America

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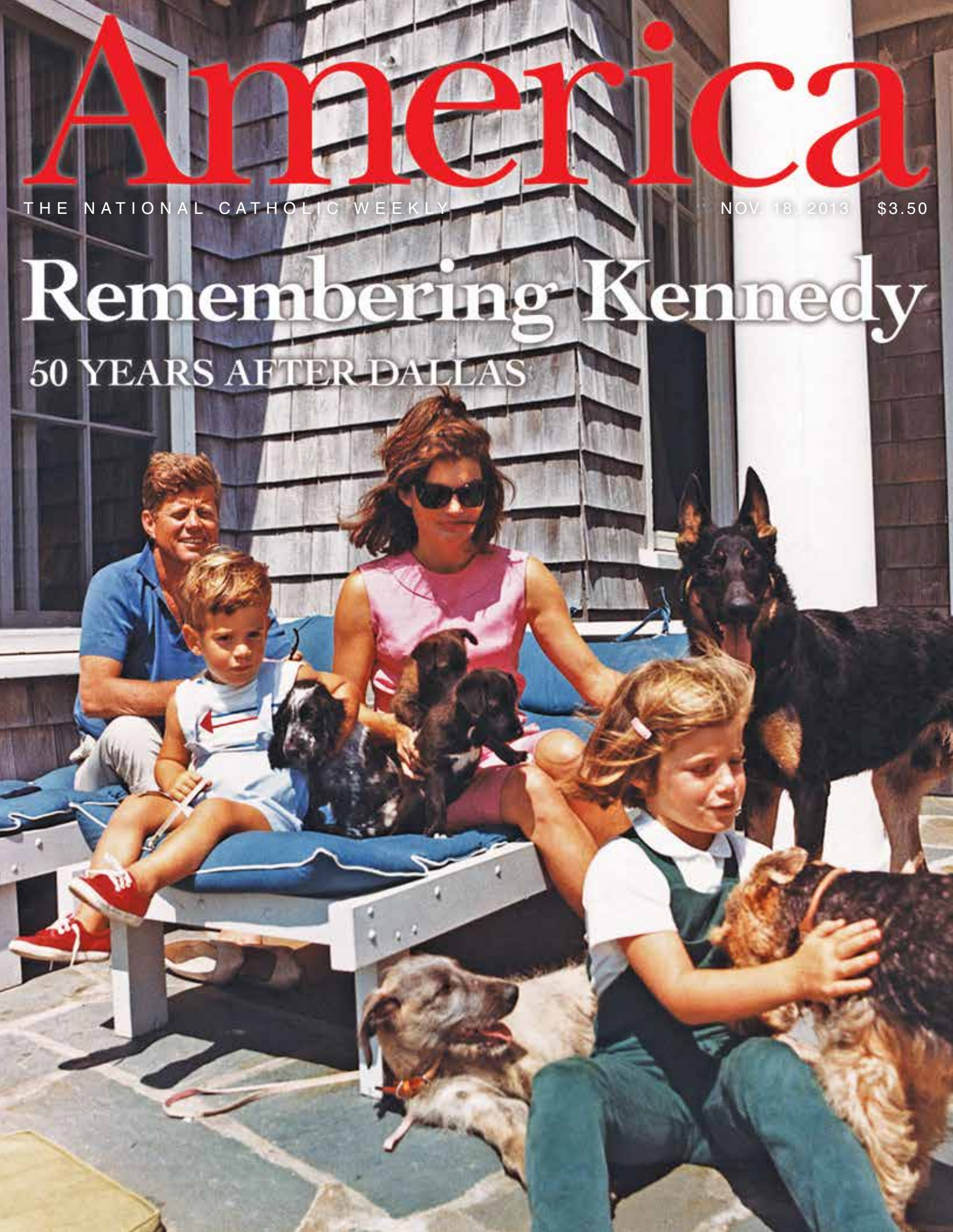
Remembering Kennedy

50 YEARS AFTER DALLAS



OF MANY THINGS

Gram and I had an annual ritual, one we enacted every summer from the time I was 4 or 5 to the time I was 10 or 11. It rarely varied, though sometimes my younger brother would join us. On what was usually a fine, bright blue day in July or August, we would set out from my grandmother's home in Hyannis, Mass., and undertake "the grand tour," as she called it, a drive through next-door Hyannisport.

Proceeding at parade-pace in her two-door, bright orange Buick Skylark, Gram would point out the various sites frequented by "The President": the compound, the country club, the post office. Almost 15 years after his death, Gram's unqualified reference to "The President"—with a capital T and a capital P—was always understood to mean John F. Kennedy.

We would then pick up the pace a bit and head across the way to the Kennedy Memorial, a modest fountain and flag on a hill overlooking Barnstable Harbor. There I would walk round the fountain, reading aloud each of the words inscribed in its base: "It is my firm belief that this nation should sail and not lie still in the harbor." At this point, Gram invariably shed a tear and then we'd make our way to the local Friendly's for a grilled cheese and Coke, or, in Gram's case, a Sanka with half a Saccharin tablet.

Throughout the meal, I would pepper her with questions: Had she ever seen The President? No, but she frequently saw other members of the The Family—likewise always capitalized—at Mass at nearby Saint Francis Xavier Church, where Gram was a parishioner. Did any of them still live at the compound? Mrs. Rose Kennedy and a few others; but it's not the same, Gram would say.

During one of these lunches, once I was old enough to understand, I asked Gram where she was when The President died. "In the hospital," she said. "I'd gone in for an operation. My dear friend Mrs. Sullivan was visiting me when we heard the news. Mr. Cronkite made the announcement and then Mrs. Sullivan said, in a nasty tone, 'Well, I guess that's the end of the Kennedy dynasty.' I never spoke to her again." A long silence followed. "That was a terrible day," Gram added.

Indeed it was. I don't know from my own experience, of course; The President died nine years before I was born. But I know it was a terrible day. Over the years, when I've asked those who are old enough where they were on Nov. 22, 1963, they all answer in the same way. First, they sigh and then briefly look away at the ceiling or the floor. It's almost as if they are looking outside of themselves to find the answer, as if the memory of that terrible day belongs to someone else. I've seen that before. It's one way people relate to traumatic events: they keep their distance.

Fifty years have now passed. That's quite a distance. And yet we still live with the memory of those events in Dallas, even if it's only a memory of other peoples' memories. As painful as it is, it's worth revisiting that terrible day, if only in order to better understand, not what happened in Dallas, but what happened to us. Perhaps we were lied to, perhaps we weren't; the debate still rages.

What concerns us more, I suggest, what has affected us more than any actual or potential lie, is the myth, the myth of who he was, of who we were; the very tale Gram retold every summer. "For the great enemy of the truth," The President himself once said, "is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived, and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebears. We subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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Cover: President John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, and their children, Caroline and John Jr., at the Kennedy family compound in Hyannisport, Mass., in 1963. CNS photo by Cecil Stoughton. Courtesy of John F. Kennedy Library in Boston.

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ON THE WEB

James W. Douglass, right, talks about the assassination of **John F. Kennedy** on our podcast. Plus, the Catholic Book Club discusses **Alice McDermott's *Someone***.
All at americamagazine.org.

Protect the Records

For decades the staff of Tutela Legal, the legal aid office of the archbishop of San Salvador, has collected evidence of human rights violations and provided legal services to survivors and families of victims of crimes committed during the civil war that raged in El Salvador from 1980 to 1992. When the staff arrived at work on Sept. 30, they found locked doors and security guards and were informed that Archbishop José Escobar Alas had ordered the office closed.

Founded by Archbishop Oscar Romero, Tutela Legal had records that include documentation of the archbishop's assassination as well as of the murders of six Jesuit priests and their housekeeper and her daughter in 1989. The closure came just 10 days after the country's Supreme Court took on a case challenging the constitutionality of the 1993 amnesty law, which protects government, military and guerilla leaders from prosecution for war crimes. Archbishop Escobar, who cited legal malfeasance and the diminished relevance of the office as the rationale behind his decision, has since announced the creation of a commission that will take over the work of Tutela Legal and pave the way for a new human rights organization.

A group of human rights organizations penned an open letter to the archbishop offering forward-looking and measured recommendations. They call for the new commission to "reflect the values and moral and ethical commitments of Tutela Legal" and rightly emphasize the need to preserve the integrity of the archives and ensure that they are made available to researchers and prosecutors. The fight against impunity, they write, "is not yet over."

In Omnibus Caritas

The Catholic Theological Society of America is to be commended for a new set of guidelines that seek to create more space for a diversity of viewpoints within the guild. The C.T.S.A. announced the changes after the release of a committee report that cited a failure to adequately represent more "conservative" perspectives at the society's meetings. "The self-conception of many members that the C.T.S.A. is open to all Catholic theologians is faulty and self-deceptive," the committee wrote.

Richard Gaillardetz, president of the society, said the C.T.S.A. should strive to be "a 'big tent' professional society that models in its attitudes and policies a commitment to the full catholicity of our theological tradition." Amen. The Catholic tradition has always been marked by a wonderful diversity of voices. The society's commitment to representing that diversity fairly is a sign of the organization's health and good judgment. Not every academic guild is open to such an examination of conscience.

One of the proposed guidelines is a commitment to a "hermeneutic of generosity" when engaging with people of differing viewpoints. We here at **America** might opt for a simpler term: charity; "Pursuing the truth in charity" is the foundational mission of **America.** The C.T.S.A.'s commitment to a spirit of generosity parallels our mission to feature a true variety of Catholic viewpoints in our pages.

The society has also made a commitment to include a diversity of "ecclesial sensibilities" at their meetings and to be respectful when criticizing church teaching. This, too, is a welcome sign.

Get the Lead Out

The devastating impact of lead exposure on childhood development has been well documented, and appropriate measures have been taken to contain contamination in societies that can afford such mitigation campaigns. But in the impoverished world, lead exposure remains a serious threat. Lead exposure still causes 143,000 deaths and 600,000 new cases of children with intellectual disabilities every year, according to the World Health Organization.

In cultures where resource extraction or manufacturing are poorly regulated and safety standards for workers or residents living nearby factory or mining sites can be blithely ignored, lead poisoning can be acute and fatal. The dramatic rise in international gold prices, for example, encouraged unregulated, small-scale gold mining in Nigeria. Child laborers in the State of Zamfara were exposed to lead dust churned up during work activities or when it was carried home on clothing. According to Human Rights Watch, at least 400 children have died there of lead poisoning since 2010 and another 2,000 required urgent treatment.

The number of nations that still accept lead in fuel and paints has dropped significantly, though some remain, including nations that export lead-contaminated products, many of them toys, to the United States. Children can still be protected if more direct assistance is offered now. Trade agreements should be established to protect vulnerable communities, and more economic and diplomatic pressure should be brought to bear on exporters of this entirely preventable contamination. As the U.N. special rapporteur on toxic waste, Marc Pallemaerts, said on Oct. 21: "We simply cannot wait another century to eliminate the use of lead."

EDITORIAL

Good Intelligence

The fallout from the release of classified documents by Edward J. Snowden, a former contractor for the National Security Agency, continues. Recent revelations that the N.S.A. listened to cellphone calls of Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany have generated widespread debate and outrage. But this solitary focus may miss the deeper issue: the vast increase in the reach of U.S. intelligence operations, which too often lack a stringent moral grounding and an appropriate balance between security and liberty. Though U.S. citizens sometimes seem content to turn a blind eye to what the government does in their name, this trend warrants attention and concern.

Our country's participation in the Second World War, and then the cold war, resulted in an enormous intelligence apparatus of lasting consequence. The National Security Act of 1947 pulled together existing agencies and established the Central Intelligence Agency. A year later, President Harry S. Truman expanded its mission to include covert operations shielded by plausible deniability. He also established the N.S.A. in 1952 to continue code-breaking work in the postwar era. These intelligence organizations, by their very nature, operate beyond public scrutiny—allowing them to expand with minimal public debate.

In this issue of **America**, James W. Douglass writes that in the wake of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, President John F. Kennedy said he wanted "to splinter the C.I.A. in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds." No such dissolution of the agency's power has taken place. Instead there has been an explosion in the size and scope of U.S. intelligence organizations following Sept. 11, 2001. We know little about the cost of these operations, but thanks to a two-year investigation by The Washington Post published in 2010, we know there are over 3,000 government organizations and private companies involved in national security and intelligence programs. An estimated 854,000 people hold top-secret security clearances.

We now know that the N.S.A. not only decodes foreign intelligence and protects American secrets, but spies without warrants on Americans at home and listens to tens of millions of calls abroad, including those of 35 world leaders. The C.I.A., far beyond its original mandate, operated secret prisons for terrorism suspects, employed methods of interrogation that amounted to torture and continues to execute not-so-secret drone strikes in countries like Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.

When President Obama came into office, he rightly changed course by issuing executive orders that closed C.I.A. prisons and prohibited enhanced interrogation techniques. Mr. Obama even ordered the release of the then-classified C.I.A. "torture memos"—a courageous decision that resulted in the expected yet unfounded criticism that the president was showing weakness on national security.

SIGN ALONG THE BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/AMONBELIAL

Even greater courage is needed to take up the unfinished business of reining in U.S. intelligence agencies. C.I.A. Director John O. Brennan has said the agency "should not be doing traditional military activities and operations." This should become policy, not just a promise. White House officials have signaled a "preference" for Pentagon oversight of drone strikes, but a full transition from the C.I.A. has not yet taken place. Only the Department of Defense should carry out U.S. military operations, and those should be in conformity with international humanitarian law and subject to public scrutiny. The resources of the C.I.A. should be directed toward its traditional mission of intelligence collection and analysis.

