts were plenty, and as Scripture said, “has anything good come from TV Land?” (I might be paraphrasing a bit).

But “Gaffigan” is funny, not *funny* funny, but really funny. The show is a semi-autobiographical account of the day-to-day life of the titular star as himself, a stand-up comedian living in New York City in a two bedroom apartment with his wife Jeannie (Ashley Williams) and their five children. The five kids is one of the true to life elements of the show, and Gaffigan

in both his stand-up and on the show refers to his wife as a “Shiite Catholic.”

The show is shot on location throughout the city, a choice which saves the show from the sterile sitcom feel it might have had otherwise, because while the show is funny, it’s not reinventing the sitcom wheel.

Recent reviews have compared it to both “Seinfeld” and “Louie,” primarily because of its New York location and protagonists’ occupation, but in truth “Gaffigan” bears far more resemblance to a more orthodox sitcom predecessor: Ray Romano’s “Everybody Loves Raymond.” Like “Raymond,” the show focuses primarily on the domestic world of its protagonist with little focus given to his professional life. Though she does not have the comedic gifts of “Raymond’s” Patricia Heaton—who set the gold standard, for the exasperated sitcom housewife type—Williams does a fine job of deftly working within the tension of playing the responsible spouse/parent and allowing for moments of reckless abandon.

The rube husband/put upon wife trope in sitcoms is as least as old as the first time Ralph Kramden said, “To the moon, Alice!” But what has frequently gotten lost in this dynamic is any sort of believable notion as to why or how a sane, reasonable woman would fall in love with such a buffoonish man-child. With Williams’s Jeannie you see the love; it’s very clear why she fell in love with her husband, and his buffoonishness is central to that, not in spite of it. As an audience we’re privy to the warmth and tenderness Jeannie feels for Jim, not through overt dialogue or behavior but rather through the occasional look and gesture, just as you would with a real married couple.

And then there’s that whole Catholic thing. The show, while hardly proselytizing, doesn’t back away from Gaffigan’s faith life. There are always a few incidental references to his faith in each episode, be it his daughter’s application at an all-girls Catholic school or Jim’s being shamed by his parish priest (Tongayi Chirisa) for his truancy from Sunday Mass. Indeed, the parish priest

is no elderly, Irish, brogue-spewing stereotype from the 1950s but a young Zimbabwean, an authentic casting choice which speaks to the very real situation of the contemporary American church. That Gaffigan’s wife is frequently stuck taking her entire brood to Mass on Sundays solo is another authentic note, and though “Gaffigan’s” Jim isn’t the most observant of believers, it’s still very clear that he believes.

At the end of the day, though, all that matters is whether or not it’s funny. Not *funny*. And “Gaffigan” is funny. The show is peppered with other real-life stand-ups including Adam Goldberg as Jim’s bizarre, sex-starved, mother-dominated best friend in a very funny turn and Michael Ian Black as Jeannie’s gay ex-boyfriend, in a, shall we say, less funny turn. “Gaffigan” will not change the face of the television sitcom, but it just might change TV Land. And most important, it will make you laugh, because it’s funny.

JAKE MARTIN, S.J., is studying theology at Heythrop College, London.

AFTER THIS

We will live on a paved street or a rough
Alley left between walls, almost forgotten,
Or on the bank of a dry river bed
With rose petals running over jagged stone,
Or we will live, naked as bees, in a patchwork
Forest stitched with water drawn from the sky’s groin.

Sooner or later we will find ourselves
In the next world. And it will be like this
Or that. We will bring with us gold or shells
And find them useful or not, in the next world,
Or there will be no time to pack.

Our heads and fingers may be too-heavy burdens
Or easy as the air encircling us here.

This much, however, we may safely assume—
Guns will be slung over the shoulders of angels,
Guardian saints will be ready to call out the dogs,
Floodlights will sweep up the night,
Tanks will patrol the outer perimeter,
Landmines will litter the far fields,
Lest a sorry soul attempt to return
To correct the wrongs that it has done.

DANIEL J. O’CONNELL

DANIEL J. O’CONNELL is a four-time award-winning poet from New York, whose work has appeared regularly in small and large journals since 1986. He taught philosophy for many years at the university level and is now a practicing attorney in San Francisco. He is a Foley Contest 2015 runner-up.

