

America

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The Audacity of Christian Hope

PAUL J. WADELL

St. Columba's Witness

A HOME FOR BLACK
CATHOLICS IN OAKLAND
KAYA OAKES

Matt Malone, S.J., is traveling.

At the end of this month, if all goes well, my husband and I will be first-time homeowners. Thus far, however, all has not gone well, so I will remain slightly nervous until we sign on the dotted line. When we began our search last fall, we had no idea that our hope for an affordable home in a nearby, friendly, artistic, quaint New Jersey town was shared by what seems to be every other young family in the entire tri-state area. The past year has been filled with endless open houses, one broken contract, hours of budget calculations and then bids, followed by bidding wars and the eventual news that, yes, we had been outbid once again.

We petitioned St. Joseph, acknowledging that he generally was known to work on behalf of the sellers rather than buyers. Still, we hoped he might be willing to put in a good word for us. And since we currently live in a tiny, fourth-floor apartment without a yard in which to dig, we stuck St. Joe's statue upside-down in the laundry basket for a while, to no avail.

We are hopeful the end is in sight. We have settled on a house in the town adjacent to the nearby, friendly, artistic, quaint town. This adjacent town had significantly less competition when bidding, and I am sure will have its own charms, the first of which is that we could afford to buy a house there.

Over the last year, I have also learned that the process of buying a house involves questions far greater than, "What does this place cost?" When choosing a place to live, one must first sort out what one values most. Is the town welcoming, diverse? Will we share values with our neighbors? Will we have the chance to be a part of a larger community? Are there opportunities for service? How will my family be challenged by being here, and how might this community be affected by

my family's arrival? Does it feel like home? They are questions not unlike those one asks when discerning which parish one might join.

Kaya Oakes's article in this issue (pg. 14) describes a California parish in which the parishioners are living at the intersection of many of these sorts of questions. St. Columba, a mostly black Catholic church in Oakland, exists in a changing neighborhood that has both frequent crime and hipster enclaves. Through all the changes, the church remains committed to being welcoming and serving as a force for justice for all. "I was looking for a place to feel comfortable," one parishioner told Ms. Oakes. Her words sum up the search of so many of us looking for a home, whether physical or spiritual. They also offer a challenge.

At a time when our world too often seems divided along political, cultural, socioeconomic or religious lines, how do we help one another to feel at home in our shared communities? Of course, being comfortable does not mean that we do not challenge one another. Rather, it means knowing that even when we are challenged or disagree, it is not out of a desire to evict one person or party but out of a desire to be more loving in the context of true commitment to one another. It means working to make sure that all of us, with all of our flaws, feel welcome here in our common home, whether on a global or local scale.

Pope Francis recently urged us once more to avoid "physical and social walls" that "close in some and exclude others." His words are a welcome reminder to each of us to challenge ourselves to be present to our neighbors, both in our towns and across the globe, to work for justice, to welcome the stranger into our lives, to walk gently when we are the stranger, to each day give of ourselves and not to count the cost.

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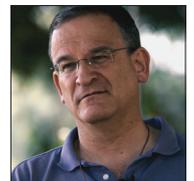
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ON THE WEB

In a new video, **David Neuhaus, S.J.**, reflects on his work for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. Plus, James Martin, S.J., on building a two-way bridge between **the L.G.B.T. community and the Catholic Church**. Full digital highlights on page 31 and at americamagazine.org.



Protecting Conscience

What does it mean, as a medical provider, to participate in a procedure that you find morally objectionable? This is the question at the heart of a federal lawsuit filed in September against the State of Illinois by three local pregnancy centers. In July, Illinois passed a law that requires doctors, hospitals and pregnancy centers to refer patients who ask about abortion to local providers if they do not provide the service themselves. The law was signed by Governor Bruce Rauner, a Republican.

Critics of the amendment claim it was directed specifically at pregnancy centers that work to offer pro-life options for young mothers. In a federal lawsuit, the plaintiffs' attorney argues that the new law violates First Amendment free speech rights as well as the right to freely exercise religion. "The government shouldn't be putting messages in people's mouths," said Noel Sterett, the attorney who filed the suit. "It's quite easy to find that [abortion] information," he added. "Go ahead and Google it. We don't have to violate others' conscience in order to make that happen."

Pregnancy centers have become a target of pro-choice groups who believe these organizations mislead women by not providing them with their full range of options. But these centers are usually independent and do not take state money. A referral may seem harmless to some, but to pro-life advocates who are passionate about supporting young mothers, it strikes at the very heart of their mission. These centers should be free to go about their work without government interference. Government attention would be more fruitfully directed toward supporting young mothers who need child care and other crucial assistance after a child is born.

Dakota Re-Route Opportunity

Americans might be forgiven if they thought they had put the great pipeline wars behind them with the abandonment of the giant Keystone XL. Concern that the lives of U.S. citizens were likely to be disrupted in the service of a foreign oil company was among the arguments that eventually doomed Keystone. That must seem all too ironic to the members of the Standing Rock Sioux community in their months-long resistance to the \$3.8 billion Dakota Access pipeline, which, they contend, is a threat to drinking water and Sioux sacred sites in its path.

President Obama's call on Nov. 2 for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to revisit the pipeline route offers a welcome way out of what has become an increasingly

tense confrontation. The Texas-based company Energy Transfer Partners should seize this opportunity to de-escalate the crisis. So far company officials have refused to budge so local police have to act as corporate enforcers against Sioux and other Native American protesters and environmentalists who have joined the fray.

The optics of the stand-off, pitting militarized officers in riot gear against Native Americans, could not be any worse. The sight invokes the most gruesome and unjust incidents from the past and suggests that Native American communities continue to be ignored and devalued in the present. It is hard to imagine the concerns of another sovereign state being similarly dismissed by U.S. government officials and energy producers.

The president's intervention should also be welcomed by pipeline resisters, who could participate in practical negotiations toward a resolution of the conflict and disassociate themselves from protesters who are seeking to terminate all extraction and movement of fossil fuels.

Blessed Are They

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus laid out many of the qualities he hopes his followers will embody, including mercy, meekness and cleanness of heart. In offering these hopes, Jesus was speaking not only to the people of his time but to each of us today. There is much to be gained from revisiting these always-relevant words of wisdom. Yet the modern age represents distinct challenges, so Pope Francis, during his recent trip to Sweden, offered some additions to the Gospel lists of beatitudes to remind us that we are called "to confront the troubles and anxieties of our age with the spirit and love of Jesus."

Each new beatitude offers a specific example of a person serving as "a messenger of God's mercy," a much needed example in our time: "Blessed are those who remain faithful while enduring evils inflicted on them by others and forgive them from their heart. Blessed are those who look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalized and show them their closeness. Blessed are those who see God in every person and strive to make others also discover him. Blessed are those who protect and care for our common home. Blessed are those who renounce their own comfort in order to help others. Blessed are those who pray and work for full communion between Christians."

The updated beatitudes remind us that the Gospel is not a static rule book to be read and followed but a way of proceeding that must be lived in the context of the modern world.

Doors of Mercy

By late November, a sense of closure sets in. Thanksgiving Day is a time to look back: What good things have I experienced since a year ago? Whom have I met? Where have I gone? How am I a better person? In the Catholic calendar, the Solemnity of Christ the King ends the liturgical cycle before we begin again with the First Sunday of Advent, a chance to start over a month before our civil calendar runs out.

This year, Christ the King, on Nov. 20, wrapped up the Jubilee Year of Mercy that Pope Francis announced in January 2015 and inaugurated on Dec. 8 a year ago. The pope offered this special year as an opportunity and a challenge. It was an opportunity to change for the better, to reach out to those estranged from us, to mend our ways where they needed mending. And it was a challenge to open our eyes to see those in need who walk our streets and pass us by, to open our hearts to the stranger, the migrant, the other.

A jubilee in the Jewish tradition was to occur every 50 years. It was a time for forgiveness of debt, a time of special celebration. Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed the first Christian jubilee year of 1300 for reconciling sinners and others estranged. People liked the idea, and subsequent popes declared more frequent jubilees, usually every 25 or 50 years.

A strong symbol of a jubilee year is the holy door. St. Peter's Basilica has a special door that is closed off except in jubilee years. The pope opens the door and the year begins. This year churches around the world—from Bangui in the Central African Republic to a modest tent in Erbil, Iraq—designated a holy door as a reminder that this is a privileged time for reconciliation, for setting things right, for entering a sacred space.

Other doors can open us to mercy—those that close off refugee camps or prisons, those we might open to visit a nursing home or a hospital. And the sacred space we enter does not have to be physical. It includes relationships with those we love. It includes encounter with those we may have closed off. It includes looking into the eyes of those we usually do not see.

This jubilee year included many special events. One Friday a month Pope Francis carried out some special sign of mercy—visiting a home for needy children or a refuge for prostitutes rescued from the streets. He made mercy a central theme of World Youth Day in Krakow in July. He canonized Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who had spent her life doing works of mercy. On Nov. 5, 1,000 prisoners from 12

countries along with family members and security staff walked through St. Peter's holy door at the pope's invitation to attend Mass with him; marginalized and homeless people came to a similar event the following Saturday.

Several dioceses set up websites specifically for the Year of Mercy, and many of the prayers and resources will go on after the official year has ended. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee, for example, listed monthly actions for people to try to show mercy. Many parishes provided volunteer opportunities; others provided lectures on mercy. These do not need to stop.

As this jubilee year ends, the need for mercy does not. This year has seen floods of refugees driven from their homes in Syria and elsewhere, risking their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea, sometimes facing hostility in their new homes. And many in our own society could use a helping hand, another chance. Fighting racism, ending scapegoating, feeding our own hungry would be great acts of mercy, too.

This jubilee year has coincided with a long, bruising political campaign, in which violent words and hostile attitudes not only revealed deep divisions in our country but even fostered them and exploited them. We have not heard many calls for mercy here.

As this year ends, it is crucial that we not shut the door—holy or otherwise—on the needs of those around us. Modern life produces stress in families and other relationships; we need to examine ourselves for how we can make things right. Our country has a great deal of healing to do, and we need to step back, recover our better selves and reach out to those with whom we may legitimately disagree. Disagreement does not have to include vilification, recrimination or charges of ill will. It does not call for shutting doors to respect or to recognition of the good in those with whom we have differences. If our country is to be strong, we must be just and offer opportunity to all. We must work to find common ground in order to carry out works of mercy. The weakest and most vulnerable suffer the most from a permanent state of political warfare.

If the Year of Mercy now ending sparks even some tentative first steps in this direction, Pope Francis' courageous initiative in calling us to this celebration will be an enduring legacy.



DOOR OF MERCY AT CATHEDRAL OF THE ASSUMPTION IN DOWNTOWN LOUISVILLE, KY. ONS PHOTO/MARNIE MCCALLISTER, THE RECORD

REPLY ALL

Not Enough

Re “Building on Diversity,” by Tara García Mathewson (10/31): *Ecelente artículo Sra. Garcia*. My family lives on the East Coast, and my career is in the medical field. We attend the cathedral in our diocese as our parish and I was a member at one time on the cathedral social justice committee.

Whenever I suggested that we should do outreach to Latinos in our area to my committee colleagues, I met siloed hearts. Their argument was that a Latino parish ministry already existed in the diocese across the river from us, and that Latinos should go to the Latino parish ministry if they needed anything. I pushed back, stating that we Latinos are found everywhere, not just on the other side of the river and not only within a diocese’s geographic radius. I further argued that the cathedral, flush with cash and centrally located, needed to reach those Latinos in our midst. Latinos are found on the streets, in the city park across from the cathedral where they receive food with the homeless, at local second-hand and consignment stores, at markets and at medical clinics, where I tend to them.

Yet the committee members would not budge. It was a “duplication of services,” they said. I responded saying, “So is collecting food for the poor.” When I was shut down, I was dumbfounded and disappointed. Although these were well meaning people, as the committee’s only Latino I eventually dropped my position.

The silo mentality is sadly very pervasive in our parishes. Having one Latino parish diocesan ministry is not enough. We don’t send the poor or those seeking Communion to assigned parishes. You might consider exploring this theme in future articles in **America**.