Last month the N.S.A. announced a plan to hire a civil liberties and privacy officer, and bipartisan legislation under consideration in Congress would limit the collection of domestic communication records. These proposals represent positive steps. The actions of U.S. intelligence agencies reflect our values as a nation. These agencies have a role to play in pursuing legitimate security interests, but they cannot bypass moral discernment. Having the ability to do something does not mean we should do it. Spying on allies has a long history, but that does not justify its continued use, especially given the invasive nature of surveillance today. The proposal by France and Germany to review intelligence gathering techniques makes sense and should be accepted by U.S. leaders.

Fifty years ago, Pope John XXIII, shortly before his death and the assassination of President Kennedy, left a testament to the world still relevant today. In his encyclical on global peace and human rights, "Pacem in Terris," the pope wrote that "true and lasting peace among nations" must consist in "mutual trust." This trust is important among allies and essential among adversaries. Relationships among nations cannot be driven by fear, competition and excessive reliance on espionage. There must be a level of trust that allows for greater collaboration in facing the global challenges and security needs that affect us all.

REPLY ALL

The Right Language

Re "A Church for the Poor," by Bishop Robert W. McElroy (10/21): I am glad to see the phrase "the common good" used. The word "poverty" appears 22 times, the phrase "the common good" 13 times, "the poor" 10 times, "a church for the poor" three times and "the public order" three times. Not appearing is the phrase "preferential option for the poor," which, for some, is akin to "busing students to achieve racial balance" or "affirmative action in employment or admissions."

JAMES SCHWARZWALDER
Lindenwold, N.J.

Homily Material

Before reading Bishop McElroy's article, I suspected that he was playing "catch-up" with the pope on behalf of U.S. bishops. Oh, how wrong I was! His exposition was articulate, well thought out and comprehensive.

Perhaps the upcoming November meeting of the U.S. bishops will direct that Bishop McElroy's article be the subject of a month of homilies in every parish in the United States. It may go a long way to align all of us with Pope Francis and Catholic moral teachings.

VINCENT GAGLIONE
Scarsdale, N.Y.

Meaning of 'Clericalism'

Re "Lead Us Not Into Clericalism," by Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M. (10/21): My fear is that the term *clericalism* is actually shielding a bias against preferences. I am a firm believer in what Cardinal Bernardin espoused as "common ground"—that the church is big enough for people of varying tastes and perspectives (even those I may not agree completely with). An article like this cricizes clericalism in a narrow way, without taking into account that clericalism exists in those who are both conservative and liberal in ideology.

(REV.) A. J. FLYNN
Online comment

Style Is Substance

Re "Lead Us Not Into Clericalism": I truly appreciate this commentary. We sometimes say that some aspects of a priest's self-presentation are "only" a matter of style and somehow not truly reflective of the person. I think this understanding of style is problematic. The eminent church historian John W. O'Malley, S.J., frequently comments that style is always an external representation of a person's deeply held personal values. From this perspective, a priest's bearing, clothing, etc., are a reflection of his deep understanding of priesthood and his ministry.

JOHN SWOPE, S.J.
Online comment

Thoreau for Students

I was thrilled to read "Reading Nature Thoreauly," by Margot Patterson (10/14). I have only recently read *Walden* and was so impressed that I assigned the first chapter for my students to read. I asked them to reflect on Thoreau's view of nature. Ms. Patterson eloquently describes Thoreau's point: "Above all, he reminds me of my own nature—that I have one, that it should be respected, that it should be cherished."

The students confessed to having a difficult time with *Walden*. Thoreau wants to liberate us from slavery to convention. Today's students are hardly aware of how enslaved they are. Hopefully, over time, Thoreau will have the desired effect on them.

DOUGLAS M. BLAINE
Queens, N.Y.

STATUS UPDATE

In light of "Lead Us Not Into Clericalism," by Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M. (10/21), we asked, "What has been your experience with new priests?" You responded:

Positive. My parish is a densely populated urban church with a majority of Spanish-speaking people. Hence, the priests hail from a vibrant, young Mexican order. We have personality variations and cultural misunderstandings to contend with, and sometimes they can be quite grave. Yet, as for the newly ordained, they are invariably quite impressive. They are orthodox (most are formed in one of Spain's most traditional seminaries), but not in a "self-conscious" American way.

SERGIO ALFÉREZ

I have found over the past 10 or 15 years that many newly ordained priests, no matter the age, are very rigid in approach and unaccepting of differences of opinion over matters in which the bishops purposely allow variance. Rather than encouraging discussion, they tend to forestall and even outright prevent it with their own pontificating oratory.... These priests make me feel neither welcome nor safe in the confessional. I long for an older priest who has been kicked around a bit and understands that there needs to be a truth-filled, very human relationship between us before I can feel comfortable in a spiritual conversation.

STACIE COURT

I am sorry that so many in this thread have had such poor experiences with young priests and seminarians, but that has not been my experience. Those I have had the privilege to meet have been kind, gentle, compassionate, personable Christian men and sons of the church. Perhaps some young priests and seminarians who happen to favor more traditional forms of clerical dress, liturgical practice, etc., also have bad attitudes. Fair enough. But I also think that older Catholics, who came of age in the conciliar era, are all too ready to see these things as infallible signs of some personality defect.

RYAN JOSEPH

Go Renewable

"Build Reserves, Win Peace," by Alfred James (Reply All, 10/7), a longtime professional petroleum geologist, questions "Unnatural Gas," by Ken Homan, S.J. (8/26) as "lacking in science and fact." But the science of high-volume horizontal hydrofracking for methane gas shows the procedure to be a dangerous threat to water and air quality and human health, and a tremendous contributor to global climate change.

The fracking industry's own research finds that 5 percent to 10 percent of fracked gas wells leak within one year of their installation, and this figure rises to 35 percent after 30 years. This leakage may include methane and/or hazardous chemicals.

Mr. James makes the standard industry argument that wind, solar and biomass cannot possibly provide the energy required, but the industrial powerhouse Germany now produces almost 30 percent of its electricity from renewable energy, and Iowa produces 25 percent of its electricity from wind power. Other countries are rapidly developing renewable energy. By doing the same, the United States could solve energy problems and also detach itself from foreign energy entanglements.

ROBERT M. CIESIELSKI
Cheektowaga, N.Y.

No Blueprint Here

In his thoughtful review ("Things Fall Together," 9/30) of my book, *The Catholic Labyrinth*, James P. McCartin correctly notes, "McDonough offers no comprehensive plan for the future" of the church in the United States.

Sometimes I would like to be able to say that I have such a plan but that I'm not talking until the time is ripe, the footnotes complete, objections anticipated, allies in place, sponsors lined up and so forth. Like actors who really want to direct, some Catholics wish they could write encyclicals. As blog posts attest, they often sound like mad scientists railing against "the fools…if only they would listen!"

I suspect that no one has a blueprint for the church in the United States. Nor, I think, would such a scheme be an unequivocally good thing. "I learn by going where I have to go" is the refrain of a lovely villanelle by Theodore Roethke. If the poem has a message, it is that change is interactive. The refrain might be adopted as a motto by the terrible simplifiers who feel that paradigm shifts are the last word.

A change of heart is a beginning. Pope Francis sounds as much like a fox with lots of modest, feasible ideas as a hedgehog with one big conviction.

PETER McDONOUGH
Glendale, Calif.

BLOG TALK

These blog posts are in response to "Lead Us Not Into Clericalism," by Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M. (10/21). The following is an excerpt from "Titles and Cassocks and Vestments, oh my!" by the Rev. Michael F. Duffy, which appeared on patheos.com (10/11).

The problem is not with the externals. Externals matter. Signs and symbols mean something; they speak to us. The greater issue is, of course, the internals. How do we priests see ourselves in relation to the people? Often, I speak of "my" parish, or "my" people. I don't use those words out of a possessive meaning, but rather out of affection. I am charged by the bishop with the pastoral care of the people of this particular parish. They don't belong to me in any way. I know I'm not the boss. Even if I become a pastor, I still won't be the boss. God is the boss. The church and all of us who are a part of it belong to him.

I agree with the rest of what Father Dan writes in his article and with what Pope Francis has been saying. Make sure to go read Father Dan's article. It really is good. But let's not dismiss the young clergy altogether. We are young. We have some learning to do. But our hearts belong to the Lord.

We've dedicated our lives to the church, not for our benefit, but because we want to serve Christ and his bride, the church.

(REV.) MICHAEL F. DUFFY

The following is an excerpt from "The False Charge of Clericalism," by the Rev. John Trugilio Jr., president of the Confraternity of Catholic Clergy, on uCatholic.com (10/14).

Father Horan, O.F.M., is correct that clericalism is a vice, which ought to be repudiated by every pope, bishop, priest, deacon and consecrated religious. Problem is that it is unfair, unjust and inaccurate to portray clericalism as merely an indulgence of conservatives or traditionalists…my experience has been that all too often it is the so-called liberal and progressive priests who behave and act in such a way as to personify clericalism.

Clericalism is a mindset, an attitude, a perspective. It patronizes and denigrates those who disagree and uses ad hominem attacks to belittle. When a priest speaks disrespectfully to an elderly woman and embarrasses her publicly at Mass merely because she exercises her legitimate option (as defined by Rome) to kneel or genuflect at Communion time rather than just stand, that is clericalism....

Real clericalism is not about attire or language, birettas or baseball caps. It is about sound doctrine, reverent worship and holy, virtuous living. I have seen priests on both sides of the fence (conservative/liberal or traditional/progressive) treat laity with disdain and contempt. It is not an issue rooted in liturgical garb.

(REV.) JOHN TRUGILIO JR.

SYNOD ON FAMILY

Vatican Seeks 'Widespread' Input On Marriage, Family Life Issues

Bishops around the world are being asked to take a realistic look at the situation of families under their care and at how effective pastoral and educational programs have been at promoting church teaching on sexuality, marriage and family life. The preparatory document for the extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family, which will be held in October 2014, ends with 38 questions about how church teaching is promoted, how well it is accepted and ways in which modern people and societies challenge the Catholic view of marriage and family.

Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri, general secretary of the synod, asked bishops to distribute the document and questionnaire "immediately as widely as possible" to deaneries and parishes "so that input from local sources can be received." The responses will be summarized and returned to the Vatican by the end of January. Archbishop Baldisseri, encouraging even wider consultation, did not specify how bishops should seek input, and it is not clear yet how bishops in the United States will proceed, but the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales put the questionnaire online in late October for anyone to answer. In a statement to The National Catholic Reporter, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' spokesperson, Helen Osman, said, "It will be up to each bishop to determine what would be the most useful way of gathering information to provide to Rome."

LE MÊME PROBLÈME? A "manifestation" against the legalization of same sex marriage in France last May.

The questionnaire covers some of the church's most contentious contemporary issues, seeking to discover the questions divorced and remarried couples have about Communion and reconciliation and whether a simplification of the annulment process would help toward "solving the problems of the persons involved."

MEXICO

Drug Cartels Battle for Michoacán

"It's almost as if we're in a sort of civil war," the Rev. Andres Larios, pastor at St. James the Apostle Parish said, somberly assessing the increasing lawlessness which afflicts his community. Some in his village of Coalcomán in Mexico's western Michoacán State have formed self-defense groups to protect themselves from extortion attempts and attacks by organized criminal groups. Others from the region, known as Tierra Caliente, fled to the United States, he said.

Many more, however, feel trapped, including Father Larios, who has not left Coalcomán in months. Violence once again flared in Michoacán as criminal groups attacked 18 substations and installations operated by the Federal Electricity Commission on Oct. 27, leaving more than 400,000 customers in the dark. The violence plunged the state deeper into crisis as multiple drug cartels—most notorious among them a group known as the Knights Templar—battle for control of criminal proceeds in a state that more and more appears to be ungovernable. Their alleged crimes range from making methamphetamines to extorting avocado growers to taxing each ton of iron ore mined in the state and shipped overseas.

The situation has created concern for Catholic officials, who have called on the state and federal governments to take action and promised to continue tending to the needs of those affected by crime. In an open letter in mid-October, Bishop Miguel Patino Velázquez of Apatzingán, called Michoacán "a failed state" and said "criminal groups contest it...as if it were a jackpot."

"In [our] communities we hear real dramas daily from persons and families who live in fear and desperation," wrote Archbishop Alberto Suárez Inda of Morelia, capital of Michoacán, in an open letter on Oct. 27 to the state's governor, Fausto Vallejo Figueroa.

"We commit ourselves to continue

The synod organizers ask the bishops to estimate the percentage of local Catholics living together without being married, the percentage of those divorced and remarried, and the proportion of children and adolescents in their dioceses who are living in families in those situations. It asks how "accepted" is the church's teaching on contraception and also touches on the status and nature of pastoral attention to people who are in same-sex partnerships. It surveys bishops about the legal status of same-sex unions in their local area and church efforts to defend traditional marriage but also asks what kind of "pastoral attention can be given to people who have chosen to live" in same-sex unions and what can be done to transmit the faith to their adopted children. Other concerns expressed by Archbishop Baldisseri in his introduction to the survey include interreligious marriages, "the single-parent family," polygamy, "a [cultural] presumption that the marriage bond can be temporary" and "forms of feminism hostile to the Church."