DIGITAL CONFESSIONS

Technology—what a gift! I was muttering the other day about my printer. A colleague here at **America** advised me simply, “Get a new one.” “It is a new one,” I mumbled back. Well, it’s six months old, and I guess that’s pretty old.

Last Saturday, in full frustration at being able to print out an article only by doing one page at a time, I’d had enough. I knew that just turning the printer off sometimes solves problems, so I pushed the power button. “Shutting down,” the little lit panel informed me. I left the office, took a long walk and returned a few hours later. The panel still read “shutting down.” I pulled the plug. That worked!

I know there are apps upon apps out there waiting for me, thousands of them. But I cannot download a one. I need a password, and that password sits on one of a dozen-plus post-it notes all covered with passwords for this and for that. If I enter one and it’s wrong, I just try again. But do that three times, and the computer or iPad revolts, presuming I’m a hacker. I try to reset the password, but the electronic wizard I am negotiating with wants to send an email to an address that doesn’t work any longer. It wants my date of birth, but tells me I am wrong when I enter it. I cannot even buy e-books—and I know they want my money. That’s what they are all about!

I protest that in the early 1980s I was using primitive computers with screens the size of a four-by-six pad. I filled up my 5.25 inch-discs. I knew dBase II. I was a whiz at PerfectWriter. I could set the dip switches on a new printer. But that is meaningless now. Today I sit in on meetings and miss half of the content as we discuss blogs

and Facebook, tweets and hashtags. Slack sends email to inform me it has sent me a notification. And little notes keep popping onto my screen every couple of minutes telling me that Dropbox has been synced or that I have a free backup available (it doesn’t work, actually) or that The Toledo Blade wants to send me an exciting new article.

A recent New York Times column by Thomas Friedman helped me understand my problem. He was analyzing the refugee crisis and the “ordered” and “disordered” regions of the world. He found three factors at play: Mother Nature, with population explosion and climate change; Moore’s law on rampant evolution in technology; and the globalization of the marketplace. The Wikipedia entry on Moore’s law is pretty detailed, but it boils down to the fact that in technology things change fast. Friedman warns us that at least the first two are just revving up their engines and observes that we “haven’t seen this play before.”

A play I have seen is the musical “Wicked.” In its song “Popular,” Glinda offers to help Elphaba, telling her not to be offended by her personality analysis but rather to “think of it as personality dialysis.” I have been wondering lately if I don’t really need some technology dialysis. Among other things, kidney dialysis removes waste and salt and maintains some chemicals safely, and it can lower blood pressure. Could technology dialysis remove useless ac-

cretions to my hardware, software and methods for using these fine tools? Could it safely keep what’s good and needed and even add new elements to strengthen the mix? That would certainly help my blood pressure!

I draw some comfort from an article in the recent edition of *Conversations*, a Jesuit education journal. (Full disclosure: I edit *Conversations*.) The author,

Mike Serazio, analyzes the impact of technology on higher education and clearly argues that human contact remains essential to the whole experience of education. He admits to using YouTube clips and Facebook in class and is fully at ease with a litany of new education-tech terms like edX, Coursera, Udacity, MOOC and later TED Talk, Flipped classroom and Minerva. But Mike still self-identifies as a “fellow Luddite.” And he

is only in his early 30s! Thanks, Mike.

There is no absolute correlation between my ineptitude and my age, but it is pretty strong. Young people on our staff are totally helpful and even patient. Kind of them! And with their patient help, this “Senior Editor” is resolved to start some intense learning when our schedules loosen up after the papal visit. Watch out, world!

I am looking forward to seeing this piece in print in **America**, since I’ve had trouble printing out a copy in my office. Printer problems again. Showing my age again. I should just pull it up on my Kindle and quit wasting paper. I really need that dialysis.

EDWARD M. SCHMIDT

I know there
are apps upon
apps waiting
for me,
but I cannot
download
a one.