GUILLERMO REYES
Online Comment

Embrace Learners of English

Re “Filling Empty Seats,” by Anthony J. Zavagnin (10/31): As a coordinator of the program for English as a new language at the University of Notre Dame, I too have been witnessing the phenomenon of increasing numbers of international students in Catholic schools. We work with Catholic teachers to improve their expertise in instructing learners of English, and in recent years there has been a notable increase in high school educators participating in our program precisely because they want to better meet the needs of the international students in their classrooms. The challenges noted by Mr. Zavagnin are consistent with the stories we hear from our teachers who serve in schools across the country.

It’s important, however, that readers understand the greater landscape of which these international students are a part. English learners are the single fastest growing population of students in the United States. Approximately 80 percent of English learners in the United States speak Spanish as their native language, and an overwhelming number of those Spanish-speaking students are Catholic. Ensuring that English learners thrive in our schools is vital. It has long been a legacy of Catholic schools in America and is a challenge we should embrace, not run away from.

CLARE ROACH
Online Comment

Not Very Helpful

Re “Hate.Net” by James Martin, S.J. (10/31): We know quite a lot about human behavior now, and we realize how much of it is shaped. If the church has told us that we should defend the faith (and this has been my experience), clergy should offer appropriate techniques and parameters of the defense. Most people have to figure it out for themselves and, online, “primitive” people seem to emerge. Name-calling

is the easiest kind of humiliation and says, “You are an idiot and I am not like you.” Not very helpful.

RICHARD BOOTH
Online Comment

Lob the Grenade

Father Martin, you are so, so right. But I’m not sure Catholics are different from others. The comments on many news stories have the same kind of reactions. So many people just feel angry all the time. And they want to hurt someone because it hurts them so much. All the better that they can lob their grenade and escape without being reproached. If you want a real firestorm, say something about gun control and hashtag it.

ROBERT KILLOREN
Online Comment

Otherwise Mild-Mannered

It’s not just Catholics. Something about social media gives latent bullies the courage to say things they would never say in person. Just take a look at the political scene this year. When many (otherwise mild-mannered) women and men sit down and type out their meanest inclinations, they are overcome by a sense of empowerment to annihilate an opposing point of view.

NANCY CLAYTON
Online Comment

Different Options

I read the impassioned endorsement of Catholic education by Matt Malone, S.J. (Of Many Things, 10/24) very carefully, and felt sad for the good, faithful Catholic parents who will read that article, and whose children are not enrolled in Catholic schools. By tying Catholic education to the realization of “God’s dream of us all,” I can’t help but think of the many Catholic families for which Catholic school simply isn’t an option: families with a child who needs specialized educational services that Catholic schools cannot provide, families who cannot afford Catholic

schooling because of unemployment, family illness or other economic realities, families who don't have access to a Catholic school, families who opt for the local public school because it's the best educational option for their children.

Might the parish's religious education programs, situated firmly in the life of the parish, also be able to claim that they "cultivate a distinctly Catholic culture," "nourishing imagination, allowing our children...to dream" and help children "realize God's dream for us all: so to live a life in faith, hope and love in a just and prosperous world"?

The future of the Catholic Church depends on strong Catholic schools and, going by the numbers, on strong religious education programs. Both should be diligently supported and recognized as equally wonderful, albeit different options for delivering the moral and ethical qualities that are needed today.

MARY ROSE
Crestwood, N.Y.

Faith and Reason

This is far more than a paean to Catholic education. It is a stirring call to Catholics and non-Catholics to use their education in the service of solving today's problems. They are not intractable.

That Irishman who asked, "Why not?" also cautioned against an over-reliance on our gross domestic product, saying "it measures everything...except that which makes life worthwhile."

With a true liberal education and wisdom gained through pain, that Irishman had a moral imagination that helped him clear away the materialistic clutter that often blinds us.

He, a student for a time of the Benedictine monks, blended faith and reason (and action) as he sought to make life just and gentle. In the words of Pope Francis, that Irishman—Robert F. Kennedy—decried indifference, which seems to have taken away our ability to

weep for the poor and oppressed.

So a round of applause for all those who see that faith and reason are conjoined friends, and let us pray that our leaders once again will embrace those qualities for the common good.

JIM TOLAN
Quogue, N.Y.

Watering the Seeds

Re: "Third Party Revolution," by Ross McCullough (10/24): Though the choices for president from the two major parties trouble many, that the author misses so critical a feature of a meaningful third party is astonishing.

Consider Teddy Roosevelt, Ralph Nader and Ross Perot; then consider the candidate leading the American Solidarity Party McCullough recommends. Each of the first three, before mounting a presidential bid, had a national profile, a national following and financial resources. No matter how attractive their platform might be, as far as I've been able to determine, the American Solidarity Party is essentially nowhere beyond its online presence. Until they do the groundwork, a vote for them is as much a throw-away a vote as Mr. McCullough insists a vote for Donald J. Trump or

Hillary Clinton is.

In his dismay that the masses hold to a myth that their vote matters, Mr. McCullough could have been more persuasive had he proposed that no one other than residents of the "king-maker" states bother to vote. Going forward, better if he invests his skills in the task of watering the seeds and culling the weeds of a nascent alternative party rather than grasping at an imaginary reaper-ready harvest.

RITA HESSLEY
Cincinnati, Ohio

Inspiration and Scripture

Re: "The Word," by John W. Martens (10/24): It seems to me that Dr. Martens has addressed the doctrine of God's inspiration and scripture when he writes: "Each [biblical] text was written by human authors who 'made use of their powers and abilities' and with God 'acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which he wanted.'" Thanks for your writing each week. I have found your reflections on the Sunday readings inspirational! God's blessings Dr. Martens, in your work and ministry.

(REV.) STEPHEN BAKER
Online Comment



CARTOON: PAT BYRNES

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

MIGRATION

Unaccompanied Minors Neglected As Calais Camp Is Demolished

The last days of October were brutal ones for the almost 10,000 residents of the informal refugee settlement known as “the Jungle” just outside Calais in northern France. Reports appeared the morning of Oct. 24 of running battles between French police and migrants as the Calais authorities moved to demolish the infamous settlement near the cross-channel train tunnels.

The move to shut down the camp put further pressure on the British government to accept more of the refugees who have been piling up at Calais, especially the camp’s many unaccompanied children. Almost all the refugees had been hoping to make it to Britain. In mid-October, as the first young people arrived from Calais, some voices in the media and Parliament cast doubt on their asylum claims. One Tory member of Parliament stated plainly that some “looked older than 18.”

Momentum began to gather for a proposal that authorities perform dental checks on the young refugees to ascertain their age. The proposal was disavowed some hours later by the government’s Home Office, though it clearly struck a chord with the suspicions of many in the United Kingdom.

Charities and relief agencies protested vigorously that the camp should not have been destroyed until every child migrant had been safely relocated. President François Hollande of France had urged the new British prime minister, Theresa May, to “take your responsibilities and assume your moral duty by immediately organizing” the arrival of scores of unaccompanied minors who had been living in the Jungle. Mrs. May retorted that over 200 children had already been brought into Britain. She refused to make any further asylum commitment, despite the verified reports of hundreds of vulnerable minors left stranded in France.

As the week ended, only about half of the residents had been removed to other locations in France, while fires set to delay the demolition began to sweep through the camp. Local authorities had provided some converted shipping containers as temporary housing, but these were quickly filled, and unaccompanied minors were turned away.

A number of charities and aid agencies working on the site reported that minors with nowhere to go were forced to sleep in the open for several successive nights as autumn temperatures dropped. Volunteers cited in the media compared the situation to scenes in *Lord of the Flies*, as up to 1,500 unaccompanied children, some as young as 8, denied even fresh running water since last week, roamed the site while the demolition efforts employing heavy machinery continued.

At the end of October, French authorities said that the operation to shut down the Jungle had been successfully concluded, but Red Cross officials rejected this claim, noting that there were still many children stuck in the now overcrowded shipping containers. On Oct. 31, a professional soccer club in west London, the Queens Park Rangers, stepped in with an offer of a fleet of buses ready



to bring the remaining children across the English Channel at a moment’s notice. Their local municipal authority, Hammersmith and Fulham, also put a team of social workers on standby, displaying a readiness to help that the central government in London had been unable to muster.

That magnanimous gesture was a rare counter to England’s increasingly sour mood regarding migrants. In his universal prayer intention for November, Pope Francis asks Catholics and people of good will to pray with him “that the countries which take in a great number of displaced persons and refugees may find support for their efforts which show solidarity.” Britain is still not showing that solidarity, instead making excuses for the low numbers of refugees it is accepting, even if that means leaving children behind in great danger.

DAVID STEWART, S.J.



THE BLUE LINE. French police prepare on Oct. 26 to push through the Calais “Jungle” migrant camp to force out residents.

AP PHOTO/EMILIO MORENATTI

LIFE ISSUES

D.C. Affirms Assisted Suicide

The District of Columbia City Council on Nov. 1 moved one step closer to allowing doctors to prescribe lethal medications to terminally ill patients who want to end their lives. The council voted 11-to-2 to pass the “Death With Dignity Act.” The proposal would allow a physician to legally prescribe end-of-life drugs to patients who have been deemed mentally competent and who have received a terminal diagnosis of six months or less.

“This bill discriminates against our African-American and Hispanic neighbors, sick seniors, the disabled, the uninsured and all who are vulnerable in our community,” said Michael Scott, director of the D.C. Catholic Conference,

The conference joined a broad-based coalition of groups in opposing the measure.

Scott said in a statement after the vote, “Our coalition will continue to fight this bill, which has few safeguards to protect the vulnerable and does nothing to help the thousands of D.C. residents desperate for access to better health care and improved social services, such as counseling.”

Opponents say the bill is flawed because it endangers “high risk” populations, including the elderly, the uninsured and underinsured, the homeless, low-income individuals and those with intellectual disabilities. Critics also charge the bill does not require doctors to give patients a screening for depression before providing them with a lethal prescription; the patient is not required to notify family members before taking the medication; and no doctor, nurse or legal witness is required to be present when the lethal dose is taken.

Council member Yvette Alexander told city lawmakers on Nov. 1 that she could not support the measure, citing a fear of patient coercion and undue influences on the poor, the elderly and the disabled; the lack of oversight during the administration of the deadly drugs; the difficulty “predicting the final six-month window”; the pressure on physicians “to engage in behavior in contradiction to the Hippocratic oath”; and the mistrust such law would create between the public and the medical community.

Introduced in 2015 by Ward 3 council member Mary M. Cheh, a member of the Health and Human Services Committee, the law permits a physician to prescribe lethal drugs to terminal patients without fear of legal prosecution. When she introduced the bill,

Ms. Cheh said permitting the terminal ill to kill themselves provides “a humane and dignified manner” of dying.

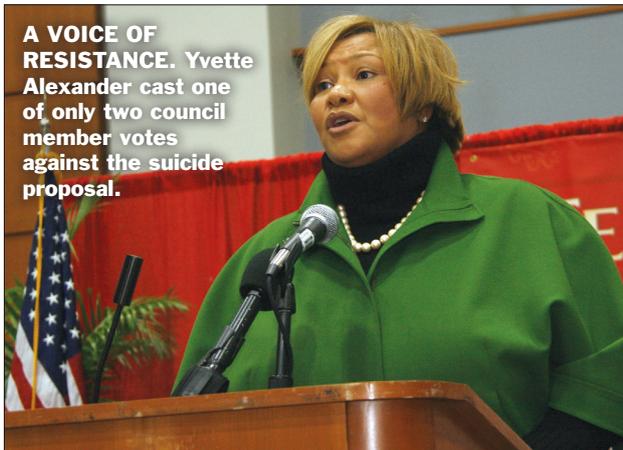
The vote does not mean legalized assisted suicide is now the law in the district. The bill is scheduled for a second vote on Nov. 15; then it moves to Mayor Muriel Bowser for approval or veto.

Dr. LaQuandra Nesbitt, director of the city’s Department of Health, has openly opposed the bill, saying it violates her Hippocratic oath.