Pope Francis' emphasis on mercy, forgiveness and not judging others and his specific comments on helping divorced and civilly remarried couples who cannot receive Communion have encouraged many Catholics to believe changes in church teaching on such matters may be in store. The document said, however, "the teaching of the faith on marriage is to be presented in an articulate and efficacious manner so that it might reach hearts and transform them in accordance with God's will." Church teaching always has been clear that marriage is a lifelong bond between one man and one woman open to having and educating children, it said, and the synod's goal will be "to communicate this message with greater incisiveness."

The preparatory document specifically mentions modern contributions to church teaching, including the Second Vatican Council's defense of the dignity of marriage and family, Pope Paul VI's encyclical "Humanae Vitae" on fidelity and procreation in marriage and Blessed John Paul II's teaching on God's plan for married love.

collaborating in [providing] pastoral attention to victims of violence and in the reconstruction of the social fabric, favoring a culture of respect for the rule of law and peace," the Mexican bishops' conference said in a statement on Oct. 27 signed by the conference president, Cardinal Francisco Robles Ortega of Guadalajara, and its vice president, Auxiliary Bishop Eugenio Lira Rugarcia of Puebla.

President Felipe Calderón initiated his campaign against Mexico's drug cartels by sending soldiers into Michoacán in December 2006. That controversial crackdown has claimed more than 70,000 lives. Calderón left office last December, but the new administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto also has had to focus on security in Michoacán.

Bishop Patino painted a bleak picture in his open letter. "Forced abductions, kidnaps, killings, extortions... have increased, and entire families have had to emigrate," he wrote. "Municipal governments and the police are subordinate and in collusion with criminals, and the rumor increasingly grows that the state government is at the service of organized crime," the bishop said.

Self-defense groups have subsequently surged, leading to government allegations that organized criminal groups are behind them.

Father Larios disagreed. "Where there are self-defense groups," he said, "crime has stopped."

STATE OF SIEGE. A federal police officer ready for action atop a vehicle in the Mexican state of Michoacán on Oct. 28.

Massacre of Christians In Sadad, Syria

The Syrian Christian town of Sadad was taken over by Islamist militias in mid-October, then re-conquered by the Syrian army on Oct. 28. What the army discovered "is the most serious and biggest massacre of Christians in Syria in the past two years and a half," said Archbishop Selwanos Boutros Alnemeh, the Syriac Orthodox metropolitan of Homs and Hama. "Forty-five innocent civilians were martyred for no reason, and among them several women and children, many thrown into mass graves," said the archbishop. Other civilians were threatened and terrorized. Thirty people were wounded and 10 are still missing, according to Archbishop Alnemeh. "For one week, 1,500 families were held as hostages and human shields," he said. "All the houses of Sadad were robbed and property looted. The churches are damaged and desecrated." He added, "We have shouted [for] aid to the world, but no one has listened to us. Where is the Christian conscience? Where is human conscience? Where are my brothers? I think of all those who are suffering today in mourning and discomfort: We ask everyone to pray for us."

Pope Francis' First Cardinals

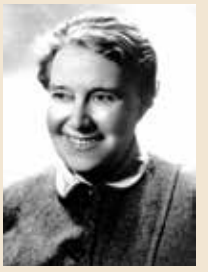
Pope Francis will create his first cardinals during a consistory on Feb. 22, the feast of the Chair of St. Peter. Pope Francis' first consistory also will offer clues about how he intends to use the College of Cardinals during his papacy, which, he has already shown, he sees as an instrumental advisory body. Frederico Lombardi, S.J., the Vatican spokesman, said on Oct. 31 that also in mid-February, the pope will have members of the governing council of the Synod of Bishops meet in preparation for the extraordinary session on the family in October 2014 and will have his Council of Cardinals, a group of eight advisers, hold what will be their third gathering. Father Lombardi said that the pope wanted to hold a consistory for the creation of new cardinals during the same time period as the cardinals' other meetings "to facilitate all these appointments."

Denouncing Corruption

"Corruption is theft from the poor," warn the Bishops of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference in a pastoral letter released on Oct. 16. Archbishop Stephen Brislin of Cape Town said the issue is especially poignant in a region as poor as southern Africa. "Money diverted into the pockets of corrupt people could have been spent on housing for the homeless, on medicine for the sick or for other needs. Aid should reach those it is intended for," he said, quoting from the statement. "Unless we are able to root out corruption in our society and in our country we are stealing from the poor, we are preventing the advancement of poor people, we are preventing poor people [from] reaching their full potential as human beings," he said. The bishops of Southern Africa have called on their people to embrace the international ecumenical campaign, called "Exposed," which encourages individuals to take action against corruption. Archbishop Brislin called corruption, whether public or private, a "selfish action" that "harms the whole community. It is a poison, an evil that must be eradicated from the whole of society."

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS



Mother Celestine Bottego

Pope Francis is **the fourth most powerful person in the world**, according to Forbes, which ranks him immediately after the presidents of Russia, the United States and China. ✦ Commissioned by the Irish Association of Catholic Priests, a critical review of the **Irish government's investigation of sexual abuse** has been in turn challenged by Dublin's Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, who defended the government's findings on Oct. 29. ✦ The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishop's collection for the **Catholic Campaign for Human Development** is slated for Nov. 23-24, the weekend before Thanksgiving. ✦ **U.S.-born Mother Celestine Bottego,** founder of the Xaverian Missionary Sisters of Mary, was declared venerable by Pope Francis on Oct. 31. ✦ **Five Catholics protesting U.S. drone warfare policies** said they were stunned, but relieved to be found not guilty of disorderly conduct on Oct. 28 for their roles in an Ash Wednesday demonstration at an air base in northern New York State. ✦ **Auxiliary Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin of Shanghai**, under house arrest since July 2012 after he resigned from the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association during his episcopal ordination, was allowed to attend the memorial service of a former colleague on Oct 24.

What You Can Do

If cynicism is the sin of our age, then ongoing paralysis in Washington is a huge occasion of sin and a temptation to despair. Washington is "de-moralized," unable to launch its health care Web site, keep government functioning, enact budgets or pass immigration reform. Washington is "de-moralized" by a House faction that paralyzes their party and the nation with disdain for compromise and for government itself. They did not repeal "Obamacare" but did divert attention from the administration's failure to get its Web site working and state disputes over Medicaid and health insurance exchanges (and an unwise battle over mandates and religious freedom). We also learned that the House gym is "essential" and that providing nutrition to newborns is not.

Washington has lost its way, cutting food stamps for the hungry and continuing subsidies to agricultural interests, cutting essential investments but not tax loopholes. As John Paul II warned us, we are losing "the ability to make decisions aimed at the common good," examining "demands not in accordance with criteria of justice and morality, but rather on the basis of the electoral or financial power of the groups promoting them." Washington is driven by two kinds of excessive individualism: lifestyle individualism, which makes "choice" the ultimate criteria, and economic individualism, which makes the market the measure of all of life.

JOHN CARR *is* ***America****'s Washington correspondent and director of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University. He previously served as director of the justice and peace department at the U.S. Bishops' Conference.*

Much has been on display in Washington, but something important is missing. There was no call for sacrifice for the common good, for the poor and vulnerable or for future generations. "Sacrifice" doesn't poll well or raise campaign funds, and Washington runs on polls and political money. But we should consider modest sacrifices in three areas.

Growing inequality and persistent poverty. Increasingly, our economy distributes benefits upward and burdens downward. Gaps between rich and poor are growing, and ladders of opportunity are disappearing. Economic pressures and family factors are leaving many children behind. The younger you are in the United States, the more likely you are to be poor. Yet the U.S. government spends seven times more on the elderly than on children, with more going for the health care and retirement of the elderly, regardless of financial situation. In family life, parents sacrifice for their children; in national life, this is reversed.

'Sacrifice' doesn't poll well or raise campaign funds, but we should consider it.

The cost of war. The burdens of war are increasingly borne by fewer and fewer Americans. The all-volunteer military and failure to actually pay for wars have left many indifferent toward the costs of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. My only sacrifice in the war on terror is more time at airport security. Others pay a profoundly higher price, including sacrifice of their lives. Many bear wounds, physical and psychological, that will last all their lives. Washington sends other people's children to fight our wars and asks nothing from the rest of us.

Environment. Addressing climate change and environmental threats requires prudence and sacrifice for the common good. The longer we delay, the greater the environmental and human impact will be in future generations. Those who contribute least to the problems will be hurt most and have the least capacity to respond. Washington ignores future threats, but the costs— financial, environmental and moral— grow with time and neglect.

Washington's de-moralization should yield to honest debate and courageous decisions about sacrifices to protect the lives and dignity of our children and grandchildren. We should recall the inaugural challenge of President John F. Kennedy, struck down 50 years ago: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Religious voices should lead the way. Sacrifice for others and priority for the poor may be politically incorrect, but they are religious obligations. Pope Francis has set a standard: "The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty." Francis also reminds us: "Politics...is one of the highest forms of charity, because it serves the common good.... We all have to give something." Good advice for a de-moralized Washington.

JOHN CARR

The deadly consequences of J.F.K.'s attempts at reconciliation

CNS PHOTO BY CECIL STOUGHTON, COURTESY OF JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY IN BOSTON

A President for Peace

BY JAMES W. DOUGLASS

The day President John F. Kennedy was murdered, a Divine Word seminarian walked up the hill to our family's apartment in Rome to tell my wife Sally and me the terrible news. Seeking wisdom, I wrote Dorothy Day, who had stayed with us the previous spring on a pilgrimage to Rome to thank Pope John XXIII for "Pacem in Terris" (1963), his landmark encyclical on global peace and human rights.

Dorothy wrote back saying I should pay attention to Kennedy's life by reading a profile on him she recommended. She said that in a context of continuing violence, she would pray *to* John F. Kennedy (her emphasis). And she encouraged reflection on St. Paul's words: "For those who love God, all things work together unto good" (Rm 8:28).

In November 1963 I was in my first full year in Rome lobbying bishops at the Second

President John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, arrive at Love Field in Dallas, Nov. 22, 1963.

JAMES W. DOUGLASS *is author of* JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters *(republished by Touchstone, 2010, and Orbis, 2013) and several books on nonviolence. He and his wife, Shelley, are cofounders of Mary's House Catholic Worker in Birmingham, Ala.*

Vatican Council to condemn total war and support conscientious objection. Inspired by Pope John's plea for mutual trust between cold war rivals, I had written in The Catholic Worker newspaper that Kennedy should have resolved the Cuban missile crisis by a (politically unthinkable) exchange of missile bases with Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet premier.

At that time I had no idea Kennedy had taken that leap secretly with Khrushchev while also pledging publicly never to invade Cuba, which infuriated his Joint Chiefs of Staff. By his turn to peace with our Communist enemies, proclaimed on June 10, 1963, in his commencement address at American University, Kennedy risked his life, according to a contingent prophecy by Thomas Merton. In January 1962 Merton wrote to a friend and expressed "little confidence" in Kennedy's ability to escape the nuclear crisis, since Kennedy did not have the necessary depth, humanity, self-forgetfulness and compassion. "Maybe Kennedy will break through into that some day by miracle," Merton wrote. "But such people are before long marked out for assassination."

Internal Opposition

Three decades later, I finally took Dorothy Day seriously by researching Kennedy's life and death. For 12 years I studied national security documents on his crises during the cold war, especially those declassified by Congress through the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992. I traced and interviewed witnesses to his assassination. I began to see the redemptive light of Dallas that Dorothy sensed in November 1963 through her love of God.

Seeking light in a depth of systemic evil that Merton called "the Unspeakable," which he described in *Raids on the Unspeakable* (1966), leads one to a Gospel story. Kennedy was learning to see through the eyes of his Communist adversaries. At great personal risk, he was turning from war to peacemaking. I was astounded by the grace-filled story of a president of the United States choosing peace—at the cost of his life.

The darkness of Kennedy's assassination extends back to the Cuban missile crisis at a meeting on Oct. 19, 1962, when Kennedy refused the pressures of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to bomb and invade Cuba. When he left the room, a hidden tape recorder kept running, capturing the chiefs' disdain for the president and their determination to escalate the conflict to total nuclear war. They wanted to win the cold war.

Gen. Curtis E. LeMay, chief of staff of the Air Force, carried out that intention. In the midst of the crisis, he ordered nuclear-armed bombers beyond their usual turnaround points toward the Soviet Union and test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile—steps designed to provoke the Soviets to react, which would trigger an all-out nuclear attack by superior U.S. forces. Fortunately the Soviets did not take the bait.

The darkness of Dallas goes back even further to the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961 by Cuban exiles trained by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. In retrospect, Kennedy realized the C.I.A. had deceived him by claiming the imminence of a popular Cuban revolt against Fidel Castro and that the exile brigade could "go guerrilla." They had tried to trap the president into authorizing an invasion by U.S. combat forces to save the day. Kennedy, however, had the courage to take the loss. As he later told friends, "They couldn't believe that a new president like me wouldn't panic and try to save his own face. Well, they had me figured all wrong." Kennedy was furious at the C.I.A. over the incident. The New York Times later reported that Kennedy told one of the highest officials in his administration that he wanted "to splinter the C.I.A. in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds."

In fact, the president had fired C.I.A. Director Allen Dulles and his deputies, Richard M. Bissell Jr., and Gen. Charles P. Cabell. Mr. Dulles was arguably the most powerful man involved in the cold war. He returned to power as a member of the Warren Commission, steering it to the lone-assassin conclusion it issued in its report in 1964 about the president's murder.

Building a Relationship

In the missile crisis, Kennedy turned toward peace. At the height of the terrifying conflict his own anti-Castro policies helped precipitate, he sought a way out. Kennedy chose a route his generals thought unforgiveable. He not only rejected their pressures to attack Cuba and the Soviet Union. Even worse, the president reached out to the enemy for help. That could be considered treason. Khrushchev saw it as a sign of hope.