FRAGILE FRONTIER

ALL THE WILD THAT REMAINS

Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner, and the American West

By David Gessner
W.W. Norton. 368p \$26.95

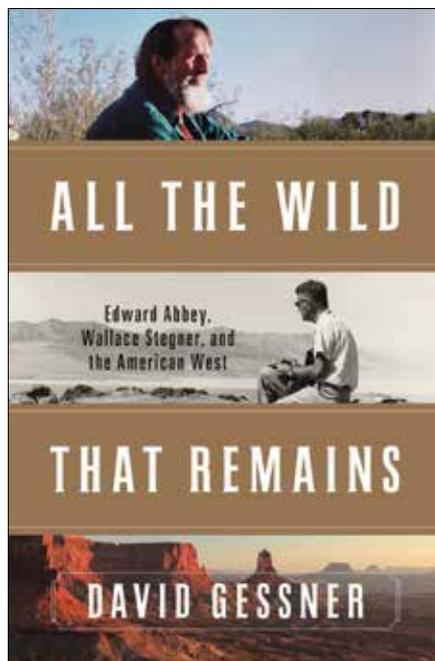
In 1955, the novelist and nonfiction writer Wallace Stegner called on a like-minded group of writers and photographers to contribute to a book called *This Is Dinosaur*, which was designed to showcase for the American public the natural beauty that would be destroyed by proposed dam projects in Colorado's Dinosaur National Monument. A copy of the book was given to every member of Congress, and it both helped derail those dams and found America's modern environmental movement.

Forty years later, Terry Tempest Williams followed in Stegner's footsteps by putting together a book called *Testimony: Writers Speak on Behalf of the Utah Wilderness*, which was in turn distributed to members of Congress and likewise designed to protect wild places in the American West. A year later, when Bill Clinton spoke at the dedication of the Grand Staircase-Escalante Monument, nearly 1.9 million acres of newly preserved wilderness in Utah, he held up the book and said, "This made a difference."

David Gessner, who recounts these two stories in his new book, *All the Wild That Remains: Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner, and the American West*, hopes likewise to jolt the reading public into action—or at least into a better understanding of the effects of their actions on the wild places that remain in the American West, home of the two writers who have long inspired his own writing and thinking. In so doing, he joins a long list of writers

on the environment—including, most recently, Pope Francis—who have argued that we need to pay more careful attention to our relationship with the natural world.

Edward Abbey and Wallace Stegner may strike readers familiar with their work as an unlikely pairing for such



a project, as Gessner immediately acknowledges. Abbey, author of the novel *The Monkey-Wrench Gang*, which helped inspire radical environmental organizations like EarthFirst!, was an outlaw who believed in pulling up surveyor stakes and crippling bulldozers for the sake of preserving the wilderness. He dropped his beer cans in the wild places where he lived, followed his romantic and sexual interests wherever they led and did not work well in formal political channels.

Stegner, by contrast, fought quietly and legally, but no less passionately, for the western landscape which he loved. He wrote many novels and nonfiction books and fit more comfortably within

the American literary establishment, winning both a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award. He was married to the same woman for 60 years and spent much of his career as a professor at Stanford University. He was the buttoned-up family man, his life and writing a sharp contrast to the shaggy yelps of wild-man Abbey.

Gessner's efforts to put these two writers into dialogue takes an unconventional form, mixing road-trip memoir, literary analysis, political journalism and environmental advocacy into a book that puts his own passion for the wild places of America on bright display. Gessner first discovered America's West when he left his native New England, in the wake of a successful cancer treatment, for graduate school in Colorado. Like many before him, he sought renewal and reinvention by heading westward. He fell in love with the dramatic contrasts of desert and mountain, and although he physically moved on—he now teaches at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington—the West seems to have remained a ghostly terrain that haunts his environmental imagination.

The book's frame takes the form of a road trip from North Carolina out west and then back again, with Gessner visiting people and places that figure prominently in the literature and lives of Abbey and Stegner. He spends a Sunday afternoon with Wendell Berry in Kentucky, visits with one of the men that Abbey transformed into a memorable character in *The Monkey-Wrench Gang*, and strolls the family farm in Vermont with Stegner's son. He takes a raft trip down the San Juan River with his favorite literary sidekick, a congenial bear of a man named Hones, and brings his daughter, Hadley, up to Stegner's childhood home in Saskatchewan.