If the bill eventually becomes law, the district would be the nation’s seventh jurisdiction to allow doctors to assist the terminally ill to kill themselves. Six states—Vermont, Oregon, Washington State, Montana, New Mexico and California—allow assisted suicide. California just issued a regulation allowing people who have been hospitalized for mental illness to request physician-assisted suicide.

A measure to legalize assisted suicide is on the ballot in November in Colorado. In Michigan, legislation has been proposed for the 2017 session. Compassion & Choices, an organization that advocates assisted suicide, is targeting several states for initiatives in 2017: Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Utah, New York, Delaware, Iowa and Hawaii.

A VOICE OF RESISTANCE. Yvette Alexander cast one of only two council member votes against the suicide proposal.



Tobin to Newark

The Vatican announced on Nov. 7 that Pope Francis has appointed Cardinal-designate Joseph Tobin, 64, as the new archbishop of Newark. At the time of his appointment, the Detroit-born archbishop was the leader of the archdiocese of Indianapolis, which he has served since October 2012. He now moves to the much larger Archdiocese of Newark, with 1.2 million faithful, under the at-times controversial leadership of Archbishop John Myers. Cardinal-designate Tobin speaks Spanish and Italian fluently and for several years exercised his ministry among the Hispanic community in Detroit and Chicago. His period as archbishop in Indianapolis is well known, including his clash with Gov. Mike Pence of Indiana over the archdiocese's decision to help resettle refugees from the Syrian civil war.

Finally a President Is Elected in Lebanon

Cardinal Bechara Rai, patriarch of Maronite Catholics, welcomed the election of a new Lebanese president, ending a two-and-a-half-year power vacuum that had crippled the country's government institutions. The cardinal also expressed his hope for the acceleration of a unified government and "direct action to save Lebanon from political, economic and social suffering." He urged newly elected President Michel Aoun and other politicians to heed the words of the apostle Paul, to forget what lies behind and to forge ahead to the future. Under Lebanon's power-sharing system, the presidential post is reserved for a Maronite Catholic. Aoun, 81, elected on Oct. 31, is the only Christian head of state in the Arab world. Aoun's election follows 45 successive failed attempts by the legislators to elect a president since the term

NEWS BRIEFS

The U.S. bishops were scheduled to concelebrate Mass at **St. Peter Claver Church**, the largest African-American Catholic congregation in Baltimore, on Nov. 14, the first day of their fall general assembly. + In advance of Black Catholic History Month in November, a delegation of black Catholic priests visited the University of Notre Dame's Theodore Hesburgh Library in South Bend on Oct. 24 to entrust the archives there with historical documents about **African-American Catholic priests**, sisters, brothers, deacons, seminarians and laypeople. + Returning from his visit to Sweden on Nov. 1, Pope Francis said the Catholic Church's insistence that it **cannot ordain women** is a teaching likely to last forever. + In a British television documentary scheduled to be broadcast on Nov. 9, Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster in the United Kingdom **expressed regret** for the actions of the church in the 1950s through the 1970s, when about 500,000 British women were pressured to give up their babies for adoption.



NOTRE DAME DELIVERY. Father Ken Taylor, Holy Cross Brother Roy Smith and Father Theodore Parker.

of former President Michel Suleiman ended in May 2014, a reflection of the sectarian power struggle that defines the country's political arena.

Climate Accord Begins

The Paris Agreement to combat climate change went into effect on Nov. 4—a landmark deal to tackle global warming amid growing fears that the world is becoming warmer even faster than scientists expected. So far 96 countries, accounting for just over two-thirds of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, have formally joined the accord, which seeks to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). Secretary General Ban Ki-moon observed the event in a discussion with civil society groups

at U.N. headquarters in New York to hear their concerns and visions for the future. Ban praised the civil groups for mobilizing hundreds of millions of people to back fighting climate change, but warned that the outcome remains uncertain. "We are still in a race against time. We need to transition to a low-emissions and climate-resilient future," Ban said. Scientists praised the speed at which the agreement, signed by over 190 parties last December in Paris, has come into force, saying it underscores a new commitment by the international community to address the problem, which is melting polar ice caps, sending sea levels rising and transforming vast swaths of arable land into desert.

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

Abortion on the Agenda

Few issues have mobilized and polarized the Irish public as much as abortion. By law, abortion is prohibited in the Republic of Ireland, except when the life of the mother is endangered, including the risk of suicide. But in recent years, the call to liberalize Ireland's abortion laws has created significant political pressure, with left-leaning parties like Sinn Féin and Labour favoring a referendum on abortion, a notion resisted by the more conservative parties of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil.

During the election of 2016, the government committed itself to creating a citizens' assembly to make recommendations on key issues of the Constitution, including climate change, fixed-term parliaments and abortion. In October, Taoiseach Enda Kenny, the prime minister of Ireland, opened the assembly in Dublin. It comprises 99 citizens and a chairperson. The assembly members were otherwise randomly selected, but they are intended to represent the Irish electorate in terms of gender, age and location. Their first priority will be the issue of abortion.

At a hotel in Dublin over four weekends, the assembly will be examining what is widely referred to as the Eighth Amendment, which gives effect to Ireland's ban on abortion. It declares that the Irish State "acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right." It was voted into the Constitution by

referendum in 1983 and passed on a significant margin, carried by 67 percent of the electorate.

But the electorate of 2016 is a different generation entirely. One recent poll found that two-thirds of respondents were in favor of repealing the Eighth Amendment to allow for abortion in some cases—incidents of rape or fatal fetal abnormalities, for example. The poll followed a United Nations ruling

The call to liberalize Ireland's abortion laws has created significant political pressure.

in June that Ireland's abortion ban violated the human rights of women.

The following month several government ministers refused to follow the government's instruction to vote against an abortion bill that would have allowed for abortion in the case of fatal abnormalities (under current laws parents must carry a pregnancy full-term). Because of the constitutional protection of the unborn's right to life, the bill was not legally viable, but the ministers' refusal to vote against it was prompted by frustration at the government for not acting on calls for a referendum on the issue.

Recommendations from the assembly, based on the members' views after discussion and submissions from various groups, will be forwarded to the Dáil (Parliament) and Seanad (Senate) for a vote next in 2017. The process has drawn criticism from the pro-choice campaigners, who feel the creation of the assembly represents little more than

a delaying tactic, while many in the pro-life campaign fear the process already has a pre-arranged outcome and that a referendum is inevitable.

Two weeks before the first meeting of the assembly, the Catholic primate of all Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin, described the Eighth Amendment as underpinning the fundamental principle that all human life is sacred. He also pointed to what he described as the contradiction between calls for the repeal of the Eighth Amendment and the increasing urgency for society to care for the planet and its inhabitants.

"To deliberately and intentionally take the life of an innocent person, whatever their state or stage of life, is always gravely morally wrong," Archbishop Martin said, adding that the national focus should be on services and support for women facing unplanned pregnancies.

At the first meeting of the assembly in October, Enda Kenny stressed the importance of allowing all opinions to be heard in an era where people with diverse opinions are often "pitied, ridiculed, virtually hounded or indeed destroyed." Kenny was specifically referring to social media sites, which have provided fertile ground for derision on both sides and have put the participants of the assembly within reach. Addressing the group directly, Kenny said the issues to be discussed were beyond politics; they are hugely challenging, deeply complex and profoundly ethical.

He said, "Your work in addressing and achieving this vital consensus on behalf of us all will affect—indeed profoundly affect—how we live our individual lives and our national life in the Republic of Ireland in the years to come."

The first discussion on abortion begins on Nov. 25.

RHONA TARRANT



Northern Warning

Pilgrims to the Oratory of Saint Joseph on Mount Royal, the highest point in Montreal, must ascend 283 steep steps to reach the church. I spent most of the climb on our visit last month trying to distract my wife from just how out of breath I was, and got lucky when she stopped to read the French sign on the 99 wooden steps located between the two sets of concrete stairs: *Réservé aux pèlerins qui montent à genoux*: “Reserved for pilgrims climbing on their knees.”

It was a reminder that Quebec Catholicism is (or was) of a different flavor than ours; most of us don’t even genuflect in church anymore. I have encountered a similar shrine in the United States once: a replica of the Lourdes grotto in Lowell, Mass., made famous by Jack Kerouac’s description of it as a medieval horror. But Kerouac’s own parents were from Quebec, and the Catholics who built the shrine were Québécois, French-Canadian in language and culture.

On display inside the oratory was the heart of St. André Bessette, C.S.C., the miracle healer of Montreal and the inspiration for the basilica (he credited St. Joseph for the thousands of miracles attributed to him)—but not in an alabaster jar, or in a discreet urn atop a distant altar. No. His heart, preserved in formalin, was floating right there in front of us in a glass reliquary, looking for all the world as if it had a beat or two still left in it. This was a Catholicism from another age, I

thought, one more fervent, devotional and sacramental than our own.

But André Bessette died in 1937. And the Oratory of Saint Joseph was finished in 1966, hardly another age at all; I’d bet it’s newer than your parish church.

What happened?

Once grouped with the Irish and the Polish as a signally devout Catholic population, the citizens of Quebec are now quite the opposite. Weekly church attendance, supposedly an astounding 90 percent in 1960, was pegged in a recent article in *The Economist* at 2 to 4 percent, the lowest of any Western country. And it is worth noting that on our visit to St. Joseph, the steps for pilgrims to climb on their knees were empty, and the only person venerating St. André’s heart was a Haitian woman praying aloud in Creole. And Montreal’s astonishing Notre-Dame Basilica charges visitors an entry fee, a tacit confession that it is more a museum than a place of worship.

It’s easy to blame the Second Vatican Council, which some do. It’s also easy to blame baby boomers for ruining everything, which they did. But the facts in Quebec hint at something else. A study in 2009 claimed that only 9 percent of high schoolers in the province identified as Catholic, suggesting that guitar masses and boomer narcissism are not the only obstacles to renewal.

The most alarming explanation is the one that many Québécois will tell you themselves. Frankly, they were

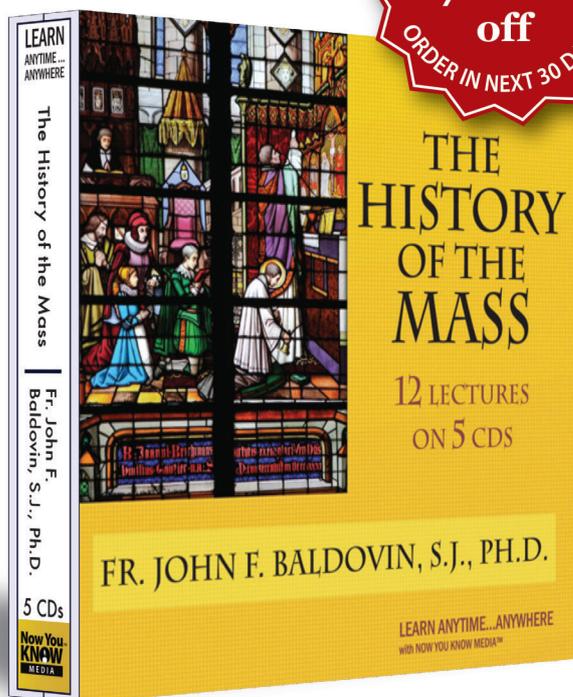
tired of the church: sick of it running every aspect of their lives and weary of the collusion with politicians that allowed the church to remain forever unaccountable. When the time came, during the turbulent days of the 1960s (remember that for Quebec, the cultural touchstone may have been less Woodstock or Vietnam than the Paris riots of 1968, which André Malraux, the French minister of cultural affairs, associated with the “death of God”) to renew their allegiance to a suddenly unsure institution or walk away, they gave a Gallic shrug and left. The same seems to be happening in Ireland today, where sexual abuse is the last straw for another population weary of the all-encompassing reach of the church.

Will it happen here? Is it happening here? Ironically, the church’s weakness in the United States may prove its strength. Prevented by the culture and the state from exerting too much control, it probably has never achieved enough power to inspire that kind of backlash. And, thanks to Pope Francis (may he live forever), the American episcopacy is undergoing a renewal that includes bishops who seem to understand the wounds left by the scandals of sexual abuse and corruption.