Robert F. Kennedy, the attorney general, had met secretly on Oct. 27, 1962, with the Soviet ambassador, Anatoly F. Dobrynin, in Washington, warning that the U.S. president was losing control to his generals and needed the Soviets' help. When Khrushchev received Kennedy's plea in Moscow, he turned to his foreign minister, Andrei A. Gromyko, and said, "We have to let Kennedy know that we want to help him." Khrushchev hesitated at the thought of helping his enemy, but repeated: "Yes, help. We now have a common cause, to save the world from those pushing us toward war."

How can we understand that moment? The two most heavily armed leaders in history, on the verge of total nuclear war, suddenly joined hands against those on both sides pressuring them to attack. Khrushchev ordered the immediate withdrawal of his missiles in return for Kennedy's public pledge never to invade Cuba and his secret promise to withdraw U.S. missiles from Turkey—as he would in fact do. The two cold war enemies had turned; each leader now

had more in common with his opponent than with his own generals.

Neither John F. Kennedy nor Nikita Khrushchev was a saint. Each was deeply complicit in policies that brought humankind to the brink of nuclear war. But when they encountered what Thomas Merton identified as "the void of the Unspeakable," they turned to each other for help. In doing so, they turned humanity toward the hope of a peaceful planet.

The genesis of the Kennedy-Khrushchev turnaround during the missile crisis was their secret correspondence, which began over a year earlier. After their failed meeting in Vienna in June 1961, Khrushchev wrote a groundbreaking letter to the president, dated Sept. 29, 1961. To convey the heart of his message, the Communist leader used a biblical analogy: Khrushchev compared his and Kennedy's situation with Noah's Ark. In the letter he wrote: in Noah's Ark "both the 'clean' and the 'unclean' found sanctuary. But regardless of who lists himself with the 'clean' and who is considered to be 'unclean,' they are all equally interested in one thing, and that is that the Ark should successfully continue its cruise. And we have no other alternative: either we should live in peace and cooperation so that the Ark maintains its buoyancy, or else it sinks."

Kennedy replied on Oct. 16: "I like very much your analogy of Noah's Ark, with both the 'clean' and the 'unclean' determined that it stay afloat."

Thus, through their secret correspondence, the two men struggled to achieve a better understanding of each other and their differences. The Cuban missile crisis a year later was proof they had not resolved their conflicts. Yet it was thanks especially to the secret letters that each knew the other as a human being he could respect. They also knew they had once agreed warmly that the world was an Ark. They had to keep the Ark afloat. And they did, at its most perilous moment.

Seeking Peace Together

Once Kennedy and Khrushchev turned together in the missile crisis, they began conspiring for peace. The breakthrough was Kennedy's address in June 1963 at American University. By introducing his vision of peace as a response to the Russians' suffering in World War II, Kennedy bridged the gap with the enemy. Khrushchev later told the American diplomat W. Averell Harriman that it was "the greatest speech by any American president since Roosevelt."

Kennedy's announcement at the university of his unilateral cessation of atmospheric nuclear tests and his expressed hope for treaty negotiations in Moscow opened the door. Within six weeks, he and Khrushchev signed the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. It was a confirming sign of their joint decision to end the cold war.

Another sign was Nikita Khrushchev's counsel to Fidel Castro that he should begin to work with John F. Kennedy. Castro had been furious with Khrushchev for withdrawing his missiles at the 11th hour of the crisis without consulting his Cuban ally, in return for only a promise from a capitalist. Khrushchev, however, wrote a peaceful, reconciling letter to Castro on Jan. 31, 1963, that corresponded to his Noah's Ark letter to Kennedy. Castro accepted his invitation to come to the Soviet Union.

Castro made that visit to Khrushchev from May to June 1963. The two leaders traveled together around the Soviet Union. Castro said later that Khrushchev gave him a tutorial on their joint need to trust Kennedy. Day after day, Khrushchev read aloud to Castro his correspondence with Kennedy, emphasizing the hope for peace they now had by working with the U.S. president.

Khrushchev was practicing what Pope John, whom the Communist leader had come to love, recommended in "Pacem in Terris," where he wrote: "True and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust." The pope had sent Khrushchev a papal medal and a pre-publication copy in Russian of the peace encyclical. Khrushchev was overwhelmed.

In September 1963, Kennedy took another giant step toward mutual trust as the new basis for peace. He initiated a secret dialogue with Fidel Castro, through the U.S./

United Nations diplomat William Attwood, to normalize U.S.-Cuban relations. Castro responded with enthusiasm and began to make secret arrangements for a meeting with Attwood. Kennedy jump-started the process by using a back channel to communicate with Castro. His unofficial representative, the French reporter Jean Daniel, was meeting for the second time with Castro on the afternoon of Nov. 22, 1963, when they heard the news of the president's death. Castro stood up, looked at Daniel, and said, "Everything is changed. Everything is going to change." The U.S.-Cuban dialogue died in Dallas.

Shortly before his death, Kennedy also moved to end U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. National Security Action Memorandum No. 263, issued on Oct. 11, 1963, says that at a meeting six days earlier Kennedy approved a program to train Vietnamese, so that the United States would be able to "withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963," and "by the end of 1965…the bulk of U.S. personnel." President Lyndon B. Johnson quietly ignored these plans. The Vietnam War reignited in Dallas.

ON THE WEB
James W. Douglass talks about the Kennedy assassination.
americamagazine.org/podcast

Rendezvous With Death

Kennedy's courageous turn from global war to a strategy of peace provides the why of his assassination. Given the cold war dogmas of his government and his own turn toward peace, Kennedy's murder followed as a matter of course. It was a transparent act of state, which leaves us in the end with a transforming hope.

Hope? How does one discover hope from the murder of a president who was turning from war to peace?

By confronting the Unspeakable in our history, we can see a redemptive light in the darkness. Pressured relentlessly to wage war, Kennedy ordered his government after the missile crisis to pursue a policy of "general and complete disarmament" (see N.S.A. Memorandum No. 239, May 6, 1963). The president's courageous turnaround and his willingness to die for peace is what spoiled the C.I.A.'s and Joint Chiefs' determination to win the cold war in the only way they knew. This conversion and sacrifice saved us all from a nuclear wasteland. We still have a chance. But are we willing to turn toward peace, accepting the cost?

Through almost constant illness, John F. Kennedy had been listening to the music of death for years. His favorite poem was "I Have a Rendezvous With Death," by Alan Seeger. Jacqueline Kennedy taught the poem to their 5-year-old daughter, Caroline. On a beautiful day in October 1963, during a meeting with national security advisers in the Rose Garden, Caroline gained her father's attention. She looked into his eyes and recited the poem, which ends:

But I've a rendezvous with Death
At midnight in some flaming town
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

On a midnight flight from Vienna after his meeting with Khrushchev two years earlier, Kennedy had written on a slip of paper a favorite saying of his from Abraham Lincoln:

I know there is a God—and I see a storm coming;
If he has a place for me, I believe that I am ready.

The storm he feared was nuclear war. If God had a place for him—a rendezvous with death—that might help avert that storm on humanity, he believed that he was ready. He would not fail that rendezvous.

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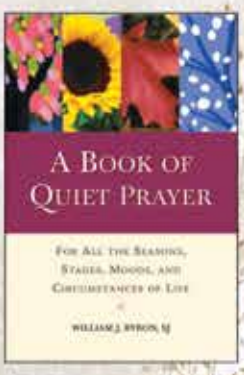

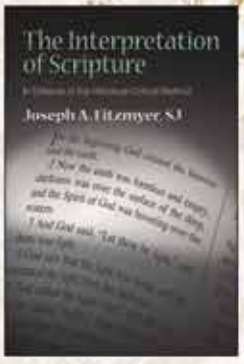

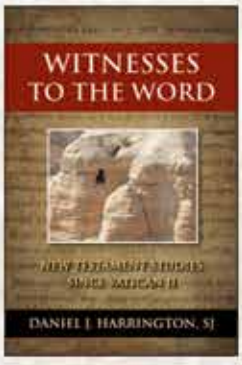

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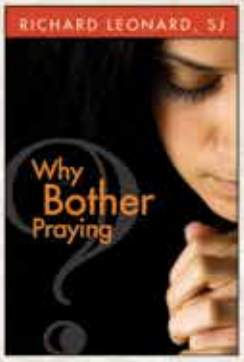

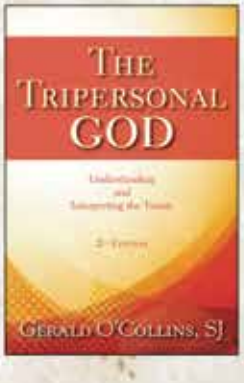

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My Father, Nikita

A conversation with Sergei Khrushchev

BY WILLIAM VAN ORNUM

Half a century may have mellowed the recollections of many Americans regarding the hottest days of the cold war, but one of the iconic figures of that time remains an intimidating figure in our collective memory: Nikita Khrushchev, remembered as the bellicose premier of the Soviet Union during the days of Sputnik, who went eye to eye with John F. Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis and who was rumored to have banged his shoe on the desk at the United Nations and shouted "We will bury you!" In an interview with his son, Sergei, however, I was shown a different side of the man so many Americans feared.

In the memories of Sergei Khrushchev, a 78-year-old historian with dual American-Russian citizenship, Nikita Khrushchev was a devoted family man, a brave reformer who brought an era of relative prosperity to the Soviet Union and a polymath who was not only intimately familiar with Christian Scripture but also reflected the Christian humanist values that his enemies always considered more characteristic of themselves.

An engineer by training, Sergei Khrushchev immigrated with his wife to the United States in 1991, eventually becoming a historian and a professor at Brown University and a U.S. citizen in 1999. Among his published works are several books about his father: *Khrushchev on Khrushchev—An Inside Account of the Man and His Era, by His Son, Sergei Khrushchev* (1990); *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (2000); and the three-volume *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev: Reformer 1945–1964*, edited by Sergei Kruschev.

Family Man

Sergei lived with his parents in Soviet government housing throughout much of Nikita Khrushchev's time as general secretary or premier of the Soviet Union, including the time of the Cuban missile crisis.

Nikita Khrushchev himself grew up in Kalinovka, a town in southern Russia 10 miles from the border with Ukraine. According to Sergei, the elder Khrushchev's elementary education ended at the fourth grade, but he was a good student with a prodigious memory. "Along with other children in the village, he went to church school, sponsored by the Russian Orthodox Church," Sergei said. The town was not prosperous, and Sergei remembered that during his own childhood,

WILLIAM VAN ORNUM, *a professor of psychology at Marist College and a regular blogger for America, interviewed Dr. Sergei Krushchev on March 14.*

PHOTO: BETTMANN/CORBIS

FAMILY PORTRAIT. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, third from left, poses with members of his family on the balcony of a house near Moscow in April 1963. Sergei Khrushchev is second from left.

even food dropped on the floor was picked up and eaten—out of respect for the many less prosperous or starving people who might find such food precious. Though Nikita often expressed fondness for his own youth and early adulthood as a peasant, "He didn't idealize the peasantry or any other group. His respect and calling were for the entire people of Russia." He was proud that his son became an engineer, since his own entry into politics had taken him so far from his desire to be a technician or an engineer in the factories.

Sergei's recollections of their family life suggest Nikita Khrushchev was what psychologists call an "authoritative parent," one offering positive affection and, when discipline is necessary, explaining things rather than giving orders or punishments. He was also an outdoorsman, fond of hunting and mushroom picking. Not so much fishing, however, according to his son: "He said, 'You go sit there and toss the hook in the water. The fish comes and sees it and thinks, who is that fool sitting at the other end of the line?'"

When Nikita Khrushchev visited the United States in 1959, he brought his family with him. Sergei remembered being given the opportunity to indulge a personal interest on a trip to catch butterflies outside Washington, D.C. For both American and Soviet political watchers, Khrushchev's decision to bring his family raised eyebrows, as it was so out of the ordinary for politicians to visit either country during the cold war.

Nikita Khrushchev is described by his son as a 'deeply moral' person who possessed a profound sense of altruism.

Food And Shelter

During that same visit to the United States, many American observers were surprised at Khrushchev's intense interest in food production methods. On a visit to an Iowa farm, Khrushchev startled the press corps traveling with him by taking an impromptu detour into the fields to examine the corn crop more closely. Poplin summer suits became grass-stained; shined shoes were scuffed. According to his son, this interest was part and parcel of Khrushchev's larger plans to improve the Soviet agricultural sector, which became one of his proudest accomplishments. In a country that suffered chronic food shortages (particularly after Stalin's catastrophic agricultural programs of earlier decades), Khrushchev was able to coax real productivity out of the Soviet farming culture.

"It was my father's destiny to serve the Russian people," Sergei said. "He tried to do the best things to make life better for them. And he did so successfully. Russia never lived better than under Nikita Khrushchev.… During his tenure, he was able to feed the people and increase the harvest," Sergei said, "and on a massive scale he created apartments for everyone, the first time this had ever happened in Russia." In the elder Khrushchev's memoirs (its publication was another almost unheard-of act by a Soviet politician), he claimed that one of his goals in his relations with the West was to create a situation in which military spending could be curtailed and redirected for greater domestic prosperity. "In the 20th century," Sergei repeated, "Russians never lived better than they lived under Khrushchev: not before him, not in the Soviet time, not in the Imperial time, not in the post-Soviet time."