But Gessner also draws from a deep well of research into the geography and nature of the American West, and from interviews with experts in a range

of areas, from environmental scientists to literary scholars. That research, along with his generous quotations from the works of Abbey and Stegner, mixes artfully with his candid and entertaining personal narratives, all of which comes in service to his attempts to understand what motivated the shared environmental advocacy of his two environmental heroes.

Throughout the book Gessner helps us understand what has enchanted so many readers, visitors and residents of the American West, and argues passionately that the open and seemingly endless expanses of the western deserts and plains and mountains are anything but endless. They are a fragile ecosystem, one that we seem hell-bent on destroying with our reckless pursuit of both unlimited energy and unrestrained development. Unlike many environmental writers, though, who see nothing but doom in the crystal ball, Gessner maintains hope that we can yet change our habits, or at least turn them in directions that capitalize on the restless energy of our species while still maintaining some of the wild places on the earth.

Near the book's opening, Gessner calls the American West a "place of startling beauty and jaw-dropping sights. But also a place in a world of trouble." We cannot ignore either of these realities, the book argues. "It seems to me," he continues, "that anyone who cares to really think about the planet today has to hold both of these things in mind, to remember to see the beauty, and to still take joy in that beauty but not shy away from the hard and often ugly reality. And it seems to me that Stegner and Abbey, who after all walked this same path before us, are well suited to help guide us in this difficult task."

Gessner finds in the works of Abbey and Stegner no easy formulas for us to follow; you won't read in here recommendations to turn off the water when you brush your teeth or to com-

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post your vegetables. Instead, Gessner challenges us to look more carefully at how we treat the earth, to consider the extent to which our hunger for oil and gas, or the desire for a second home, or for neatly manicured lawns in the desert have implications for the creation from which we have grown increasingly distant. Although he swings broadly, he makes for a convincing advocate, and his book should follow in the tradition of Stegner and Abbey to inspire real change in his readers.

The power of writing to make a difference to the environment may yet see an even more dramatic demonstration in the coming months and years, as

Catholics digest and respond to Pope Francis' new encyclical. Unlike Stegner and Abbey, who spoke primarily on behalf of the wild places in the western United States and sought to mobilize America's environmentalists and politicians, Pope Francis calls all of humanity to the table, with an eye toward the entirety of creation. If his words have the kind of power evinced by the books of Stegner and Abbey, the scope of that change could be unprecedented—and, for writers like Gessner, would be most welcome indeed.

JAMES M. LANG is an English professor at Assumption College in Worcester, Mass.

on Mass attendance, adult conversions to the church and monetary contributions by some 20 percent.

Born in Anaconda, Mont., Hunthausen became a priest of the diocese of Helena, a faculty member, coach and, at the young age of 35, president of Carroll College in Helena. At the age of 41, Hunthausen was chosen to be the bishop of Helena in 1962. He is the only living bishop to have attended all the sessions of Vatican II, which left a deep impression on him. Even as a seminarian, Hunthausen had been horrified by our dropping atomic bombs on Japan. He puzzled over why we couldn't have warned the Japanese or dropped the bomb in the Pacific to show its potential devastation. Why, he wondered, did we have to drop it on people? At the council, again he pondered the moral evil of nuclear weapons. The pursuit of Hunthausen mainly stemmed from his opposition to the Trident submarine nuclear weapons stored in the Seattle area.

Installed as Archbishop of Seattle on May 22, 1975, Hunthausen chose not St. James Cathedral for the ceremony but the large Seattle Center Arena, where all could attend. Over 5,000 people did so, including Protestant and Jewish leaders. Hunthausen wore a simple white alb and a white cloth mitre without adornment. His crozier

was a smooth mahogany stick, void of decoration. He set aside his predecessor's crozier, richly ornamented in gold and silver. He strongly supported women in the church, stressing affirmative action, equal access to diocesan jobs and the