Even so, Quebec’s religious history should still provide a powerful *memento mori* to the American church. There is a point when the people in the pews turn their gaze from the altar to the exit.

Quebec
Catholicism
is (or was)
of a different
flavor than
ours.

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



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A Crossroads in Oakland

Black Catholics witness to a changing community.

BY KAYA OAKES

San Pablo Avenue runs through four cities in San Francisco's East Bay. As it courses through Oakland, pockets of urban struggle are revealed: prostitution, drug dealing, derelict buildings and broken-down cars rusting along its curbsides. But it also shows signs of change: the skeletons of condominium towers beginning to rise, dozens of new restaurants and bars, and gutted streets around downtown making way for tech companies being lured across the bay from San Francisco by the possibility of cheaper rents.

At the intersection of San Pablo and Alcatraz Avenues, drivers and pedestrians regularly slow down in front of St. Columba Catholic Church to examine a monument to Oakland's continued grappling with violence and crime. White wooden crosses dot the church's lawn; a sign reads, "These crosses represent those killed by homicide in Oakland this year." Each cross is marked with the victim's name, age and date of death.

In 2004, the Rev. Jayson Landeza, then the pastor at St. Columba, devised this symbolic response to Oakland's high murder rate. Homicide surged along with gang violence and drug dealing in the 1980s and '90s. Despite the increasing gentrification of the community, that violence continues to afflict Oakland. With a population of less than half a million people, Oakland has one of the highest per-capita murder rates in the United States. Father Landeza saw St. Columba's busy location as an opportunity to make a statement about the homicides, which touched many members of his congregation.

An average of more than 100 crosses crowd the patch of lawn by the end of each year, and on Dec. 31 they are removed during an interfaith ceremony. The ritual begins all over again each January with the news of the first shooting death.

A Changing Community

Like the city around it, St. Columba has survived through waves of demographic changes. Founded in 1898, the church originally served the working-class Irish families who lived in West and North Oakland. After the 1906 earthquake, the neighborhood became increasingly populated by Italians,

KAYA OAKES teaches writing at the University of California, Berkeley, and is the author of *The Nones Are Alright*. She lives in her hometown of Oakland, Calif.

but by the 1960s, the black diaspora had brought many African-Americans to the Bay Area. St. Columba had a gospel choir by the 1970s, and in the '80s it began celebrating Black Catholic History Month and Kwanzaa alongside the regular events in the liturgical calendar. The Jesus hanging above its altar is black; the saints depicted on its walls are black; and its statues of Mary and Joseph have been repainted by the Ghanaian artist Anthony Komla to reflect the faces of the congregation. According to St. Columba's current pastor, the Rev. Aidan McAleenan, this is part of an effort to "make the church look like the people."

African-Americans have long been a minority in the U.S. Catholic Church. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, only 3 percent of American Catholics—about two million people—identify as non-Hispanic black. But black Catholicism is a significant part of American Catholic history. As the black Catholic historian and Benedictine monk Cyprian Davis, O.S.B., put it, "the Catholic Church in America has never been a white European church."

Father McAleenan, an immigrant priest from Northern Ireland, arrived as St. Columba's new pastor in 2009. He was intimately familiar with death. Father McAleenan had worked with the first AIDS hospice run by Catholic Charities in San Francisco in the late 1980s, and growing up Catholic in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, he had also witnessed violence firsthand. But as he arrived, the neighborhood around St. Columba was starting to change yet again. Although it has long been known by locals as the Golden Gate neighborhood, around 2012, real estate agents rebranded it as "NOBE," or North Oakland/Berkeley/Emeryville, in an effort to polish its rough reputation. Many longtime residents were displaced as developers bought out and razed houses to build condominiums, biotech campuses and shopping malls. In 1980 black residents made up 46 percent of Oakland's population; in 2016 they make up less than 30 percent.

The streets around St. Columba today sport shiny new condo buildings, a knitting supply shop and a vegan cupcake shop. But Oakland's superficial, hipster-friendly changes have not stemmed the crime that has plagued the city for decades. A parishioner says that recently someone saw a girl being dragged down the street. When the police were called, they discovered three more girls in the house she had been

SUNDAY MOURNING. Crosses in front of St. Columba Catholic Church represent those killed by homicide in Oakland this year.



dragged into, victims of human trafficking. But Oakland's new residents, mostly young, white and affluent, have for the most part taken to the website Next Door, a neighborhood social network, to complain about crime rather than organize with the community to end it. They have also tended to follow their millennial peers in a generational drift away from religion.

An Uplifting Spirit

Were Oakland's new residents to step inside St. Columba on a Sunday morning, they would discover that its Mass is not like Mass at other Catholic churches. As the Rev. Bryan Massingale, a scholar of black Catholicism, told Crux this year, black Catholics were reassured after the Second Vatican Council that they could find forms of worship that maintained their cultural identity. According to Father Massingale, however, most parishes have not incorporated African-American traditions like clapping and praise dancing. Gospel music has even been forbidden in certain places, a reflection of the "normative whiteness" at the heart of the U.S. church.

St. Columba embraces those traditions. Mass begins at 10:30 a.m. with an exuberant gospel hymn, including clapping and swaying in the choir and the congregation. Parishioners are vocal, adding "amen" and applause throughout the readings. The homilies, delivered by Father McAleenan and the assistant priest, Kwame Assenyoh, S.V.D., often rely on a dialogic approach, asking parishioners to respond to ques-

tions or gathering them into small groups to talk. Passing the peace takes 10 to 15 minutes as parishioners circulate to deliver hugs and catch up on news (the bulletin tells newcomers that parishioners are "Roamin' Catholics"). It is a long service—rarely under two hours—but it does not feel long. Margaret Roncalli, the director of faith formation, says that entering Mass at St. Columba means moving in *kairos*, or God's time. The emphasis throughout the prayers of the faithful, the homilies and the announcements is on social justice, love and service.

St. Columba plays a part in the community in more than liturgical ways. A long list of social justice and restorative justice ministries are listed in the church bulletin and often mentioned in the announcements. Members of St. Columba regularly lobby the mayor's office about incarceration, gun violence and housing issues. But it remains a relatively small, poor church in a transitioning neighborhood.

The week of June 13 offered a snapshot of the struggles the parish faces from week to week. Father McAleenan presided over a vigil to mark the one-year anniversary of a balcony collapse in nearby Berkeley that killed five visiting Irish students. The shooting of 49 people in Orlando, Fla., on June 12 deeply affected some of St. Columba's L.G.B.T. parishioners, so the church was offered as a place to pray for an evening. Six funerals were hosted at the parish on top of these events, and it was also announced that Father Assenyoh had been reassigned to a suburban parish. Father McAleenan told the congregation that he had never faced a

PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. COLUMBA CATHOLIC CHURCH

week like this in all his years of ministry.

The following week, about 20 parishioners crowded into the rectory's dining room after Wednesday morning Mass to share coffee, pass around plates of pastries and talk about the parish and their relationships with it. "Most people don't come here for anything other than love and fellowship," an African-American woman said. A white man added: "The African-American spirit drives this church. An uplifting spirit is so important. Solemnity in prayer is great, but that's not all there is." One woman was brought there by a friend; another's daughter had sung in Catholic gospel choirs in Louisiana and wanted to sing in one again.

"I was looking for a place to feel comfortable," an African-American woman said. "I came one Sunday and stayed. A lot of people do that." The black diaspora out of Oakland and into the suburbs means that some parishioners drive over an hour for Mass, seeking something other parishes could not provide. Father McAleenan said that the parish includes people from 100 ZIP codes.

Word of mouth, community ties and the internet have all helped people to find their way to the church. But most of

the parishioners agreed that its reputation and social justice leanings were part of what had drawn them there. A Lutheran woman who works at St. Martin de Porres, the school jointly supported by St. Columba and several other parishes, said

that 30 St. Columba parishioners had recently attended her husband's funeral at a Lutheran church. "I love it here because there's so much openness," she said. "It's not formal. There are discussions. I was at my own church recently and felt it wasn't as expressive."

Father Assenyoh, who is originally from Ghana, said that part of what draws him to St. Columba is that "the church respects the priesthood

of the people. People don't attend Mass, they celebrate. The priest is the presider; everybody is a celebrant." Using African-American spirituality is about recognizing it as "one of the marginalized spiritualities. It's not about excluding. It's about recognizing the different faces of spirituality. It attracts people who like that." When it comes to faith, he said, "people should not be afraid." Father McAleenan added that St. Columba is about "listening to the heart and mind of the church and reflecting that back," which includes an "organic liturgy."

Ms. Roncalli said that the African-American liturgy is about the "whole community claiming the tradition and the articulation of it." Oakland, she added, still identifies as a black city, and the diocese needs to represent that face. Out of suffering, African-Americans "built a spirituality that's the salvation of the church." Even as the neighborhood around it changes, "St. Columba needs to continue to be an African-American parish." As part of the church's renovation two years ago, the Gospel book was enthroned in a cubby in the wall with a spotlight. This is especially significant in a black church because of the emphasis on the word, both in the lecturing and the preaching. That word plays out both within the church and without.

In an interview in 1999 with Catholic News Service, Father Cyprian Davis said: "There is more to being black and Catholic than having nice music. We're an integral part of the church, and we're not negligible." St. Columba's presence in a changing Oakland is a reminder of that and also of the *sensus fidelium*—the "sense of the faithful." Every year, the parish chooses a phrase as its annual theme. This year, that phrase is "We See You." St. Columba sees Oakland for what it is right now: blight and beauty, tradition and change.

Outside the church, pedestrians and cars continue to slow to see those crosses, reminders of lives lost. But right now, at the beginning of summer, after California's first rainy winter in years, those crosses are surrounded by flowers and surging signs of life.

Out of suffering, African-Americans 'built a spirituality that's the salvation of the church.'

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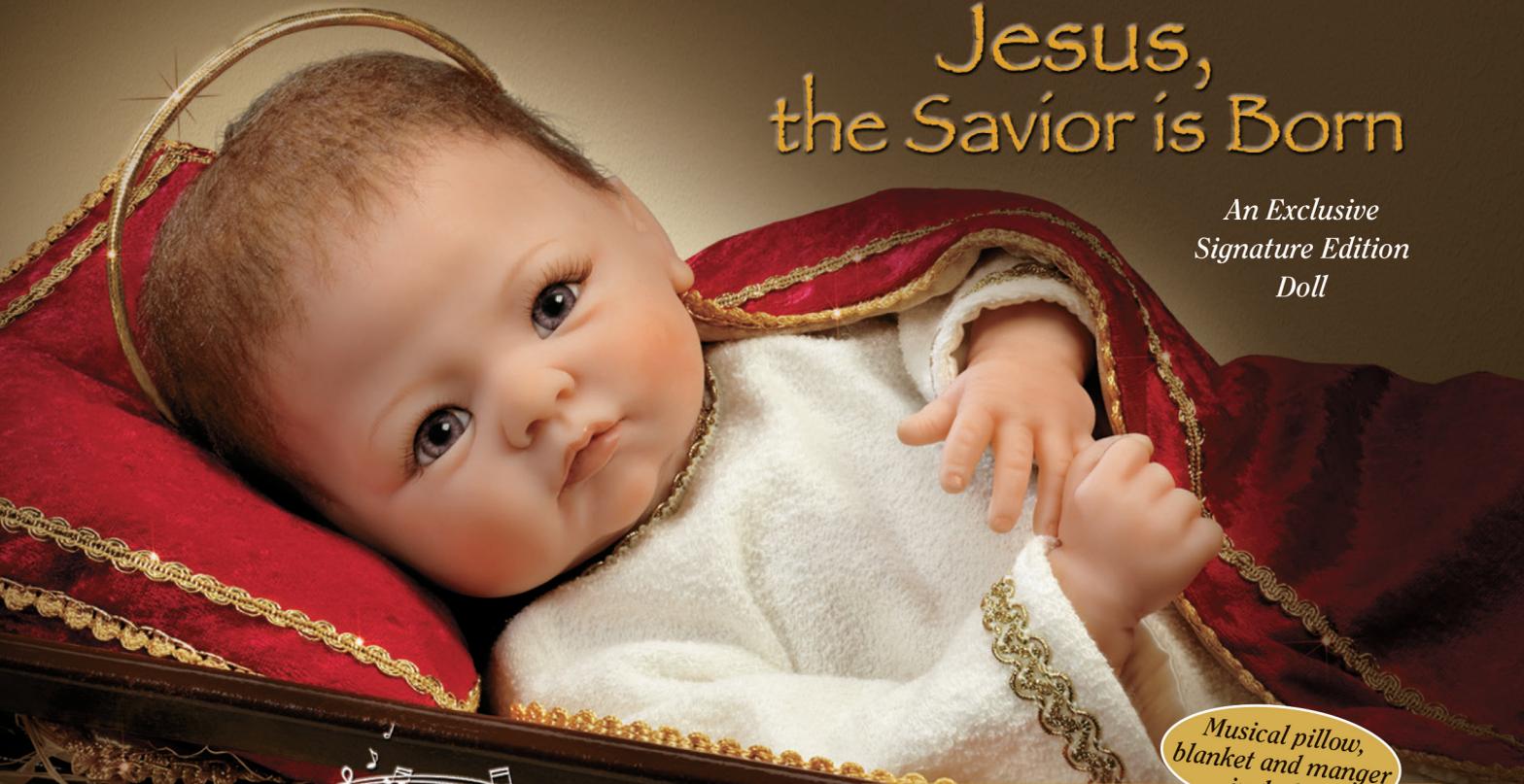
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Still Tinkering With Death