Khrushchev also risked his own life as a politician by denouncing Stalin's violent purges, even though he himself had been involved in carrying out some of them as a younger politician. In order to "move in the right direction, serving your people first," Sergei noted, "you have to confess your crimes, and then people will decide what to do…only after that do you have the moral right…to lead them in the future."

Sergei Khrushchev also explained the Cuban missile crisis from his fa-

ther's point of view—that the installation of missiles in Cuba was less about a desire to attack the United States than it was about protecting Cuba and fulfilling the Soviet Union's obligations as a superpower to defend its allies: "Cuba became the same to [Khrushchev] as West Berlin was to the United States." His father did not panic during such a tense standoff, because earlier in life he had been present as a commissar for some of the bloodiest fighting of World War II: "He had experienced events much worse, such as the battles of Stalingrad and Moscow." According to Sergei, Kennedy once told his father "we can kill you many times over," to which he replied, "We can kill you only one time. Why do you want to kill us many times?"

Spiritual but Not Religious

Nikita Khrushchev is described by his son as a "deeply moral" person who possessed a profound sense of altruism, one that was closely linked to his own sense of the destiny of the Russian people. According to Sergei, he believed in Communism not as an expansionist or violent philosophy but as a political and economic system that would eventually win out over capitalism because it could truly "present better life to the people."

Though both he and his wife were avowed atheists as adults, and Nikita Khrushchev was convinced that religion was vanishing from the world ("he believed that in his lifetime he would shake hands with the last Orthodox priest"), his son recalls that Khrushchev was the first Soviet politician to attempt to establish relations with the papacy, sending Sergei's sister and her husband to Italy on the pretext of a journalistic visit but with the hopes of establishing a backdoor channel of communications; Khrushchev's removal from office soon afterward scuttled these plans.

Khrushchev has also been described elsewhere as having an almost encyclopedic knowledge of Christian Scripture. "It is possible, as some have suggested, that Father memorized the entire Gospels," his son related. He is noted for having said, upon seeing the fertile lands of Israel from a plane on a visit to the Middle East, "I can see now why the Jews cherished their Promised Land." Upon his removal from office in a bloodless coup in 1964, Khrushchev reportedly asked of his antagonists, "What are you going to do now? Crucify me on a cross like Christ?" Khrushchev instead survived under a kind of limited house arrest for the rest of his life, and lived long enough to write his memoirs with his son's support.

In light of these discussions of the papacy and of Khrushchev's at-least literary appreciation for Christianity, I thought of Pope Francis' recent expression of admiration for the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky. I asked if Nikita Khrushchev had felt the same. "He read Dostoevsky," Sergei said, "but he preferred Tolstoy." A

2013 Catholic Press Association Awards

Honor 'America'

FIRST PLACE

Best Essay
"Help Their Unbelief," Matt Emerson, Sept. 10, 2012

Best Coverage of Religious Liberty Issues
"Religious Liberty at Risk" Blase Cupich, Mary Ann Glendon, David Hollenbach, Thomas A. Shannon, March 5, 2012

Best Coverage of Election
"Just a Few More Questions" and "Electoral Responsibility," The Editors, Oct. 29, 2012
"In This Together," Richard E. Pates, Aug. 13, 2012

Best Coverage of the 50th Anniversary of Vatican II
"A Time to Harvest," Ladislas Orsy, Oct. 8, 2012
"A Great Awakening," Martin Marty, June 18, 2012
"An Ongoing Renewal," Dolores Leckey, Gerald O'Collins, Catherine E. Clifford, Greg Kandra, Oct. 8, 2012

Best Review Section
Fall Books, Oct. 15, 2012

Best In-Depth Writing
"Why Not Women?"Emil Wcela, Oct. 1, 2012

Best Online/Multi Media Presentation of Visuals
"Voices of San Quentin," Kerry Weber

Best Web Site
www.americamagazine.org

SECOND PLACE

Best Essay
"Waiting for Gabriel" Timothy P. O'Malley, Oct. 22, 2012

Best In-Depth Writing
"In Harms Way," Mary Meehan, Jan. 16, 2012

Best Online Blog
"In All Things"

THIRD PLACE

Best Regular Column
John F. Kavanaugh, Jan. 16, April 30, June 18, 2012

Best Coverage of Vocations
"The Long Black Line," Patrick Gilger, Jan. 2, 2012

Best Review
"Abe, Honestly," John Anderson, Nov. 26, 2012

May He Rest in Peace

Ten days ago, we were blindingly jolted into a vision of the teetering frailty and mortality of our lives and human institutions. That stark event made us realize how constantly and how precariously any man's life—even a life hedged with such divinity as is a king's—sways over an abyss of blind chance, unreason and evil. Indeed, when the life so overtaken by malice or madness is that of the acknowledged leader of the entire free world, we are all engulfed in his personal tragedy. In an hour like this it comes clear that

> *The cease of majesty*
> *Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw*
> *What's near it with it. It is a massy wheel*
> *Fixed on the summit of the highest mount,*
> *To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things*
> *Are mortised and adjoined; which, when it falls,*
> *Each small annexment, petty consequence,*
> *Attends the boisterous ruin.*
> ("Hamlet" III, 3)

On such a scale must we measure the sorrow and distress we feel as we look back on the brutal assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Word of the infamy of November 22 thundered upon us with the heart-stopping suddenness of a midair collision or of a step over the brink into darkness. At one moment, it was noon under a Texas sun and a wide Texas sky. The next moment struck, and with it a long night of sorrow and horror had fallen over decent men everywhere. The first nightmarish news flashes that carried this incredible report around the world have now become an indelible page of history. Whenever November 22, 1963 is recalled, men will invariably retell its story with anger and revulsion.

A young and profoundly loved President has been struck down at the very crest of his power, talents, experience and influence. He fell victim to a senseless stroke of that very violence he had pledged all the resources of his person and his office to restrain. Now he is gone. We pray that he may rest in peace—his noble soul with God for all eternity, his still youthful body awaiting the resurrection of the dead.

...

We American Catholics mourn John Kennedy neither more nor less than our fellow Americans of other faiths. He was President of all the people of the United States. Catholics took his nomination and election in stride, some voting for him, others against him. We anticipated no special favors from him because of the faith he shared with us. He was simply our President—as he was everybody else's—and as time went on, many of us came to judge that he was an extraordinarily good President for these turbulent days.

Shortly after Mr. Kennedy was inaugurated, **America** noted that with his election "the full first-class citizenship of U. S. Catholics" had at long last been ratified. We asked:

> How do these now fully enfranchised Catholics regard their coreligionist in the White House? They respect him as their President, and they can't deny—whether they voted for him or not—a certain natural pride that he happens to be a Catholic. But there is no gloating in the

*This editorial was published by **America** on Dec, 7, 1963, following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on Nov. 22. We republish it here in honor of the 50th anniversary of his death.*

CNS PHOTO/ABBIE ROWE, NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE, COURTESY JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Catholic attitude. Catholics look for no special preferments or special favors, and they will get none. They would be disappointed in the President if he ran things any other way.

Even in those instances where many Catholics (and **America** with them) judged President Kennedy to be bending over backward in an effort not to lose precious votes in the Bible Belt, we recognized that this was a posture forced on him by the stern exigencies of American political life. Two years ago (1/13/62, p. 462) we said: "Catholics in general are not troubled by the fact that the first Catholic President finds it expedient to walk so softly on so many fragile Protestant eggs."

But let's make no mistake about it: Catholics are proud of him. We are proud that he was a devout, practicing adherent of our ancient faith. When Mr. Kennedy sought the Presidency, he realized that he would have to campaign every inch of the way against deeply ingrained prejudice. As we all know, he sought no quarter on the subject of his Catholic faith. He never for a moment pretended that he was anything other than a full and integral Catholic. He made a public issue of his faith in the famous confrontation he held in Houston, Texas, with a large association of Protestant ministers. After a vigorous campaign, he was elected President by a slim margin.

In the three short years since his election, he has disproved all the inherited clichés that were supposed to prove that a Catholic could not exercise the powers of President of the United States. Quietly, most naturally, John F. Kennedy proved that a Catholic could not only be President, but could be an extraordinarily good one. What all the wisdom and learning of so esteemed a thinker as Fr. John Courtney Murray could perhaps never have brought home to the minds of many American Protestants, President Kennedy accomplished *ambulando*. Catholics are gratefully proud of his record.

Moreover, while the actions of John F. Kennedy in Washington were once and for all demonstrating that an American Catholic could lead his country without in any way jeopardizing the Constitution, another man named John was engaged, far from Washington, in another historic demonstration of the relevancy of Catholicism to the modern world. Someone has already coined a happy set of phrases to describe these parallel achievements: Two Johns—one on the Potomac, the other on the Tiber—have, in the first three years of the 1960's, changed the public face of Catholicism. These men named John—one, an aged Italian; the other, a young Boston Irishman who went to Harvard—had so much in common. Wittingly or unwittingly, they did so much in common. The entire earth has been their beneficiary. The people of the whole earth mourn them both with a profound sense of loss. A

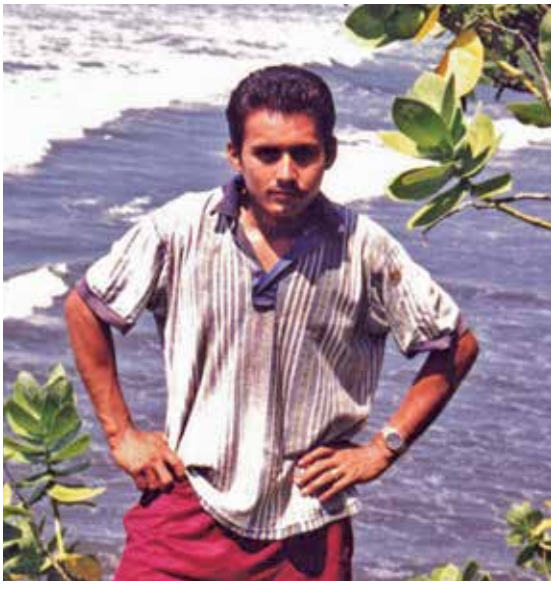
Rafael's Story

Remembering the stranger we are commanded to love

BY LISA MARIE BELZ

We met Rafael's battered body in Capulín, El Salvador, where the dusty road out of the parish of Chirilagua reached its highest and widest point. From there, one can survey the western part of the 200-square-mile parish: the cornfields climbing steep, deforested mountains and mud and stick huts dotting the deep valleys, surrounded by pyramid-shaped volcanoes jutting up from vast ancient flood plains blanketed by the sugar cane and cotton fields where so many underpaid serfs work from sunup to sundown under the relentless and brutally hot tropical sun. Not too many days before, a young and vibrant Rafael had passed by this very spot, eager for a new life of promise in El Norte. But on this day, weighed down by hearts heavy with grief, we gathered together as a parish family to meet the "hearse," a beat-up old pickup truck that would bring home our young friend's lifeless remains.

I first met Rafael while directing a young catechists' retreat. With only 50 or so priests for a population of nearly two million Catholics, the Catholic Church in this diocese in El Salvador exists because of catechists like Rafael—faith-filled, dedicated and committed young men and women who deeply love God and the church. Rafael had a joyous, exuberant personality that attracted many of his young companions, and I was delighted when he sent them to be trained as catechists alongside him. One day



Rafael asked me if he could borrow our Spanish-language recording of "Jesus of Nazareth" (1977), by Franco Zeffirelli, to show in his village. He was certain that all the *jóvenes*, or teenagers, in the town would come the following Saturday to the little chapel to watch it.

His little town along the Salvadoran coast had recently acquired electricity, and a stateside relative of one of the townspeople had donated a small television set and a video cassette player to the local Catholic chapel. I hesitated to lend out the valuable video, but he assured me, with his broad, toothy grin, that he was very responsible; and he promised to return it the following Sunday, when he would walk the four hour round trip on foot through the mountains to attend morning Mass at the parish church, his weekly custom. Something inside told me to take the risk and, sure enough, after Mass the following Sunday, Rafael spotted me out to return the video in person, showing me his customary smile. "See, *Madre*," he said, "I told you, I'm very responsible. And, just as I said, all the *jóvenes* came to watch it. We had a great time together!"

Indeed, he was a very responsible young man. He felt a deep sense of responsibility for his widowed mother and younger siblings, whose daily diet consisted of meager portions of corn, rice and beans. Like so many others in their village, they lived in a very simple house, with a dirt floor, a tin roof, and mud and stick walls. Rafael did his best to help his mother make ends meet, but with El Salvador's unemployment rate of 20 percent, underemployment rate of 70 percent and the low wages given those who did have jobs, he knew he did not have many options in his homeland. But if he could find work in El Norte, he could send money home each month so that his family would have enough to eat and maybe, over time, even build a real home with a cement floor, cinder block walls and a tile roof.

A Perilous Journey

Immigrants from places like El Salvador and Mexico would love to come to our country legally. They would prefer it. Legal travel is much more comfortable and far less expen-

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AUTHOR

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LOST GENERATION. A procession for the feast of St. Peter, made up of young catechists.

sive than illegal entry. And it carries far fewer risks. The problem is that U.S. embassies make it very hard for all but the well-to-do to travel to the United States. First of all, one must pay $100, just for an appointment in the embassy. This does not include the visa. And most are turned away, but only after the embassy collects the $100 appointment fee. Those not turned away are people with hefty bank accounts. Those without a visa have to choose between unemployment and underemployment in their native land—and the hunger that goes with it—or a 21st-century version of indentured servitude in the United States where they work at sweatshops until they pay off the coyotes' exorbitant travel fees of $7,000 or more—money no one has, of course. But for these migrants, exploitation as underpaid indentured servants in the United States is preferable to hunger in their native land.