JOHN A. COLEMAN

ACTIVIST IN THE CHANCERY

A STILL AND QUIET CONSCIENCE

The Archbishop Who Challenged a Pope, a President, and a Church

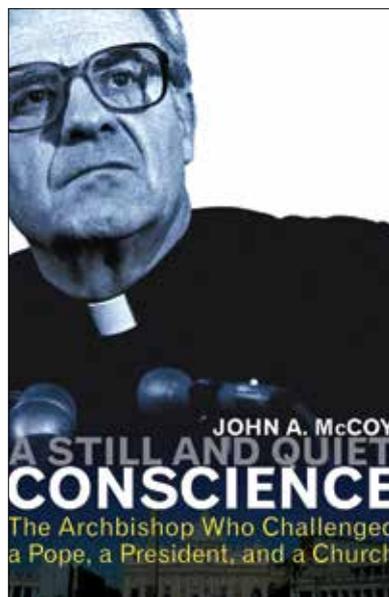
By John A. McCoy
Orbis Books. 288p \$26

John McCoy, an excellent writer, tells an insider's account of the public humiliation of Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle. I met Hunthausen on a number of occasions. I always came away with the image of a humble, deeply pastoral and collegial bishop. He was one of my heroes. Bishop William McManus of Fort Wayne told Seattle's Msgr. Michael Ryan: "Stay with this man and continue to back him. The American hierarchy has produced very few great men. He is one of them!"

McCoy, a former reporter for The Seattle Post-Intelligencer and director of public affairs for the Archdiocese of Seattle (in Hunthausen's last years and also under Hunthausen's successor), gathered copious interviews and notes on Hunthausen's pastoral presence as bishop and on the Roman in-

vestigation under Cardinal Ratzinger and Archbishop Pio Laghi, the Vatican's ambassador to the United States. He then let his proposed book on Hunthausen lie fallow in reams of notes on his computer for many years.

Finally, the person of Pope Francis led him to complete his biography. As he says of Francis: "He reminds me in many ways of Hunthausen. He's humble, kind, compassionate, plain-spoken and unpretentious. He has a Vatican II vision of the church, of a church that is inclusive, loving, transformative, of a church with a heart for the poor and the oppressed." The Vatican seemed unimpressed that, under Hunthausen's leadership, Seattle exceeded the national average



removal of sexist language. He championed a priests' senate. When he attended ecumenical breakfasts and was asked by a Protestant what to call him, since they addressed his predecessor as "Archbishop," he responded: "I also called him that. You can call me 'Ray.'" Hunthausen was pro-life and adhered to "a consistent ethic of life." In 1980 he persuaded his fellow Washington State bishops to issue a letter, "The Morality of Being a Single-Issue Person," against those who made abortion a single litmus test for all voting. It said: "A Catholic Church which thinks in terms of only one issue has given up its birthright."

Beginning in the late 1970s Hunthausen began to speak out and protest against the buildup of nuclear weapons, especially the Trident submarine, harbored near Seattle. He showed up at a protest in 1978 but stated, "I'm here out of my own personal conviction. Not here as the archbishop." Later, as the Reagan administration built up the nuclear arsenal, Hunthausen publicly stated that he was withholding his taxes and giving them to charity "in resistance to nuclear murder and suicide."

Unfortunately for Hunthausen, a kind of entente cordial grew between the Reagan administration and the Vatican. Reagan recognized the Vatican diplomatically and gave information to Vatican officials about the Communist bloc. Many in the Reagan administration (especially Catholics, including Reagan's secretary of the navy, secretary of state, director of the C.I.A., and national security advisor) asked Cardinal Ratzinger to make an example of one of the U.S. bishops who was anti-war. The Vatican sent Cardinal James Hickey of Washington, D.C., as an apostolic visitor. Hunthausen was accused of alleged liturgical abuses, inability to enforce church law, laxity in allowing annulments to marriages, being soft on abortion and being too lenient toward

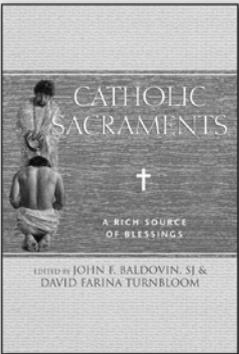
homosexuals (the diocese had allowed a Dignity Mass in the cathedral).

But in a visit to Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio of the Congregation of Bishops, Baggio told Hunthausen he suspected the visitation "stemmed from his involvement in the arms race question." Later, Hickey told an old friend in Seattle, the Rev. Larry Reilly: "Well, I guess we both know why I'm really here." Reilly answered: "Yes, you're here because of Ronald Reagan and the Archbishop's position on nuclear disarmament." "That's right, that's right Larry," was Hickey's response. The Vatican's reaction was to appoint an auxiliary bishop with special faculties, Donald Wuerl. Hunthausen sought the advice of the Rev. James Coriden, the best canon lawyer in the United States, who told him he did not know what to advise because the Vatican seemed to be making up the rules as it went along. Bishop Wuerl gained final authority over six areas: liturgy, marriage, clergy and seminarians, ex-priests and any issues related to health care and homosexuals. In effect, the archbishop was symbolically stripped of office.