The Eighth Amendment prohibits “cruel and unusual punishment.” In 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court put a moratorium on executions because legal inadequacies permitted arbitrary and capricious imposition of death sentences. States that wanted to reinstitute executions rewrote their laws, and in 1976 the court upheld capital punishment when rendered with enhanced procedural safeguards. Since then, however, the court has considered many death penalty laws and ruled on their constitutionality in the following areas:

Juries and Sentencing. The court’s first decision of the term that began in October 2016 considered impact statements in capital sentencing. The court ruled that family members may testify regarding the character of a crime victim and the loss suffered by the victim’s family, but may not give opinions regarding the appropriate sentence that should be imposed.

Last term the court reaffirmed that juries, rather than judges, must determine every fact necessary for the imposition of a death sentence. When that decision’s case was sent back to the Florida Supreme Court, the state court ruled that death sentences require a unanimous jury verdict. Alabama is now the only state that permits death sentences to be rendered without a unanimous jury determination—but that ruling likely will be overturned, as the U.S. Supreme Court just returned three death penalty cases to Alabama for reconsideration.

Racial Bias. In *Foster v. Chatman* (2016), the court vacated a death sen-

tence rendered by a jury from which black jurors were systematically and notoriously excluded. This term the court will consider whether a defendant received ineffective assistance of counsel when his own attorney proffered racially biased testimony. The explicit bias in these cases is rare, but implicit racial discrimination throughout the criminal justice system is a serious constitutional concern.

Method of Execution. Since the death penalty was reinstated, all states with death penalty laws have adopted lethal injection as their primary method of execution. In 2008 the court upheld the constitutionality of a three-drug cocktail that renders the condemned unconscious and immobile before inducing a heart attack. In recent years, however, manufacturers of the most commonly used execution drugs have stopped selling their products for that purpose, which has forced states to create untried recipes. In *Glossip v. Gross* (2015), the court upheld the use of a substitute drug, midazolam, despite its seeming failure to impede pain in two lengthy executions.

Age and Intellectual Disability. In 2005, the court prohibited the execution of offenders who committed crimes while under the age of 18. In 2002, the court determined that the execution of intellectually disabled offenders is an unconstitutionally excessive punishment. Since then the court has held that states may not use I.Q. scores alone to determine an offender’s intellectual disability and must grant a hearing to offenders who proffer evidence of intellectual disability. This

term the court will review evolving medical standards and decide whether current standards used to determine intellectual disability or those accepted by the profession at the time of sentencing should determine whether an offender is put to death.

Vagaries. Justice Stephen G. Breyer asserts that in the 40 years since the court reinstated the death penalty, states have been unable to apply it in a just and uniform manner, as required by

the Eighth Amendment. The death penalty is meant to punish “the worst of the worst,” as Justice David Souter wrote in 2006, but it does not. Race, gender, the effectiveness of one’s lawyer and geography play a more important role in determining punishment than does the

heinousness of the crime.

Even within states that regularly impose death sentences, the county in which a murder is committed, not the brutality of that murder, is a better indicator of punishment. Added procedural safeguards have resulted in fewer death sentences and fewer executions, but the process is still unreliable and unpredictable. The court recently denied review to a first-time violent offender convicted of a single murder who was sentenced to death because of woefully ineffective assistance of counsel. The attorney advised his client to plead guilty and then failed to submit evidence of obvious mitigating factors. According to Justice Breyer, “to receive that sentence...is the equivalent of being struck by lightning.” It is cruel and unusual and unconstitutional.

The process
is still
unreliable
and
unpredictable.

ELLEN K. BOEGEL

ELLEN K. BOEGEL, who teaches legal studies at St. John’s University in New York, clerked for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.



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Not Settling for Less

The audacity and practice of Christian hope

BY PAUL J. WADELL

A few years ago, I attended a four-day conference on the theological virtues. The conference included numerous talks on faith and no shortage of presentations on charity, but there was only one offering on hope, and it almost did not happen. None of the presenters had thought to talk about hope. Not surprisingly, the planning committee realized you could not have a four-day conference on the theological virtues but deal with only two of them, so a member of the committee volunteered to share a few thoughts about hope. Still, I wondered, why didn't it occur to anyone that hope was worth talking about?

Hope has been called the forgotten virtue of our time. Although we live in an era of considerable technological and scientific achievements, it may also be an age of diminished hope or, perhaps more accurately, misdirected hope, because it is tempting to replace the theological virtue of hope with flimsy substitutes that cannot possibly give us what our souls ultimately need. We also live in an era marked by violence, which leads to a barrage of images sent worldwide that show citizens fighting police, children in Syria bloodied by war, refugee children washed up on a beach in Greece. These can threaten hope. But perhaps what threatens hope even more today are not these tragedies and calamities but the soft and subtle despair we settle into when we slip into ways of living that rob us of the exalted good God wants for us. The problem is not that we hope for too much, but that we have learned to settle for so little. We have caused the horizons of hope to shrink. We have lost sight of hope's transcendent dimension because we have forgotten the incomparable promise to which hope always beckons.

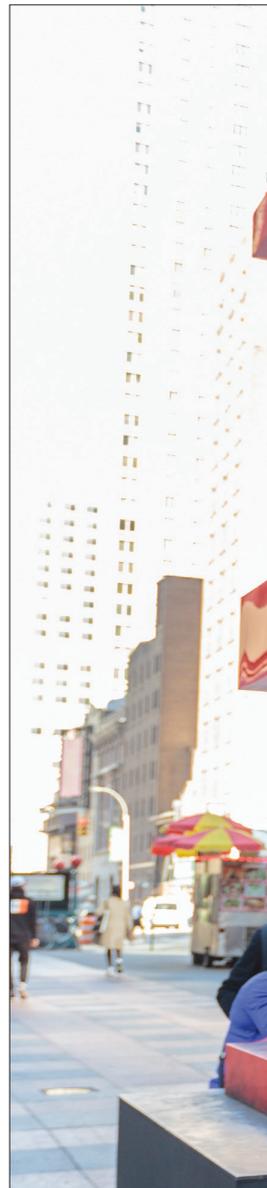
The Shape of Christian Hope

When writing about hope, St. Thomas Aquinas noted that hope is born from the desire for something good that is "difficult but possible to attain." There is no need for hope if we can easily get what we want, but neither is there any reason to hope when what we desire is completely beyond our grasp. But Aquinas also observed that there are far more reasons to be hopeful "when we have friends to rely on" (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 17, 8). If the object of our hopes can extend

no further than what we might be able to secure for ourselves, then our hopes will necessarily be rather cautious and limited. But if there are people who not only love us and care for us and want what is best for us but will also help us achieve it, then our hopes can be much more daring and expansive. We do not hope alone, we hope together. Hope requires companions, people who want our good and who help us along our way.

Christian hope should never be puny or timid, because when Aquinas spoke of help from others and friends we can rely on, who he really had in mind was God. Like any friend, God desires our happiness and seeks what is best for us, but the good that God wants for us is the richest and most fulfilling of all, namely God and everlasting life with God. And, like any friend, God accompanies us, blesses us, steadies and encourages us so that the absolutely best thing we could ever hope for will be ours. This is why hope is not something we achieve through hard work, grit and determination. Hope is inescapably a gift. Hope is the gift God bestows on us so that we can turn our lives to God, seek God, grow in the love and goodness of God and someday know the unbroken beatitude that comes from living in perfect communion with God. If hope arises from the desire for something good, then Christian hope is naturally audacious because Christian hope reaches for an unsurpassable good we already, if imperfectly, possess: the very life, love, goodness and joy of God. Christianity infinitely expands the horizon of hope because, as the whole of salvation history testifies, the scope of Christian hope is determined not by our own power or resources or ingenuity but by God's inexhaustible love and goodness. Christians should never be anything other than bold and daring with hope because they know that God is both the object of our hope and the means to attain it.

In "Saved in Hope" ("Spe Salvi"), his



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2007 encyclical on hope, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, “The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life” (No. 2). These words remind us that hope is not a fleeting emotion, much less an attitude that fades when life is hard, but a resilient stance toward life marked by trust, confidence and perseverance. Hope empowers us to live differently because a Christian understanding of hope is rooted in the unshakable conviction that God loves us and wants our good, a fact memorably exclaimed by Paul’s declaration in Romans: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (8:31). To live with hope is to take those words to heart and to allow that knowledge to change our lives in creative and surprising ways.

To live in hope is to want nothing less for ourselves than what God wants for us. If that were the fundamental desire of our lives, what would change? How would we be resurrected? At the very least, it would free us from the enervat-

ing habit of worrying excessively about ourselves and unbind us from the joyless pastime of always comparing our status and achievements with another’s. Because God is for us and wants our good, we do not have to be anxious and fearful, calculating and cautious. We have time to love our neighbors. We have time to be merciful and compassionate, patient and generous. We have time to listen and to be present, time to encourage and support, because we know, thanks to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, that what God’s love envisions for us will be fulfilled. Hope frees us from the intolerable burden of thinking that so much depends on us that we become oblivious to the blessings around us, and especially to how each day God calls us out of ourselves in order to draw others more fully to life through our kindness and goodness. For Christians, hope is a new and abundantly promising way of life characterized by joy and thanksgiving, service and generosity, hospitality and celebration and even the wonderful freedom to fail.



The Waning of Hope

The greatness of our hope will always be in proportion to the greatness of the good on which we have set our lives. But that’s the problem. Hope is imperiled not so much by the misfortunes, struggles and sometimes inconsolable losses that come our way because, as a virtue, the very nature of hope is to steady and strengthen us during those moments lest they defeat us. Rather, hope erodes when we no longer aspire to something sufficiently good enough—something sufficiently blessed and promising—to sustain us in the life that God wants for us. Or, as David Elliot observes, hope diminishes—and eventually disappears—when we lose sight of who we are and where we are going. Who are we? We are pilgrims on a journey to God, making our way to God and helping others do so as well. Where are we going? We are heading to that great feast that Jesus called the reign of God, the heavenly banquet where we rejoice together in the presence of God and love one another as we do so. Hope guides us on the journey by keeping us focused on the feast. That’s what is different about Christian hope. Christian hope fixes our sight on the only thing that can ever truly complete us, fulfill us and bring peace to our restless hearts, so that we do not settle for anything less than what God wants to offer us. Christian hope summons us to

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look up and out lest we lose sight of the feast.