To be sure, my young catechist friend Rafael wanted to come to the United States legally. With visa, he would have to pay only about $500 for a flight to Miami, Los Angeles or Houston. But, of course, he had no bank account, and no bank account meant no visa. As he saw the worry grow on his mother's face as she tried to find enough to feed her young brood, he knew his family's best chance for survival was for him to find a job in El Norte. He had heard from others that people in El Norte earn in one hour what Salvadorans earn in one day, around $3.00. Rafael also knew the risks. But the skinny faces and distended bellies of his little brothers and sisters urged him on. When the word got out that the coyote would be coming soon to take people up to El Norte, Rafael made plans to leave.

Although the coyotes charge thousands of dollars to guide their clients to a new life in the North, the journey the coyote offers is fraught with many dangers and takes days, even weeks. Travelers can face extremes of weather, bandits, hunger, thirst, insects and rodents; often the modes of transportation are unsafe, even hazardous. Rafael was stuffed along with too many others in the back of a small, open pickup that sped through the night along a lonely mountain road.

The little truck had just crossed over the border between Guatemala and Mexico when it hit a rock and overturned, sending its occupants fly-

ing in all directions. Rafael took a hard hit to the back of the head and died shortly after. A local Mexican charity group affiliated with the church was going to bury him until contact was made with his family, and his neighbors sold their cows—their source of milk and cheese—to raise the funds to bring his body home to El Salvador. Everyone in his hometown loved him dearly and could not bear the thought that he would be buried as a stranger in a strange land.

A Deeper Meaning

Years later, after I returned home to the States, I went to work toward a graduate degree in biblical studies at a large Catholic university in the Midwest. There I took a doctoral course on Leviticus with students much younger than I. At one point in the course we studied and discussed Lv 19:34, which reads: "You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God."

My young classmates argued over the meaning of the Hebrew grammar of this verse. One of them queried: "Does the Hebrew verb *kamoka* mean to love the *ger* (stranger, alien or immigrant) 'as yourself,' or 'as one like yourself'?" As I listened to the class discussion about grammer, the smiling face of Rafael came to mind. He would have been the age of many of my classmates. He, like them, had dreams and hopes for a brighter future. His dreams and hopes were different from theirs—as students, they already possessed more than he could ever dream of—but he had dreams and hopes, nonetheless.

Remembering Rafael, and many other Salvadoran catechists like him, I could not help feeling some disappointment that the discussion on loving the immigrant among us, as commanded in Leviticus, was so focused on the level of grammar. The meaning of *kamoka* was obvious to me; its ambiguity included both meanings. I knew this because I personally knew people like those referred to by the Hebrew word *ger*. And I knew why a *ger* would leave his or her beloved family and homeland to become a stranger in a strange land, and even risk dying as one. Many, like Rafael, never make it to their destination. And those who do are often exploited, abused and denied basic human rights.

ON THE WEB
America's coverage of the immigration debate.
americamagazine.org/immigration

As our nation debates immigration reform, some of us presume that undocumented immigrants are criminals who could have come to this country legally but chose not to. Many fear that these "criminals" are "terrorists." These presumptions and fears are not, of course, rooted in reality. In fact, those involved in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, were able to come here legally because they had financial resources. They paid all the fees—from the hefty appointment fee in the embassy to visa fees. They did not come from single-room mud and stick huts with dirt floors—with a dream for honest employment and a brighter future. Nor did they risk their lives to get here. Instead, they came to this country comfortably and safely by airplane.

As Catholics in the United States, we are challenged by our Scriptures to remember the *ger* among us and the admonition, as the people of God, that we not look away, harden our hearts or close our borders. Instead, we are told with all the firmness of the biblical command: "You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God" (Lv 19:34).

Next to Godliness

Prayers over the washing machine

BY SUSAN M. ERSCHEN

"Slow me down, Lord. Slow me down." These words stopped me in my tracks. They were exactly the prayer I needed as a busy mother of four young children. As I read the prayer, which our archbishop had included in his weekly diocesan newspaper column, I knew I needed to make it my own.

The prayer spoke to the reality of my life: "Oh, God, I know that I am going to be very busy today." It also had a calming effect: "Help me not to be so busy that I miss the most important things." The prayer also asked God to grant me time to see the beauty in the world, to listen to those in need, to chat with a friend, to read a few lines from a good book, to be patient and kind.

I sat and stared at the words. I knew that if I could find time in my busy life to read this prayer every day, it would make a difference. Yet the prayer itself was not a short piece that I could stick on my mirror or the refrigerator and read quickly; it wrapped around two columns. I cut it out and taped it to a sheet of pretty green paper. Then I carried it around the house, trying to find the perfect spot to hang it, a place where I would remember to pray these words on a regular basis.

Then I realized that I had only 30 minutes before I needed to wake my two little ones from their naps to go pick up my two older ones from school. I needed to use this quiet time to finish the laundry. I carried the prayer downstairs and laid it on top of my washing machine. As I folded towels, I re-read the words that had touched me so deeply. And in doing so, I found my answer! I quickly found some tacks and hung the prayer over my washing machine. And thus began a ritual, which I would follow for years, of praying this prayer every time I did the laundry.

Eventually a collage of prayers spread out over my washer as I added other prayers I felt I needed to say: prayers for my family: the Peace Prayer, often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi; a blessing for my home and all who entered; prayers for Christmas peace and joy; the famous Serenity Prayer, sometimes attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr.

Years later, when I took a job to help pay for high school tuitions, my husband offered to take over the laundry chores. But I refused his offer, protecting my private prayer time. I told him he could clean the bathrooms. I could hardly tape my prayers to the side of the bathtub!

After many years, the needs of our growing family demanded that we expand into a larger home. I carefully removed all my prayers from above the washing machine and packed them in a file folder. They were faded, marked with water spots and splashes of blue laundry detergent. The tape was yellowed. Holes in the corners marked where they had been tacked to the wall. Yet to me they were sacred. I was taking them to our new home. Unfortunately, my new laundry area had no convenient place to tack the prayers that had sustained me for so many years. With regret I decided a better place for the prayers would be in a binder beside the rocking chair in my bedroom. I vowed I would read them every night. But life just got busier, and more nights than not I forgot about the prayers. The little binder got picked up, dusted and placed upon a closet shelf.

Many years later, while cleaning out closets, I found the prayers. As I read through them, it dawned on me that throughout my life I had kept the prayers much closer to me than I had thought. And God had answered them, too. More often than not, I had lived my life slowly, thoughtfully and

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ART: BOB ECKSTEIN

joyfully. The prayers had guided me in my transition from being a stay-at-home mom to a career woman. They had reminded me of what was important. I did my best to be present for special events in my children's lives. I was also there to meet the ambulance when Mom was rushed to the hospital and to sit in the waiting room during the long hours of Dad's bypass surgery.

I found time to cultivate friendships, read great books and to sit and watch many beautiful sunsets. I watched my children grow up and become blessedly happy and content in their adult lives. Without my even being aware of it, God had given me—at exactly the times I had needed it most in my life—the patience, the courage, the wisdom and the other virtues and blessings I had once prayed for while standing over my washing machine. I had stopped reading the prayers, but, by the grace of God, I never stopped trying to live them. A

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

DALLAS, 1963

'Parkland' returns to the scene of the crime.

The most important news photographer of the 20th century was a Russian-Jewish immigrant clothing manufacturer from Dallas, Tex., who almost left his camera home on the day his life went crazy. Abraham Zapruder, whose half-minute film has fueled a half-century of conspiracy theories, recorded a presidential assassination, wept, said he thought the gunman was behind him and sold Life magazine the rights to his movie. Today its 26.6 seconds can be watched on YouTube.

The accomplished actor Paul Giamatti plays Zapruder in Peter Landesman's **Parkland,** a film whose intent seems to be a kind of sweeping up of Kennedy assassination ephemera, a celebration of all the marginal participants who have been neglected since Nov. 22, 1963, by the likes of Oliver Stone ("JFK") or Neil Burger ("Interview With the Assassin") or any of the other filmmakers who have tried to nail down the ineffable plot points in the Kennedy narrative or make up their own. Landesman, who was accused of his own creative reportage when he wrote about sex slavery for The New York Times Magazine, does not really have an aggressive objective regarding the "truth" of the Kennedy assassination; his editorializing manifests itself mainly through omission or adherence to the official line.

Paul Giamatti, far left, as Abraham Zapruder and Billy Bob Thornton, center, as Forrest Sorrels

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But it is hard to imagine anyone, including the film's makers, approaching "Parkland"—the name of the Dallas hospital where Kennedy and then Lee Harvey Oswald, and a few years later Jack Ruby, all died—with zero presumptions about the single-bullet theory, the man with the umbrella, the questions surrounding the entry/exit wounds or the burning of the infamous Oswald letter. This last bit is executed late in the film by the F.B.I. agent James Hosty (Ron Livingston), in a scene reimagined by Landesman with an air of ritual and "Godfather"-evoking cross-cutting between Parkland and the lighting of the eternal flame beside the Kennedy's grave at Arlington, after which a conscience-wracked Hosty says a Hail Mary.

Suffice it to say, there is a strong strain of visual Christian commentary going on throughout "Parkland," including the haloed close-ups of the crucifix placed on Kennedy's chest, the administration of last rites by the Rev. Oscar L. Huber (Jackie Earle Haley), the attentiveness to the president's spiritual needs by the supervising nurse Doris Mae Nelson (Marcia Gay Harden)—all of thelm real people, usually overlooked by history, their lives having immediately become the collateral damage of a madman's act. And as far as "Parkland" is concerned, that is madman in the singular—no second gunman on the grassy knoll.

Even those born long after the assassination have their opinions

about the Kennedy murder. What is Landesman's opinion? Basically that there were a lot of good people who got caught up in and/or trampled by the action surrounding the events of Nov. 22. As well as some truly miserable characters for whom "Christian" seems an alien concept—Marguerite Oswald, for instance, the mother of Lee Harvey Oswald, who numbers herself among the principal victims of the assassination, much to the mortification of her son Robert (the terrific James Badge Dale). Marguerite, portrayed with a possessed brilliance by Jacki Weaver, is almost unbearably awful, but she also gives the movie an astringent quality it otherwise lacks, which is welcome.

James Badge Dale, left, as Robert Oswald and Jacki Weaver as Marguerite Oswald

"Parkland" was produced by the American Film Company, which was behind the Lincoln-assassination film "The Conspirator," directed by Robert Redford (which just adds to all those mythic Kennedy-Lincoln parallels). The company was founded by Joe Ricketts, according to its Web site, in order "to celebrate the extraordinary characters and events from American history…with the vision that films can entertain while changing the way audiences view our collective past." While the site also notes that Ricketts founded TD Ameritrade, it neglects to mention that he served on the board of trustees of the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute, whose members were onetime architects of much of the policy of the George W. Bush administration and include Paul Wolfowitz, Newt Gingrich and John Bolton.

Still, it is hard to find a political thread running through "Parkland," unless one equates religious enthusiasm with Americanism. And this "Parkland" certainly does. Had Landesman spent a bit more time on his characters and narrative, he might have made a more watchable movie, but of course he has a lot of people to work into the mix: Dr. Charles Carrico (Zac Efron), the hospital intern who first worked on the wounded president; Forrest Sorrels (a very convincing Billy Bob Thornton), the supervising Secret Service agent at the assassination; Zapruder's assistant, Marilyn Sitzman (Bitsie Tulloch), who was with her boss while he shot his film; the Kennedy aide David Powers (Gil Bellows) and Oswald himself (Jeremy Strong). It is quite a cast, some of whose members have only small roles, but all work effectively. One of the things Landesman seems to get very right is the mix of sadness and anger felt by all those on the scene, and how it manifested itself in a jockeying for jurisdiction and an aggressive assertion of territory. The wrestling over Kennedy's casket during a dispute among the F.B.I., the Secret Service and the Dallas police is beyond embarrassing, but it really happened. The city of Dallas, which managed to let a president and his assassin get murdered in the same weekend, does not come off well: "What a [expletive] place to die," someone says, and no one argues.

"Parkland's" contribution to Kennedy assassination lore is limited. The dead president's face, virtually unmarked as he lies on a hospital gurney, seems to be modeled after the autopsy photos, which are themselves a subject of controversy. The whole issue of the trajectory of the assassin's bullets is skipped; the Zapruder film is not shown (only Zapruder's reaction to the killing, which is quite effective). Little foundation is set down for the conspiracy theories that would follow.

The point instead is how human complexity and kindness manifest themselves in a time of what is both national catastrophe and a personal crisis for all involved. At the Oswald funeral, attended only by his immediate family, members of the media are pressed into acting as pall bearers; a couple of cemetery employees, touched by the sight of Robert Oswald single-handedly filling in his brother's grave, lend a hand; that they are black men is not irrelevant, given what Kennedy already meant to the issue of civil rights in the United States. Helping bury the man's assassin is a portrayal of charity in its purest form, and if there's an agenda to "Parkland," that seems to be it.

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

SIGNAL/NOISE

Having spent time in analog recording studios before the digital revolution, one bit of technical jargon still remains with me. The term "signal to noise ratio" refers to the measurement of desirable audio signal compared with the amount of undesirable noise that analog audio devices create. The phrase is rarely used now because the noise generated in the digital realm is negligible, but "signal to noise" has taken on new meaning in the Internet age.