It was an unworkable arrangement (which even Wuerl later admitted). A

sign that the main cause was not pastoral failures but the peace activities was that the only other bishop to get an auxiliary with special faculties was Bishop Walter Sullivan of Richmond, Va., who, as bishop advisor to Pax Christi, was also a peace activist. The 17 bishops of the Northwest (except Archbishop William Leveda of Portland) sent a letter to Pope John Paul II praising Hunthausen and asking that he return Seattle to normal ecclesial governance. The American bishops in 1986 took up the case. A three-member commission suggested a new coadjutor, Thomas Murphy of Billings, Mont., who would have responsibility but not ultimate pastoral decision on the areas assigned to Wuerl. Both worked hard at this task, but it is unworkable to have, equivalently, what is, in effect, two archbishops in one diocese.

Notably, Hunthausen was one of the first archbishops to deal forthrightly with the clergy abuse issue. He turned over priest pedophiles to the law and said, in a letter to all his priests sent in 1988, that he would name pedophile priests and asked the priests to follow procedures if a victim came forward. Jason Berry, the first jour-



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nalist to break the priest pedophile story, said, "Hunthausen was the first archbishop to deal with this problem publicly. The fact that Hunthausen spoke out and was so forthright—you cannot overestimate that!"

Hunthausen was investigated, punished and humiliated. He had no official legal representation, no right of appeal, no due process or access to the report of the allegations made against him to the Congregation for

the Doctrine of the Faith.

Hunthausen retired in 1991 when he was 70. He returned to Montana and has said, "Francis is doing the things I tried to do!" This stellar biography shows a truly courageous and holy man but also deeply unjust and humiliating actions by some church officials.

JOHN A. COLEMAN, S.J., is an associate pastor at St. Ignatius Church in San Francisco.

LUIS A. TAMPE

ENCOUNTERING THE FUTURE

THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL ENCUESTROS Hispanic Americans in the One Catholic Church

By Mario J. Paredes
Paulist Press. 256p \$27.95

In his book *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church*, Bradford Hinze of Fordham University skillfully explores various examples of dialogue within the church, including the pastoral letters on peace (1983) and the economy (1986) issued by the U.S. bishops following wide-ranging consultation. Hinze also focuses on the two-year consultation sponsored by the U.S. bishops that culminated in the national assembly Call to Action, held in October 1976.

Hinze's analysis, however, fails to mention the vast grassroots consultation—in total, perhaps as widespread as that of Call to Action, if not more so—sponsored by the U.S. bishops of the church's Hispanic American population during this same time period. This consultation was divided into three different periods and resulted in national gatherings of U.S. Catholic Hispanics in Washington, D.C., in 1972, 1977 and 1985. The consultation process and the gatherings were called National Hispanic Pastoral

Encuentros. Hinze's oversight, while unfortunate, is not surprising, since at the heart of what gave rise to the Encuentros (literally, encounters) in the first place is the sad fact that U.S. Catholic Hispanics have often been underappreciated and underserved, if not worse, by society at large and the church itself.

This book by Mario J. Paredes is an important step in presenting to a new generation the Encuentros and their impact on U.S. Catholic Hispanics and the wider church, as well as their promise for them. Paredes is well situated to be our guide in this significant endeavor: as one of the delegates from Brooklyn, he participated in the first Encuentro and, as executive director (1976-2003) of the Northeast Catholic Pastoral Center for Hispanics, he helped organize the second and third Encuentros. The importance of this book is partly rooted

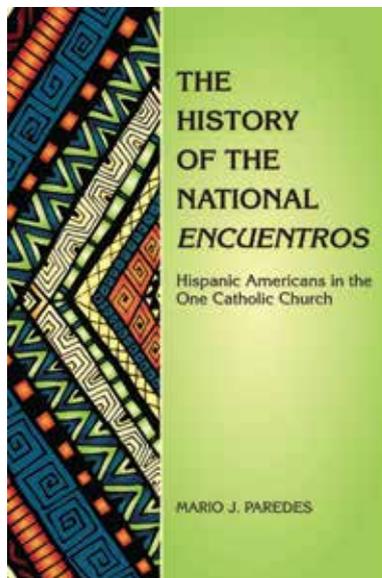
in the fact that Hispanics are today present in more than a third of U.S. parishes and account for about 40 percent of all Catholics in the country and for 70 percent of the church's growth in the United States. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is also currently in the initial stages of planning the next Encuentro.