If we live in a time of diminished hope, it may be because we have lost this sense of ourselves as wayfarers, as pilgrims in the world making our way to God. Instead of moving forward, we settle in and eventually do not think of ourselves as going anywhere at all. This is not to deny the genuine blessedness of life in the world or the goodness that shines forth in the gifts of God's creation; indeed, hope provides the moral and spiritual vision that enables us to see, appreciate and enjoy everything's distinctive value. With hope, we are much more likely to reverence another thing's existence than exploit it. Still, it is one thing to contemplate the beauty and goodness that surrounds us, but another thing to look no further. Hope keeps us from being so immersed in the good things of this world that we forget who we really are, a people on the move, pilgrims who are called not to stay put but to move toward the feast. Most of all, hope prevents us from becoming so comfortable with the pleasures of life that the possibility of a journey never even occurs to us.

Early Christian writers maintained that we are most vulnerable to despair not when everything suddenly begins to go wrong in our lives but when we allow ourselves to be lured away from what is best. It is not, they suggested, the reality of evil that makes us most susceptible to despair, but letting our hearts be captured by things whose goodness is undeniably real but also inherently limited. They named this turning away from God to lesser goods the vice of worldliness. The language of worldliness may seem quaint and even strange to us, but the reality of worldliness surely is not. If hope is a matter of cleaving to God, in the grip of worldliness we cleave to wealth and possessions, pleasures and comforts, status and honor, power and influence, or else the endless trivialities with which our culture encourages us to fill our lives. Every vice damages. What makes worldliness particularly dangerous is that when cultivating it rather than hope we become so enamored of the attractions of this world that we shut the door on what is truly worth the gift of our lives. We narrow and reduce the horizon of our hope in such a way that we rob ourselves of hope's great promise. What really matters no longer interests us, not because we have consciously rejected it but because we have grown oblivious to it. Habituated in worldliness, we may be comfortable and even quite successful, but our days are marked by the soft despair, of which we may not even be aware, that is the inescapable result of no longer caring about who God wants us to be and who we have it in us to be: friends of God who are

summoned to share in the life and happiness of God.

Cultivating and Practicing Hope

Hope is God's gift to us. But because it is a virtue, it is a gift that has to be cultivated, nurtured and practiced lest it shrivel and die. How can we strengthen the hope that God has entrusted to us? How can we be practitioners of hope, even living sacraments of hope, in a world that both hungers for it and doubts its existence? There are many ways to enkindle hope, but here are three to consider.

First, hope is nurtured and strengthened through the Eucharist, because every time we gather for worship we are reminded of who we are, what we are about and where we are going. At the Eucharist we remember that we, thanks to our baptism, have been incorporated into the story of God, a story that is much more promising and blessed than anything we could offer ourselves. In light of the Eucharist, we recognize that hope dwindles when we replace the story of God that came to us in Israel and in Jesus, a story of boundless love and unbroken faithfulness, with lesser stories, or else with the cynicism that holds there is no story at all. If hope is weakened when we shut the door on higher things, the Eucharist forms us into people who will not allow something other than God to be the object of their hope.

Second, the Eucharist is crucial for nurturing hope because the Eucharist forms us into people of gratitude, people whose stance towards life is marked by thanksgiving and praise. The Eucharist can rightly be described as a great sacrament of hope because there we gather to remember God's goodness to us and to acknowledge that despite the struggles and hardships and sorrows and difficulties of life, despite the ills we note in our cities and in our world, life remains a blessing and a gift. Gratitude fosters hope because it draws us out of ourselves and opens our eyes to see the beauty and goodness of life, a beauty and goodness that is always there, but that we easily overlook. Gratitude and hope are closely intertwined because both hinge on learning to look for what is there instead of what is missing. Gratitude enkindles hope because grateful people notice; they see what others overlook. Gratitude is a reliable path to hope because with gratitude we realize that even though life doesn't always give us what we want, it does bless us with unexpected goods and pleasures.

Third, hope grows deeper in us when we commit to being ministers of hope to others. Hope grows when it is shared, it

**‘Hope has been called
the forgotten virtue of
our time.’**

blooms when it is given away. This is why Christian hope must be understood as both a gift and a calling. Because God has given us hope, we are called to bless others with hope, especially those who are struggling, those whose lives are bereft of meaning or any sense of purpose or those who for too long have felt estranged from anything promising. It is important to stress this lest we think that hope focuses so much on the promises of the next life that it distracts us from the work that needs to be done in this life. Rather, it is precisely because we are confident of the hope God holds out for us that we can attend to the needs of others and do what we can to work for the world's healing. Far from allowing us to turn our backs on the world, hope commissions us to bring God's love, mercy, justice and compassion to life in the world. Hope gives us work to do.

In "Saved in Hope," Pope Benedict XVI said, "All serious and upright human conduct is hope in action" (No. 35). This is why we can be ministers of hope every day in the ordinary circumstances of our lives. We minister hope through acts of kindness and attentiveness. We minister hope when we help people find healing for hurts that will not go away and for memories that still haunt them. We minister hope when we affirm the goodness in a person that they may not yet see in themselves. We minister hope when we ask another how she is doing and take time to listen to what she says. We minister hope when we forgive and allow ourselves to be forgiven. We minister hope when love is called forth from us and we gladly give it away. And we especially minister hope when we affirm the dignity of every person who passes in and out of our lives, celebrate their existence and let them know how poorer the world would be without them. As Pope Benedict wrote near the end of "Saved in Hope": "It is never too late to touch the heart of another, nor is it ever in vain" (No. 48). Hope arises, both in us and in others, when that becomes a regular practice of our lives. **A**

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Steps to Hanoi

Are Vietnam and the Holy See close to establishing diplomatic relations? This question is being asked after a joint working group established in 2009, whose goal is the establishment of such relations, met for the sixth time on Oct. 24 through Oct. 26 in the Vatican. It will meet again in Hanoi next year.

The meeting attracted little attention because the media is focused on a possible Sino-Vatican breakthrough agreement regarding the appointment of bishops and related matters, including whether Pope Francis will pardon China's eight illegitimate bishops and Beijing will recognize some 30 underground church bishops.

Diplomatic relations are not on the agenda of the secretive talks with China, whereas Vietnam and the Holy See set up their working group with the aim of reaching that goal.

Relations between the Holy See and Vietnam are moving ahead in a positive way, notwithstanding some tensions in church-state relations at the local level in this land of 91 million people, six million of whom are Catholic. The church enjoys religious freedom, though sometimes problems surface regarding questions of justice, including requests for the return of confiscated church properties.

In the October press communique, the joint working group "acknowledged the progress," citing "regular contacts and consultations, the exchange of high level delegations" and "frequent pastoral visits" to Vietnam by the nonresident

papal envoy. These are only part of a broader positive relationship that is worth recalling.

When the Communists won control of Vietnam on April 30, 1975, they broke diplomatic relations with the Holy See, but they never persecuted the Catholic Church as China did. They always allowed a degree of religious liberty, which has increased notably in recent decades with high-level visits from Vietnam to the Vatican and vice versa, beginning in 1990 when the Vatican's Cardinal Roger Etchegaray visited Vietnam.

Subsequently, both sides reached an important agreement regarding the appointment of bishops that has worked well. Vietnam's bishops can travel freely to the Vatican, and the Holy See can send top officials to Vietnam without problems.

A significant breakthrough came in January 2007, when Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung of Vietnam visited Pope Benedict XVI. He was the first Vietnamese leader to come to Rome since 1975. That led to the setting up of the joint working group. In December 2009, Vietnam's president, Nguyen Minh Triet, also visited the pope; and in June 2010, the working group agreed that "in order to deepen relations between the Holy See and Vietnam" and "between the Holy See and the local Catholic church" as "a first step, a non-resident representative of the Holy See for Vietnam will be appointed by the Pope." Afterward, Msgr. Ettore Balestrero, head of the Holy See's delegation, told me: "It is a first step on the road to diplomatic relations, others will

follow. It is a historic step."

Since then many positive things have happened, three especially noteworthy: The papal envoy has visited all 27 dioceses, the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference held its plenary assembly in Vietnam in December 2012, and the country's first Catholic university opened in September 2016.

The Holy See would like this relationship developed through full diplomatic relations and, in the October communique of the working group, it "reaffirmed that Pope Francis has a keen interest in the development of Viet Nam–Holy See relations."

Why, then, has Vietnam hesitated? Authoritative sources suggest three main reasons. First, there are "local irritants" that do not help.

Some Catholic communities press local authorities to return confiscated church properties or challenge them on questions relating to justice, freedom of speech and other issues, provoking negative responses. Second, there is the question whether it is convenient for Vietnam to establish relations now. Linked to this is, perhaps, the decisive reason: China. Vietnam has considered China its big brother and may fear that if it were to move first in establishing diplomatic relations with the Holy See, this could upset Beijing and those on the central committee of Vietnam's Communist Party who are close to the Chinese. Consequently, diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the Holy See are not imminent.

The Holy See can send top officials to Vietnam without problems.

GERARD O'CONNELL

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A Shrine That Endures

Our Lady of the Gates of Dawn

BY PAUL JASKUNAS

For the past four months I have lived next door to a holy shrine, a chapel built into a medieval gatehouse. The structure is the last surviving gate in the defensive wall that once ringed the city of Vilnius, Lithuania. An icon of the Virgin Mary hangs within, facing the Old Town through a large arched window over the gateway. The painting has been adorned in a protective casement of golden-hued silver that makes her resplendent at all hours, but especially at night, when light is cast on her surface and she shines for all in the street to see.

Our Lady of the Gates of Dawn, as the painting is known, is said to have protected the city from harm, healed the sick and comforted the wretched for three long centuries. It remains a potent symbol of mercy for Catholics in the region. In this Holy Year of Mercy, named by Pope Francis, the icon is inspiring an outpouring of reverence. People pray before the icon by the hundreds each month, experiencing private miracles that they commemorate with votive offerings, tiny silver medallions shaped like hearts, legs, arms and eyes. Many of these medallions have been affixed to plaques on the walls of the small chapel, testifying to the painting's wonder-working powers.

In all seasons, tour buses deposit pilgrims outside the gate. Most are

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from Eastern Europe, but in summer we are deluged by Chinese tourists as well; they throng below the gate, dutifully recording images with phones and cameras held aloft. With these rich visitors come beggars, who establish strategic positions just under the gate's archway and appeal for spare change in Polish, Lithuanian, Russian and English.

My morning routine takes me through the gate, past these beggars,

into the heart of Vilnius, a maze of streets lined with medieval and Renaissance buildings. Many fellow residents are likewise heading to work at this hour, and not a few turn to look up at the icon and make the sign of the cross before moving on. Some passersby go to the trouble of visiting the chapel in person. To do this, they enter a door in a wall behind St. Theresa's, the Baroque church that stands adjacent to the gate. The door leads to

a steep flight of stairs, at the base of which hangs a crucified Jesus. Some visitors pause here to kiss and caress the statue's feet. From his shins to his toes, the enamel has been worn, the plaster made pale with so much touching and kissing.

The stairs were previously of a soft stone made concave by heavy use, but the passage to the chapel has been modernized with a new flight of marble stairs and improved lighting. Years ago, before these renovations were completed, one could see elderly women ascending the stairs on their knees, with rosaries in their hands. This spectacle is rarer now.

The stairs bring visitors to the entrance of the chapel in the gatehouse over the street. Because of the large windows, it is a well-lit room. In the morning I've found here a dozen or two elderly women reciting the rosary in Lithuanian. Most of them kneel on the tiled floor or on a wooden kneeler surrounding the altar on three sides. They kneel a long time with faces intent on prayer, eyes closed. As the chapel is small and often crowded, visitors may have to step over other penitents to find a spot along the wall.

Those entering the chapel, I've noticed, often hesitate to look forthrightly at the icon. The Virgin looms large in this narrow space. The worshiper kneels or stands in intimate proximity to her grand and shining surface. Though known as Mother of Mercy, she can instill a certain discomfort.