In our streamlined, online universe we communicate instantly, chat endlessly and share abundantly—so much so that in this world of pristine digital signals, I believe we have finally located the source of the noise. It is us. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the realm of faith and religion.

At a recent workshop for mission and ministry professionals from Jesuit schools across the country, I spoke on the topic of using social media for outreach to millennials. Though it's an issue I have a lot of experience with, I confessed that it was a source of conflict as well.

In our screen-dominated lives, there is a sense among many that this technological revolution is a sign of an evolutionary change in humans. We have mystified our tech wizardry to the point that it almost seems an end in itself, threatening to shift what once grounded us: "In the beginning was the word, and the word became text."

I couldn't disagree more. "And the word became flesh" isn't a figure of speech, it is a necessity for millennials in a 21st-century economy of belief. In terms of conveying transcendent truth and meaning for millennials on the margins of faith, we are living in a post-textual world, where words are no longer sufficient. In a marketplace overstuffed with loud ideas, data, opinions and arguments about religion, authentic lives of service, simple faith and justice are far more persuasive.

Researchers have described this phenomenon in terms of a lack of connection many young Christians feel regarding their parents' expression of faith, being overly focused on politics and culture wars rather than Gospel messages about poverty and justice. This is consistent with millennials in general, who are much more concerned with the poor, education and the environment than the previous generation.

We are living in a post-textual world, where words are no longer sufficient.

To complicate things even further, millennials are also the most media savvy generation ever to walk the earth. They've been messaged and marketed to since birth. They are allergic to hypocrisy, and they understand tone and message the way fish understand water.

It is no accident that "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report" are among their most trusted sources of information. Think about that for a moment. If the satiric deconstruction of mainstream media messaging is actually your most credible resource, you're clearly dealing with a highly sophisticated understanding of media.

This does not absolve us from the responsibility for doing media well in the religious sphere, but it certainly should be the backdrop for any efforts we make. Millennials know the chasm between institutional religious rhetoric and reality. For them, service and reflection are more authentic, compelling and incarnational languages of faith.

Don't get me wrong. I love the beautiful elegance of so much of the technology I use everyday—including the MacBook Pro I'm typing these words on, the iPhone I'm using to text questions to a friend in ministry, the iPad Mini that I'm receiving Facebook messages on and so on. This technology has tremendous power to connect, but ultimately it is a tool that helps point to the truth. It isn't the truth itself.

Sometimes I feel as if we've fallen in love with our hammers instead of the homes they can help us build. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., recognized this temptation decades ago in a pre-Internet age. "Nowadays the world does not need words," he said, "but lives that cannot be explained except through faith and love for Christ's poor."

That is why, 2,000 years later, we try to do as Jesus did instead of fetishizing the type of sandals he wore as he traveled to deliver his message.

It is why the lives we lead say more about us than our words ever could.

It is why the moment I finish typing this I need to close this screen and go "do" some religion instead of just talking about it.

BILL McGARVEY, *author of* The Freshman Survival Guide, *owner of CathNewsUSA.com and former editor in chief of Busted Halo (2004-10), is a musician and writer.*

LAMB, FOX, LION

CONSCIENCE AND ITS ENEMIES
Confronting the Dogmas of Liberal Secularism

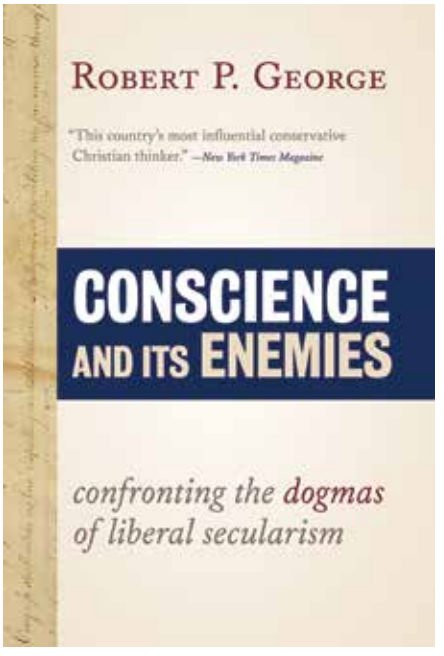
By Robert P. George
Intercollegiate Studies Institute. 384p
$29.95

When speaking against the death penalty to secular audiences, I try to work in a plug for the unborn. So, once as a guest lecturer at Princeton, I lamented the passing of Paul Ramsey, a Princeton ethicist who demanded that abortion at any gestational stage be distinguishable from infanticide. I equally lamented the current celebrity of Princeton's Peter Singer, an ethicist who justifies both abortion and infanticide. I had hardly finished my point when a student piped up proudly: "Yes, but we also have Robert George!"

Indeed, Robert George—along with the likes of Mary Ann Glendon, Daniel Sulmasy and John Noonan—has challenged pro-choice orthodoxy from within our most elite academic institutions, where it seems most entrenched. One need not share his political compass to count George an asset in a country that abides over a million abortions annually. George merits reading, close reading. The 28 essays assembled in *Conscience and Its Enemies: Confronting the Dogmas of Liberal Secularism* range widely in focus.

George imparts an inspiring vision of liberal-arts education and sounds sobering alarms over the steady increase in out-of-wedlock births and our "unbridled culture of pornography." He calls out universities that champion racial diversity amid stifling ideological homogeneity; he skewers the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy for excising God from its reprint of the Gettysburg Address. He pitches to economic conservatives the importance of social conservatism: if the family fails, the state fills the void.

At certain points, the breadth of George's discussions costs him depth. The death penalty wins mention in his case against Mario Cuomo but draws no condemnation; subsidiarity eclipses



the counterbalancing imperative of solidarity; and health care as a human right becomes merely something of which it is "certainly not unreasonable to speak." These cannot be the ultimate views of a counselor to our bishops who condescends a mite toward the "contemporary dissident Catholic." George covers a lot of territory, but he burrows in on two issues: the humanity of the embryo and same-sex marriage.

Taking up for embryonic life threatened by research, George eschews faith and dogma. He reasons from science. "From a purely biological perspective, scientists can identify the point at which a human life begins. The relevant studies are legion. The biological facts are uncontested. The method of analysis applied to the data is universally accepted." With fertilization comes "a new, complete, living organism." Its development is internally controlled and directed. Nothing interrupts its physical continuity or species membership. An embryo did not become you; it was you. "You were once an embryo just as you were once an adolescent, a child, an infant, and a fetus." When we deny protection to this embryo, even for noble research, we no longer respect human beings for what they are but for some acquired characteristic.

Some would abandon an intrinsic-value approach in favor of linking respect to capacity for certain mental functions. George urges us to recognize the mental capacities the embryo enjoys in root—if not immediately exercisable—form. George searches out and slays counterargument after counterargument.

Yet one puzzle needs further work: twinning potential. Very early on, the embryo can divide into two, making for twins. How can we say one person becomes two persons? George points to the flatworm. A whole flatworm, once divided in two, becomes two whole flatworms. A single organism before; two organisms after. The flatworm analogy does not catch, especially after George has put his axe to the pro-choice camp's likening of fertilized eggs to acorns and people to oak trees. The divisible flatworm seems curious. The divisible person seems absurd. And George's fallback argument—that twinning "increasingly" seems to represent natural cloning—requires both elaboration and a more apposite footnote.

Same-sex marriage figures prominently in five of George's essays.

ON THE WEB
The Catholic Book Club discusses Someone by Alice McDermott.
americamagazine.org/cbc

Employing natural law, George attacks the very notion of same-sex marriage and, more effectively, forces us to confront a couple of line-drawing problems side-stepped until now. Marriage, George contends, distinctively involves "a bodily union made possible by sexual-reproductive complementarity of man and woman." By dint of this complementarity, the "mating pair is a single organism." This permits between husband and wife a "one-flesh union" that is the "justifying point of marital intercourse," that makes for "conjugal marriage" and that objectively and exclusively implies fidelity and permanence.

The infertile man and woman can partake of conjugal marriage. For "acts that fulfill the behavioral conditions of procreation are acts of the procreative kind even where the nonbehavorial conditions of procreation do not obtain." Same-sex marriage, though, radically redefines marriage and further weakens an already "wounded" institution. It subverts the "stabilizing norms specific to marriage." "Permanence, monogamy and sexual fidelity" become mere "subjective preferences."

For many Americans, George's marital metaphysic will stand up poorly next to the reality—just down the block or a few family relations away—of a committed gay couple with children. So take or leave George's argument that a same-sex marriage cannot be a genuine marriage. Acknowledge, though, that same-sex marriage proponents have largely enjoyed a pass on issues of limits. George's arguments make that much clear. Why doesn't the "consenting adults" principle allow for polygamous marriages? Why not let a post-menopausal sister marry her brother? As Robert Sokolowski pondered in these pages, why can't a pair with no interest in mutual sexual conduct marry for the legal benefits and protections? And what are the limits on requiring acceptance of same-sex marriage? Must the justice of the peace with religious objections preside over a same-sex wedding or may she claim conscientious objector status? How about the government-paid chaplain? The local wedding photographer or cake designer? George insists that acceptance of same-sex marriage inevitably requires coercion of these folks.

This brings us to the lamb-fox-lion problem and this book's greatest disappointment. An old Protestant knock on our church is that she is a lamb in minority, a fox in equality and a lion in majority. In truth, this knock can be credibly leveled against most any institution or interest group or individual. With the upper hand, we are all tempted to reign like lions.

Now, George pleads powerfully for the claims of conscience when those claims belong, for instance, to doctors and pharmacists whom some in the American College of Obstetricans and Gynecologists would force, despite grave objection, to perform abortions or dispense abortifacients. And he decries as "trampling conscience rights" the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services's contraception-abortifacient mandate. But how about the rights of those whose consciences he judges faulty?

Should not society respect some sphere of personal autonomy for even erroneous moral navigation, provided no direct harm comes to others? Is George's concern Conscience and Its Enemies or only Correct Conscience and Its Enemies? George seems noncommital, sending signals in different directions. No good. George observes that today's same-sex marriage debate is not about criminalizing anything. Yet in 2003, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops "deplored" as disrespectful to the family the Supreme Court's striking down of a Texas statute that made consensual homosexual sodomy a crime. If George would defend such thinking, he should resign himself to a perpetual game of lamb-fox-lion in our legislatures, a game leaving little room for conscientious objectors or for reasonable minds that differ to live out their differences.

A Calvary in Beechhurst

He's moved his body crossways in the bed.
His bony legs are thrust between the bars.
His knees are scored with crusted scabs and scars,
But time has not effaced his striking head.

His urine soaks his undershirt; the sheet
Beneath him's drenched. He will be hard to shift.
I roll him on his side and slowly lift
The saturated bedding. No small feat.

I've thought of killing him and then myself;
No chandelier in here would hold my weight.
And so I guess that I shall have to wait
Until his old age kills me. Though I laugh,

I've learned a thing that cannot be denied:
One does not need nails to be crucified.

MARY-PATRICE WOEHLING

Mary-Patrice Woehling *teaches English at the Mary Louis Academy in Jamaica Estates, N.Y.*

He should also resign himself to the risk of more disastrous judicial overreaching. Do not forget the origins of Roe v. Wade. The Connecticut legislature outlawed contraceptives even for married couples. This begot Griswold v. Connecticut, which overturned Connecticut's statute on the grounds of marital privacy. In less than a decade, Griswold begot Roe and the ensuing catastrophe.

We voters can do better than judges at protecting conscience. First, though, we must resolve to safeguard even the conscience we count as flawed.

KEVIN M. DOYLE, *who has represented capital defendants and death row inmates in Alabama and New York, is the former capital defender of New York State.*

J. GREG PHELAN

MAN OF LETTERS

SUITABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

An Autobiographical Story of Family Life: The Letters of J. F. Powers, 1942-1963

By J. F. Powers
Edited by Katherine A. Powers
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 480p $35

"J. F. Powers, 81, Dies; Wrote about Priests."

So read the stark headline of this great Catholic writer's obituary in The New York Times in 1999. Powers did write about priests in most of his short stories and both of his novels, including his comic masterpiece, *Morte d'Urban*, which won the National Book Award in 1963. His priests are not saints, but flawed men who have sacrificed worldly comforts and often their dignity for their vocation, working for a bureaucracy that his protagonist, Father Urban, noted wryly had been "rated second only to Standard Oil in efficiency."

As we learn in *Suitable Accommodations*, a new collection of letters edited by his daughter, Katherine A. Powers, J. F. Powers also sacrificed worldly comforts to pursue his vocation, struggling for decades to support his family with his writing. Powers hoped that sales of *Morte d'Urban* would solve his chronic money problems and enable him at last to realize his quest to buy a permanent home for his family. Despite the award, though, sales were not nearly enough to end a bitter cycle of disappointment and poverty.

According to Ms. Powers in her introduction, her father planned to write a novel about a family man—an artist with ambitions who is driven down in what she calls "a hopeless contest with human needs and material necessity." She offers this collection of her father's letters as a substitute for this novel he never wrote—*An Autobiographical Story of Family Life*—based on excerpts she selected from thousands of letters and several personal journals, from the acceptance of his first story at age 24 to his reception of the National Book Award.

Along the way, Powers spends time in jail for being a World War II conscientious objector, falls in love and marries his wife, Betty, also a writer, publishes stories and novels, securing if not a wide popularity, at least the recognition he needed to gain entry into the literary community and rears five children, moving them back and forth between the United States and Ireland in increasing disastrous attempts to find a tolerable living situation. "No money is the story of my life," he writes.