The book is divided into three parts, one for each Encuentro, and is mostly Paredes's summary of the many documents produced by each of these gatherings, like the working documents, agendas, plenary-session presentations, minutes and the recommendations approved at the three national Encuentros.

My own doctoral research on the Encuentros helps me to recognize the importance of providing a summary of these documents. Indeed, some of them are extremely difficult to obtain—more so now that because of budget constraints, the U.S.C.C.B. has made access to its archives virtually impossible.

Paredes also comments on each Encuentro and discusses the prospects for the next Encuentro, which will be the fifth of its kind since a fourth was convened in 2000 as the "Encuentro 2000," though without the consultative dimension and pastoral aim of the previous three.

The idea to convene the first Encuentro (June 19-22, 1972) emerged in September 1971 in New York City and soon garnered grassroots support in the subsequent months. The primary aim of the first Encuentro was to begin "to develop a pastoral plan for Hispanic-Americans, who at the time made up 25 percent of



the U.S. Catholic faithful.”

The second Encuentro (Aug. 18-21, 1977) was preceded by a concerted, wide-ranging consultation that began by focusing on *la base* (the grassroots, the base) nearly two years earlier. Throughout the country, different groups and dioceses organized local gatherings to take the pulse of U.S. Catholic Hispanics. In all, some 100,000 people participated in the second Encuentro’s countrywide consultation.

The third Encuentro (Aug. 15-18, 1985) was by far the best organized and most ambitious of the three. More than 100,000 people were consulted during the process leading up to the national gathering. The delegates at the third Encuentro also laid the groundwork for the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry approved by the U.S. bishops in 1987. Although not consistently implemented, this plan remains the official touchstone for Hispanic ministry in the United States.

The delegates at the Encuentros approved recommendations related to education, social justice and intra-ecclesial matters such as co-responsibility, evangelization, a greater Hispanic role in the decision-making process and the type of church U.S. Hispanics wanted to form. The Encuentros’ most prominent ecclesial stress is succinctly expressed in this book’s subtitle, *Hispanic Americans in the One Catholic Church*. U.S. Catholic Hispanics could have favored the formation of a national church existing parallel to the established church. Instead, the “Spirit has called Hispanic Catholics in the United States to a far more difficult path: that of the Hispanic faithful’s integration, without assimilation, in the U.S. Church.”

As noted previously, Paredes’s book represents a significant step toward presenting the Encuentros to a new generation of Catholics. I nevertheless have a few quibbles with the author’s reflections and will mention two here.

First, Paredes does not include actual descriptions of what the mood was like at the Encuentros, nor does he address events of note that might have taken place outside of the official agendas. When describing the third Encuentro, for example, Paredes makes no mention of the raucous tension that arose over the ordination of women. A fair number of the women delegates left the plenary session in protest. This event, as well as the fact that all three Encuentros called for a re-examination of women’s role in the church, could dampen Paredes’s view that for Hispanics “ordination, power and competition are not in play nor does the subject produce an aggressive climate.”

Second, Paredes is disheartened by certain aspects of the Encuentros’ methodology, lamenting their use of insights derived from liberation theology that limit the flexibility of their recommendations. However, as with

any example of inculturation, certain limits to any pastoral process of consultation are to be expected precisely because these endeavors attempt to balance our understanding of the Gospel within the context of a particular time and place.

Paredes’s book will undoubtedly prove a rich resource as the U.S.C.C.B.’s Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church brings to reality the fifth Encuentro, an ambitious undertaking that will require five years to complete (see www.enhave.org for more information). The current preparatory stage will be followed by a countrywide consultation culminating with the national gathering of the fifth Encuentro, presently scheduled to take place in late September 2018 in Dallas, Tex., followed by an extensive assessment period.