But eventually visitors do look, and this is what they see: the Virgin encased in silver, her head slightly tilted, eyes closed, arms crossed at the wrists before her chest. Of the painting, only the hands and face are visible, and these are an earthy shade of brown. Her downcast eyes project serenity, or perhaps sorrow. The fingers seem crudely rendered because of the overlay of the casement, fashioned in the Byzantine

style. In this image, Mary has no child. She seems neither young nor old but somehow outside of time. The trauma of her son's life has passed; this is not Mary, but the Queen of Heaven, already assumed into heaven. She wears not one but two crowns adorned with glass gems, and silvery spindles are arrayed in an aureole around her head. In the 19th century, the Virgin received one further adornment—a crescent of silver that stands just in front of the image, curving upward, forming a rounded and extravagant boundary.

After taking in this richness of ornament, the viewer will return to gaze

I gave up trying to pray and simply looked at the icon. Only then did I begin to experience something like reverence.

at the dark face, which might be read as merciful—if, that is, an expression can impart mercy. According to the logic of iconography, it can. Grace, mercy, divine love may flow from an aesthetic surface properly viewed; the image of Mary rendered in paint on oak boards does not merely represent mercy but provides access to it for the prayerful.

As with many European shrines, a variety of tales have attached themselves to the icon, but no singular event seems to have birthed the tradition of the Gates of Dawn. Its status is owed to a gradual accretion of meaning throughout history. One might argue that the icon's capacity to work wonders preceded its existence, in that it was commissioned by the governor of Vilnius for the purpose of protecting the city, as were other icons placed within city gates and walls.

Most of the tales associated with the icon concern the city's vulnerability. In 1702, after the Swedish army

occupied Vilnius and prohibited locals from worshiping the icon, the Virgin's powers caused the tremendous iron grate below to fall and crush four Swedish soldiers warming themselves by a fire. Soon thereafter, local forces rallied against the invaders and liberated the city.

A similar story is told concerning a Russian invasion six years later; when a conniving soldier attempted to steal the icon's vestments, he was hurled against the chapel wall and killed. Thereafter, the invading army treated the Lady with respect. And in 1711, on the day of Pentecost, a fire broke out in the city and threatened St. Theresa's, but two quick-thinking monks carried the Virgin into the church; the inferno retreated and the structure was saved.

Yet for all the icon's powers, Vilnius would fall repeatedly to foreign forces in the modern era. The once vast Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in which Vilnius had been a seat of power, was erased from the map in the 1790s, its lands divided among Russia, Prussia and Austria. For the next century Vilnius would belong to the Tsar and in the 1900s, five distinct nations would claim the city: the Russian Empire, Poland, Germany, the Soviet Union and independent Lithuania. Throughout this period, devotion to the shrine would be colored by nationalist sentiments, political yearnings and ethnic loyalties. Though the Soviet regime shuttered many of the capital's churches, it allowed the Gates of Dawn to remain open, an acknowledgment of the passions the shrine inspired. Thus, the Virgin looked down 25 years ago as the occupying Soviet forces gave up and left Lithuania independent.

Today Lithuania exists within the European Union, a secular political entity. Many of the visitors are not Catholic or even Christian. Yet unlike

better-known shrines that have become chiefly tourist sensations, the Gates of Dawn remains a site of fervent yet obscure devotion. In mid-November every year, the icon's feast day is celebrated with eight days of Masses and concerts that attract thousands into the chapel and neighboring church. Souvenir stands and shops lining the street do brisk business selling icons, rosaries and trinkets to the faithful. Each morning of that week, St. Theresa's overflows, and the chapel in the gate is brightly lit and full of worshipers late into the night.

Certain Catholics refer to Vilnius as the City of Divine Mercy, even though a decidedly merciless genocide took place here not long ago. From 1941 to 1943, nearly all the city's approximately 40,000 Jews were killed by Nazi soldiers and local collaborators. The systematic slaughter of the Vilna Jews makes a cruel irony of the appellation. The title gained currency only after the war, arising not from claims about the citizenry's moral character, but from a series of visions experienced by a Polish mystic.

From 1933 to 1936, the nun Helena Kowalska was stationed in Vilnius, where she claimed to have had a series of encounters with an angel, Mary and Jesus. While she was praying in the Gates of Dawn, the icon of the Virgin came alive and told her to submit unquestioningly to God, "like a little child." In another vision, Jesus instructed her to create a painting of "divine mercy" as it had been revealed to her in visions. The nun thus collaborated with a local artist to render an image of divine mercy that hangs today in another Vilnius church. It features a barefoot Jesus looking into the eyes of the viewer, a hand held to his heart, from which rays of soft, colored light shine forth.

When the painting was unveiled in the Gates of Dawn chapel in 1936, Sister Kowalska saw this image, too,

come alive. Jesus' hand made the sign of the cross over those in the chapel. Before the nun died of tuberculosis two years later at the age of 33, she would be credited with the founding of a new order of nuns and a tradition of devotion to mercy that is still practiced today. Pilgrims honor her memory by taking trips to her former convent, reading her spiritual diary and repeating a prayer "given" to her by Jesus called the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

St. John Paul II canonized Sister Kowalska as St. Faustina in 2000. As

low. Otherwise, the chapel was silent.

Perhaps because I'd heard that many ill people had been relieved of suffering after visiting the icon, I prayed for my mother, who for decades has been afflicted by rheumatoid arthritis. But my prayer felt weak because of my self-consciousness and general skepticism. I soon gave up trying to pray and simply looked at the icon. Only then did I begin to experience something like reverence.

Here was an existential proposition, an image of a storied life defined by



The Gate of Dawn in Vilnius, Lithuania

with many saints, at the center of her legacy are works of art: the icon of the Virgin and the painting of divine mercy. In both cases, she experienced the aesthetic objects not as representations, second-order signs or imitations of the real but as embodiments of divine agency.

When I visited the icon of the Virgin this winter, I expected no miracles, but I did kneel before it. I felt rather self-conscious, being the youngest person in the room, an American and not nearly as devout as the people around me. An old woman beside me murmured prayers in a rhythmic, scarcely audible hum. The windows were open, a breeze coming through, and we could all hear soft voices from the street be-

godliness, by its intimate involvement with the divine. What could one say to, or alongside of, this face? What to make of so much meaningfulness, this crowding of signs calling out to be read? The flowers in the Virgin's silver gown signified her inner garden, the beauty of the soul; the crowns marked her status as heaven's queen; votive offerings symbolized healed arms and hearts. One could participate in the tradition of this icon without embracing the theology surrounding it. In my case, simply being there summoned appreciation for the entire aesthetic project that is the Gates of Dawn.

To think of such a place as an "aesthetic project" might seem to discount the faith that gave rise to it. But the

faith itself is inseparable from story and image, from the New Testament narratives and all the art they inspired. Images have always embodied and enacted what they purport to represent. They can exist independently of what they refer to; we encounter them, if we are awake to their potential, as dynamic objects asserting new realities. The icon of Mary in Vilnius has its own life. The petitioning goes on every day, the kneeling and yearning before the image. Here form and content are one; the icon, made of boards, paint and silver, substantiates the faith one places in its power. The system of exchange continuously nourishes itself, generating acts of homage that infiltrate civic life.

This morning as I passed through the gate I closely observed the motions of those around me. A middle-aged, dark-haired woman in drab clothing turned to glance at the icon and make the sign of the cross with a worried look. Another paused, her back to the

chapel as if uncertain whether to turn or not. She did turn and likewise made the sign. Finally, a third woman walked by; she hesitated and threw a glance over her shoulder at the Virgin before walking away. As for me, I made no backward glance, no sign of the cross. And though I know the image is only a painting and has no eyes with which to see, I felt as if the icon were watching me walk away. But I was too self-important or merely self-conscious to return her regard. I recalled Lot's wife, who knew she must not look back at the burning city but could not resist and was at once turned to a pillar of salt. Laying eyes upon divine power has always been risky.

The Mother of Mercy ostensibly offers refuge from danger and harm, as mothers are supposed to do. She gives material form to our desire to see the metaphysical. To regard the icon, the chapel and the entire tradition embedded within it is to participate in a collective yearning. Without diminishing

it, one can think of Catholicism as a series of aesthetic gestures and forms, an abiding involvement in image, word and song. The Gospel of John begins with this mysterious proclamation: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

As I now live next door to the gatehouse during my sabbatical, I pass beneath the icon several times a day. I have developed a habit of looking at it when I return home in the evenings. Mary is always shining in her window, watching over the street below. I have grown grateful for this rarefied presence, respectful and inclined toward pious feelings when I pass. I have even caught myself speaking inwardly to the icon, muted utterances of gratitude for the life I am leading. If you were to ask me on such evenings if I believe in the Virgin Mary, I would say yes, I believe in her, meaning the icon itself in all its thing-ness and contingency. Faith begins with image. A

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PORTRAITS OF AMERICA

'Loving' and 'Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk'

Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, Malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And, but for the interference with his arrangement, there would be no cause for such [interracial] marriage[s]. The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix.”

Thus spake Leon Bazile, the Virginia trial judge who in late 1958 set out to uphold a pair of unfortunate American traditions: Racial segregation and the invocation of God to justify it. Bazile’s ruling was meant to reaffirm a Virginia law against miscegenation and put asunder what the Lord (and a justice of the peace) had joined together. What Bazile did, in effect, was open the door to the 1967 Supreme Court decision that would change the

meaning of marriage in America.

Loving, the new film from Jeff Nichols (“Mud,” “Take Shelter”) has a dream of a title; it names the principal characters as well as the crime they committed. On June 2, 1958, Richard Loving and Mildred Jeter, with Mildred pregnant, got married in Washington, D.C., thus avoiding Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act of 1924. In the film, Richard (Joel Edgerton) is well aware of what they are doing and the law they are evading; Mildred not

quite. On July 14, at around 2 a.m., police break down their doors and roust the couple from the marital bed. “I’m his wife,” Mildred tells an officer. The officer replies, “Not here you’re not.”

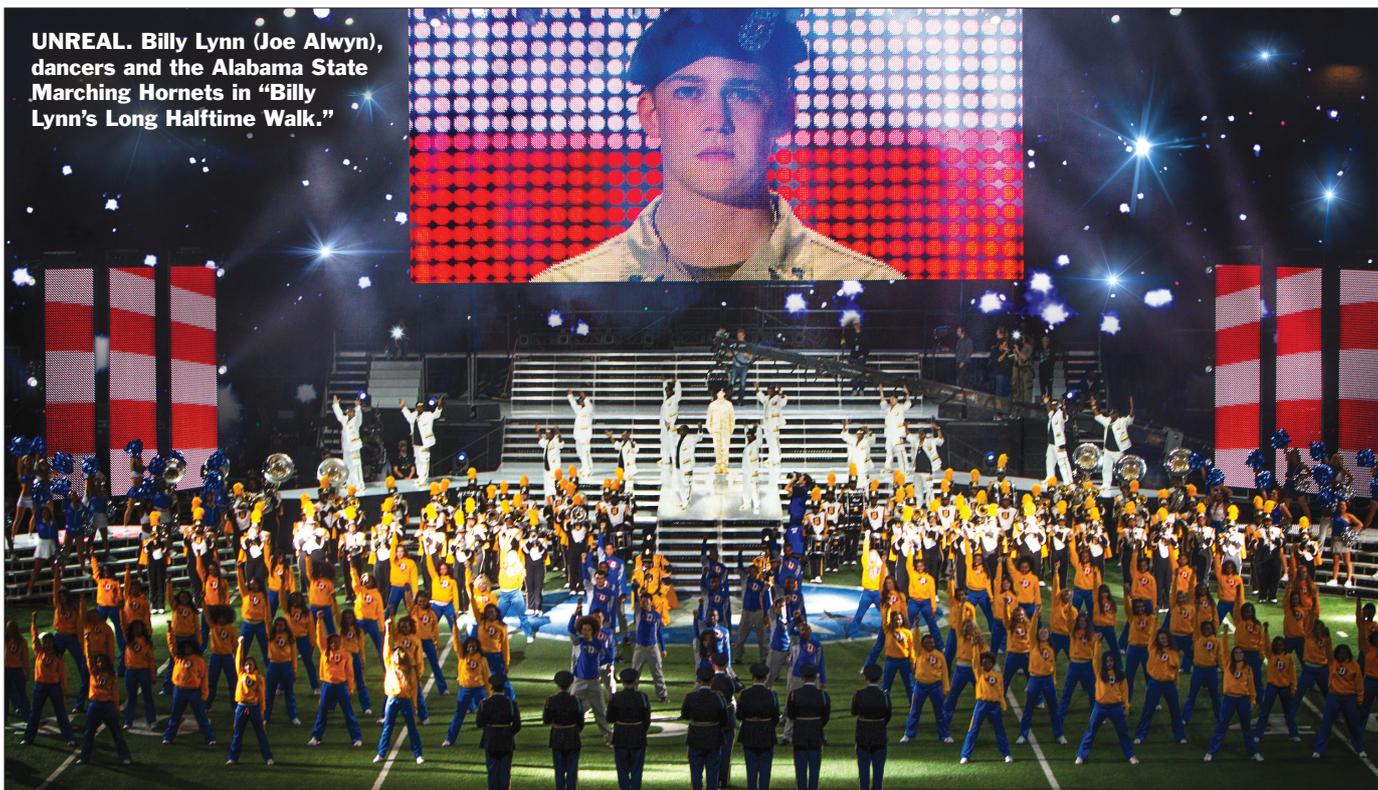
Loving v. Virginia is a great story in which the Supreme Court ruled, by a rather quaint 9-0 decision, that miscegenation laws were unconstitutional and marriage an inherent right. But does it make for a great movie? Not really. The Lovings always seemed like wonderful people, country people—simple, basic and bewildered as much as by the attention they got as by the unfairness of the law. But outside of the arrest and the court battles to come, their lives were not exactly electrifying. They moved to Washington, D.C.,