His early letters to Betty during their engagement contain many portentous warnings. "I don't want a job, of course. Only the freedom to write and, it may be, starve." And later, after she marries him and their life becomes as dire as he forewarned, he writes to her—"I suppose I thought I'd made it clear there'd be times like these"—as if saying so was enough to shed any responsibility.

In addition to his wife, Powers corresponds with old friends, many of whom are priests, including his literary patron, the Rev. Harvey Egan, and new friends as well, including the literary luminaries Robert Lowell and Katherine Anne Porter. Shunning any earnest discussions of literature or faith, Powers fills his letters with keen observations about his predicament, laced with his Irish black humor that often tips into sarcasm. His wisecracking obscures any self-revelations, and we get little insight into his inner life. The tantalizing episodes when he meets another important writer, like Dorothy Day or Thomas Merton, frustrate in their lack of detail or reflection. Regarding Merton, he says, "I liked Fr. Louis quite a lot."

Despite his desperate need for cash, Powers refuses offers of employment that don't suit him and in one particularly cringe-worthy episode, he negotiates himself out of a $2,000 fee to option one of his stories for television by insisting on a share of the profits. Worse, he often fails to get any writing done, spending his time betting on horses or buying items at auctions, among other distractions. The sad result is reminiscent of the sinner in C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*, who says upon his arrival in hell: "I

now see that I spent most of my life in doing neither what I ought nor what I liked."

As one continues to read Powers's sardonic laments, one cannot help but wonder about his long-suffering wife, Betty, whom in one letter he accuses as having "no talent for motherhood (once she's conceived)." Three quarters into the collection, we get a glimpse of her perspective in an extract from her journal: "Jim's first work in Ireland done today, 6 months & one day after our arrival, followed by his picking up a 'low ladie's chair' from auction."

That is funny, or would be if we weren't so concerned about the poor children. In the afterword, Katherine A. Powers writes: "Growing up in this family is not something I would care to do again. There was so much uncertainty, so much desperation about money, and so very little restraint on my parents' part in letting their children know how precarious was our existence." According to Ms. Powers, it was her mother, not her father, who "cobbled together the wherewithal for our survival" and, despite having to cook, clean and ration, wrote every day on a strict schedule, trying to bring in money herself. And she did, by publishing her own stories and a novel, though this did not not earn nearly enough to solve their financial problems.

Katherine Powers's judgment of her father, however justified, pervades the collection. At first, as she discloses, reading her father's letters made her angry, sad and shocked at the life her mother "had taken upon herself in joining her life to this man's." Eventually, though, the letters with "their wit and drollery and festive turns of phrase won me over."

> And indeed, in selecting the letters to tell the story, I increasing felt I was bringing order to a situation where there was little. With that came satisfaction and a certain amount of peace.

The letters presented here do make an airtight case that Powers was an impractical, selfish man and a terrible provider. But what did Ms. Powers leave out? Her criteria for choosing excerpts focused on family life may have served her purpose, but by cutting letters and passages that "are not necessary to the story, including a large number concerning JFP's deliberations and negotiations with editors and publishers," she leaves us to consider whether there may have been unpublished excerpts from his letters or perhaps his journals (of which we are given barely a glance) that might have shed a more balanced and nuanced light on the artist we experience through his masterful fiction.

And given a small taste of Betty's cutting wit, we also yearn to see far more from her letters and journals in the hope that she might further illuminate our elusive subject, whom she marvelously described as a "divinely inspired gadfly," and perhaps give us insight not only into why she ignored Powers's warnings and married him, but also into why she stayed with him for so many long decades as she struggled herself to pursue her own vocation as a writer, wife and mother.

Though Powers never did write his planned novel about family life, he did write two autobiographical short stories, both about a father struggling to provide a stable home for his family—"Look How the Fish Live," in an old house about to be torn down to become a parking lot, and "Tinkers," in a rundown hotel outside of Dublin. Powers handles the sadness and frustration of the father in these stories with a light comic touch mostly absent from this selection of letters. The husband and wife, who persistently but gently disagree, share a strong bond and wry sense of humor that helps them persevere.

J. GREG PHELAN *has written for The New York Times, The Millions and other publications.*

JOHN P. LANGAN

A FAREWELL TO ALMS?

CHARITY
The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition

By Gary A. Anderson
Yale University Press. 232p $30

Charity is a book that gives away with one hand even while it takes back with the other. On the one hand, the book, written by a Scripture scholar who is the Hesburgh Professor of Catholic Theology at the University of Notre Dame, underlines the urgency and the prominence of almsgiving in both patristic Christianity and rabbinic Judaism. He uses his profound knowledge of the relevant texts from Ben Sirach and Tobit. He is intent on showing that almsgiving is not to be understood along the lines of obedience and reward or punishment employed in the Deuteronomic theology. He gives a central place to charity, which in his account is centrally almsgiving to the poor, which is an expression of faith in God and his providential ordering of the universe rather than an expression of the moral state of the giver.

The problem he works to resolve is the need to avoid the works-

righteousness that Protestantism found in the connections medieval Catholic theology made between the practice of almsgiving and the gaining of indulgences, even while affirming the quasi-substantial character, the "thingness" of the good deeds of the righteous, which are stored in a heavenly treasury. He even entitles the second part of his book, "Charitable Deeds as Storable Commodities," an exercise in reification that seems neither sophisticated nor plausible.

Anderson has interesting treatments of the story of the rich young man (given in parallel forms in Mark 10, Matthew 19 and Luke 18) and the account of the last judgment in Mathew 25. He also connects almsgiving with fasting, both of which he sees as petitionary exercises rather than as penitential discipline for the sins of the giver. It is appropriate and enlightening that in the reconciliation of divine freedom and human merit Anderson gives the final word to St. Augustine, who saw both at work in the final moments of the life of his mother, St. Monica. "Divine freedom is never compromised. But neither are Monica's charitable deeds."

Anderson's book is unquestionably learned, insightful and occasionally provocative. At the same time, it is both a sign of hope and a disappointment. For this reader, the sign of hope is the extensive use that Anderson, like an increasing number of Christian scholars, makes of Jewish sources for unfolding the meaning of the New Testament, which clearly has its roots in the Jewish religious world. With its careful use of Jewish sources and its watchful eye for Protestant theological concerns, *Charity* is an encouraging work of interreligious scholarship.

The disappointment has to do with Anderson's neglect of social and economic history. Despite the subtitle of the book, "The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition," very little is said about the changes in the condition of the poor, about economic practices and institutions in ancient Israel and the Roman Empire, about the factors that may have led to the need for repeating and intensifying the call to almsgiving.

Even less is said about the difficulties that confront modern Christians as we attempt to interpret and apply the biblical teaching on almsgiving and its complex relationship to economic justice. I mention this not to chide the author for failing to write a quite different book but to advise readers about what is likely to be a source of disappointment for those approaching the topic in a more activist or liberationist spirit. It would be illuminating if Anderson were to pose to his colleagues at Notre Dame the question of how the argument of his book should be connected with the sense of institutional life and history that is so powerful within Catholicism.

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The True King

CHRIST THE KING (C), NOV. 24, 2013

Readings: 2 Sm 5:1–3; Ps 122:1–5; Col 1:12–20; Lk 23:35–43

"He is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15)

The whole nature of kingship can be confusing. At least it is confusing to me, raised as I was in Canada, a democracy that nevertheless retains a monarch as head of state. It does not necessarily get clearer in the United States, whose founding as an independent nation goes back to the casting off of an unjust king. These seem to be the two modern views of monarchs: pretty figureheads who wave to adoring crowds or petty tyrants who exploit their subjects. Neither model is particularly appealing and, more significant, neither model makes sense of the reality of Christ the king, the model of true kingship.

Confucius spoke of the need for the rectification of names in the political and social spheres, that unless people met the requirements of their name—like father, son, ruler or subject—the society would be out of order. That is, one could be called a king, but if one did not embody the requirements of a true ruler, like benevolent treatment of subjects, one was not a true king but only a person who bore the name. From a Christian point of view, there have only been rulers who imperfectly bear the name of king, apart from Christ the king. The rectification of our understanding of kingship depends upon a proper understanding of the nature of Christ's kingship.

The people of Israel yearned for a king, and while the prophet Samuel warned them of the nature of every human king, God allowed them human kings. It was God who said of David, "It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel." David did rule, for 40 years, and in that time, apart from his great achievements, the Israelites could also reflect upon the adultery and murder committed by the great King David. He was a king like every other human king in so many respects. But God had also promised that his throne would be established forever. The Jews of the following centuries would await the fulfillment of the Davidic kingship, wondering, who would fulfill the messianic promises?

True kingship, it turns out, is a revelation. Having all power, Christ, the king of the universe, uses this power only to free us from the thrall of false kingdoms and kings, whether construed as human or spiritual kingship. The beautiful Christ hymn of Colossians, possibly pre-Pauline, tells us that God "rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." This kingdom, and Christ's kingship, was intended for subjects unworthy of the kingdom, in need of redemption from slavery but unable to foot the bill. Though "he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation," and "all things have been created through him and for him," his task was to serve the cosmos and humanity through his role as suffering servant. In fact, "through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross."

The power of true kingship, it appears, is made manifest as this: the king of the universe on the cross. We ought not to be surprised that the rulers, Luke tells us, "scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!'" or that "the soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!'"

When the only kingship you know is the brute force of power to impose your will on others, it can be difficult to recognize that the true ruler, the genuine king, acts not with arbitrary and malevolent force but with mercy. What a shock it must have been to the repentant criminal on the cross to realize that hanging beside him in his darkest hour was, in fact, God's beloved son, who could transfer him from the power of darkness to God's kingdom. "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" is not so much a request as an acknowledgment: You are the true king!

JOHN W. MARTENS

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Think of how Christ the King uses his power. How can you use the power you have in your day-to-day life to make more fully manifest God's kingdom?

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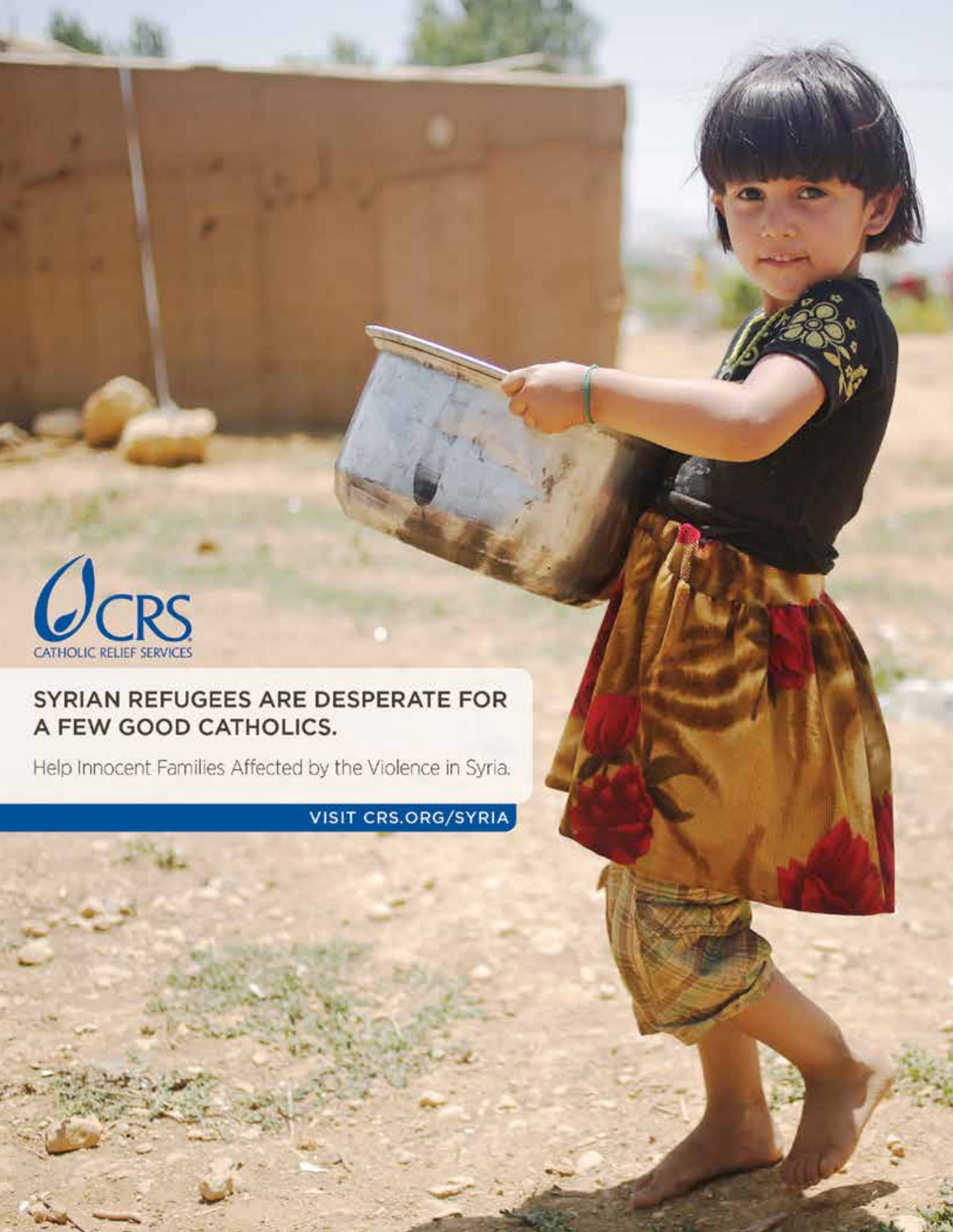
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