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The Spirit of Wisdom

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), OCT. 11, 2015

Readings: Wis 7:7–11; Ps 90:12–17; Heb 4:12–13; Mk 10:17–30

I called on God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me (Wis 7:7)

An elected county clerk in Rowan County, Ky., Kim Davis, was jailed for refusing to grant marriage licenses. She is required by law to offer marriage licenses to same-sex couples, which she refused to do since it affronts her understanding of the nature of marriage as a Christian. The situation has riled up many people. Some consider her a martyr who is being persecuted for her religious beliefs; others consider her a hypocrite for refusing to do her elected duty, especially since she herself has been divorced three times. While numerous evangelical Christians support her, Catholic commentators have also defended her, on the basis of Scripture and natural law, specifically the principle that an unjust law is no law at all and might even demand civil disobedience.

This dispute has become a source of rancor among Christians because it exposes deep cultural fault lines about the relationship of civil law to divine mandates. But while the particular issue might be new, Christian allegiance to divine commands in the face of contrary civil law has a long history, grounded not only in the teaching of the apostles and the behavior of the first martyrs but also among Jews like the Maccabees and the figure of Daniel. The well-formed conscience has a genuine integrity that cannot be dismissed with snide remarks or by harshly judging the authenticity of participants in a dispute.

How does one navigate contentious

issues? What is needed is wisdom. Wisdom, *sophia* in Greek, *hochmah* in Hebrew, is personified in Scripture as a divine figure who comes from God to guide us. “Therefore I prayed,” says the Wisdom of Solomon, “and understanding was given me; I called on God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.” We are told that wisdom must be valued above all human gains—“I preferred her to scepters and thrones, and I accounted wealth as nothing in comparison with her”—but that with wisdom “all good things came to me along with her, and in her hands uncounted wealth.”

Wisdom can take time to find and counsel us, and wisdom requires our attention. In these days, filled with more distractions than ever before, we are called to make complex moral judgments in an instant. Yet the psalmist prays, “Teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.” Wisdom is not the product of the wittiest tweet, the snarkiest put-down or the cleverest meme but the fruit of prayer, reflection and humility.

Wisdom means carefully examining the positions of others, especially when we are convinced we are correct. Wisdom asks us to see the human beings behind the soundbites, searching out their humanity, even when we are convinced their stance is wrongheaded.

As Christians, we have Scripture to introduce us to wisdom, and we know that “the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge

the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Wisdom comes through attentive reading, when we allow Scripture to interrogate our hearts and minds.

When we read with the teaching and tradition of the church, we are able to hear the wisdom of the people of God and the magisterium, and it is more than just a process of looking to the correct page and chapter in the catechism. Think of Jesus, who met a man who had followed all the commandments exactly, but when Jesus asked him to sell what he owned



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Free yourself from distractions and seek out wisdom. What difficult social issues or church teaching demand your prayers and reflections? What helps you to make certain you are seeking out wisdom, the eternal treasure, and not simply your own way?

and to give the money to the poor so that he would “have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me,” the man balked at accepting Jesus’ wisdom, as most of us might.

Peter, too, cried out to Jesus after the rich young man left, “Look, we have left everything and followed you!” Jesus was challenging his disciples to look beyond commandments simply as a form of proper procedure to the value of wisdom, “uncounted wealth,” “treasure in heaven,” which can guide us in the most tumultuous of times to eternal life.

JOHN W. MARTENS

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Discussing Latino Catholicism



Professor Timothy Matovina from the University of Notre Dame will offer a lecture on "Latino Catholicism." Response by Dr. Valerie Torres, PhD., adjunct professor at Fordham University's

School of Religion. Conversation hosted by Fr. Matt Malone, S.J. Editor in Chief of *America* magazine.

The evening will include the following program:

- 5:30 - 6:00 Light Refreshments
- 6:00 - 7:00 Lecture by Professor Timothy Matovina, PhD
- 7:00 - 7:15 Break
- 7:15 - 7:45 Remarks by Professor Valerie Torres, PhD
- 7:45 - 8:30 Fr. Matt Malone, SJ – moderator of a conversation with Professors Matovina and Torres

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