CRIMES OF THE HEART. Joel Edgerton, second from left, as Richard and Ruth Negga, right, as Mildred in Jeff Nichols’s “Loving.”

PHOTO: FOCUS FEATURES/BEN ROTHSTEIN

UNREAL. Billy Lynn (Joe Alwyn), dancers and the Alabama State Marching Hornets in “Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk.”



after being banished from Virginia. Richard worked as a carpenter/mason at construction jobs in and around the city. One of Nichols's recurring motifs is of Richard applying concrete to brick and block in a process, intended to mirror the courts—that is, painstaking and slow. The couple had three children. One gets hit by a car, and though he is only hurt, it makes Mildred long even more for rural Virginia, to which the family returns and where they live secretly. But once the outrage and indignities of their arrest and jailing have come to pass, the film spends a lot of time on their daily lives, and the portrayal of their day-to-day existence is not as compelling.

“Loving” aims for maximum indignation, as well as sentiment. Ruth Negga looks quite a bit like the real Mildred Loving and captures the same kind of quiet sweetness one sees in the period footage and interviews done with the couple back when they suddenly became newsworthy. (Whether Mildred's quiet charm was a byproduct of an atmosphere of racial fear is something the viewer can decide.) The

movie's evocation of a late-1950s and early-'60s South feels authentic; the people even look as if they belong in the time being portrayed, which is not always the case with period movies.

Edgerton is more of a problem and a puzzle. His portrayal of Richard Loving is physically right. He wears the same blond buzz-cut; he has a similarly muscular bearing. He moves like a man tripping over his own humility. But Edgerton eschews the obvious intelligence of the Loving we see in Nancy Biurski's recent documentary, “The Loving Story,” for instance (a must for those interested in the real case), in favor of something almost primal. The real Loving seems to have been retiring, yes; but he displays nothing like the near-pathological reticence of Edgerton's character, who bears a too-striking similarity to Boo Radley. Mouth agape, shoulders sloped, the Loving delivered in “Loving” is a product of Acting with a capital A, the kind of thing that sucks the air out of a movie, and without much of an emotional payoff.

This is not, of course, meant to

downplay the importance of what the Lovings meant to the United States or race relations or same-sex marriage. Nor is it to deny the many moving moments in the film. But the inertia is made more glaring when something exciting actually happens, like Michael Shannon's arrival as the Life magazine photographer Grey Villet, who elevates the mood of the whole movie and even gets Richard Loving to laugh, or the arrival on the scene of the lawyers Bernard Cohen of the American Civil Liberties Union (played by Nick Kroll) and his colleague-to-be Phil Hirschkop (Jon Bass), who would eventually argue the Loving case before the Supreme Court. Kroll, in particular, delivers a weird, twitchy performance—but not very far, to be honest, from the Cohen we see in news clips. The two of them are very alive and energized by their pending landmark case. Their unabashed careerism makes them both funny and human.

“Loving” is film about a lot of things, including two simple people causing violent eruptions across the social and legal landscapes. It is a portrait of

America at a particular time and place. So is **Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk**, which intends to cause a fierce revolution in the way we see movies. Directed by one of our finest filmmakers, Ang Lee ("The Ice Storm," "Lust, Caution," "Sense and Sensibility"), it is based on the novel by Ben Fountain about a hero soldier (Joe Alwyn), who returns from Iraq in the mid-2000s and is thrust into a maelstrom of media exploitation, deal-making, clueless expressions of sympathy and the empty echo of "Thank you for your service." Bravo Company's tour of celebrity duty culminates at a Dallas Cowboys game on Thanksgiving, as it performs at halftime with Destiny's Child (Beyonce's old group, for readers under the age of 14). The experience is excruciating, for Billy and for us, but what Fountain strives to express in his novel is the dissolving lack of distinction in American media, life and consciousness between what is real and what is not.

This makes the book, and Texas Stadium, something of a perfect laboratory for Lee's movie, which is more than an experiment and something less than a fully realized cinematic experience, if only because the audience won't be ready for what it sees. Almost since the beginning of (movie) time, film has been shot at 24 frames a second, a rate that makes comfortable the phenomenon known as persistence of vision (the illusion of action on screen). Lee shot "Billy Lynn" at 120 fps, as well as in 3D and 4K (four times the pixels). Although most audiences will not see the film at higher than a 3D/4K/60 fps presentation (because dual projectors are need to deliver 120, and most theaters do not have them), it is a different thing entirely. Many people will find it too real ("Hobbit" viewers had a similar problem, because that film too was shot at a high frame rate), the image too clean and alive. Some will find it reminiscent of video, soap operas and sports events. Lee, whose cast in

"Billy Lynn" includes Kristen Stewart, Steve Martin, Vin Diesel and Garrett Hedlund, has a new palette at his disposal and uses it with intellectual rigor, changing the look of the film to accommodate the emotions he's after in ways far more dramatic than were possible in the past. During many of the more spectacular scenes, at the halftime show for instance, the immediacy of the action is utterly enthralling. Whether it is cinema is another question, one that will take time to answer.

Is anyone going to watch "Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk" and fully absorb the meaning of the story, the messages it brings about war and warriors and a nation's responsibilities? No; they are more likely to be dazzled by the spectacle—which, in its own perverse way, captures the message of the novel perfectly.

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

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AFTER ELECTION DAY

The last year has been a difficult one indeed, particularly for those who are in any way concerned about political life in the United States. As I write this column, the election has not yet taken place, though we are close to Election Day and early voting is already underway in many parts of the country, including my home town of Chicago. I do not know what the results are, and, like many here and abroad, I find myself nervous about the outcome.

Even as recently as a year ago I could not have anticipated the events that have unfolded. Like most political veterans and media commentators, I was convinced that Donald J. Trump's candidacy for the Republican nomination would inevitably be a short-lived publicity stunt. Also like most people, I never could have imagined that a major-party nominee for president of the United States would do or say the sorts of things that he has subsequently done and said, let alone the inappropriate and possibly criminal things he has discussed allegedly doing.

Some readers may have concluded that I am playing a partisan role, talking down one candidate explicitly and thereby implicitly endorsing another. That is not my intention. Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee, is not a perfect candidate. However, at least at the time of this writing, she has not exhibited the racist, xenophobic, misogynist and otherwise appalling views that have become commonplace across the political aisle.

I don't blame Mr. Trump exclusively for the divisions we have witnessed

these last months. More troubling to me than his individual behavior has been the response of people who express feelings of disdain for immigrants, hostility toward women in power and persons of color, and hatred toward anybody and anything that does not conform to a narrowly defined concept of what is "legitimately American." Less than two weeks before the general election, The New York Times reported that some Trump supporters are increasingly using the language of revolution to describe their anticipated reaction to the possible news that their candidate has not won. The language has been both violent and threatening.

So now I have begun thinking about Nov. 9 after many months focused on the day just before it. What will happen after the election? Can anything be done to repair the divisions that have been so sharply drawn? How might we stem the seemingly endless tide of fear and hatred and anger?

I believe that women and men of faith have resources and the responsibility to try to do something proactive, encouraging all people in these difficult times. One such resource is found in the writings of one of the most-popular saints in Christian history and the namesake of the current bishop of Rome: St. Francis of Assisi.

St. Francis believed that being a peacemaker and a reconciler was not

something reserved just for a special few, but rather was part of what it meant to be truly human itself. In his famous "Canticle of the Creatures," he highlighted how all aspects of creation give praise to God by virtue of what they were created to be: The sun shines, the earth provides vegetation

and so on. When it comes to human beings, Francis believed that we give praise to God when we are reconcilers, peacemakers and lovers who endure the difficulties and disappointments of life with patience. Following St. Paul, who exhorted Christians to support one another, and Jesus Christ, who modeled love of enemies, St. Francis calls us to step away from the division, the hatred and the fear-based rhetoric that leads to violence. To

think and engage in these ways is to be un-human and to not praise but actually stand against God.

Regardless of how the election turns out and despite the inevitable disappointment that will come for some, Christians must be exemplars of St. Francis' insight by encouraging all women and men, regardless of their faith tradition, to become more human. This is a message we are all in need of hearing in the wake of such a startling and, frankly, dehumanizing election cycle. The only way forward is to have the courage to be what God actually created us to be: peacemakers, reconcilers and lovers.

How might we stem the tide of fear and anger?



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CHRIS HERLINGER

THE LONELY EVERYMAN

ONE MAN AGAINST THE WORLD

The Tragedy of Richard Nixon

By Tim Weiner

St. Martin's Griffin. 384p \$15.99

BEING NIXON A Man Divided

By Evan Thomas

Random House. 640p \$18

THE LAST OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEN

By Bob Woodward

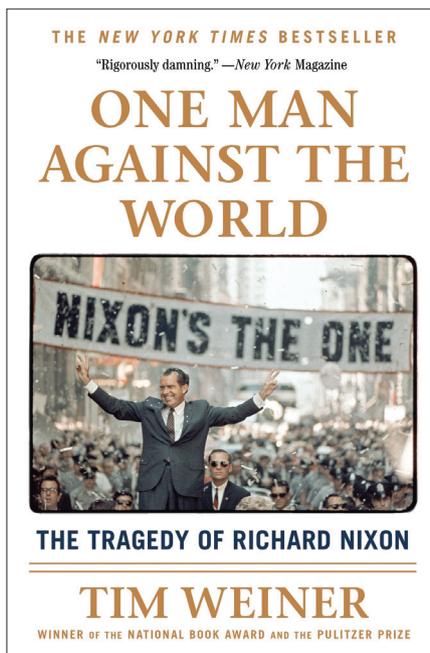
Simon & Schuster 304p \$28

Who was Richard Nixon? The question might seem absurd on the face of it, particularly for those who grew up in the 1970s. We saw Nixon as a kind of colossus—the shadowy figure whose triumph (the olive branch to China, historic re-election landslide in 1972) and fall (the disgrace of Watergate, threat of impeachment and ultimate resignation) were touchstones of an era.

Yet 2016 is a good moment to consider Nixon. Seventy years ago, Nixon won his first election—to the U.S. House of Representatives, beating an entrenched liberal Democrat on an anti-Communist platform. Thus began Nixon's quick, startling and, for an introvert who disliked the necessary glad-handing of politics, improbable ascension to national prominence. (In 1952, the Navy veteran who never saw combat in the South Pacific stood beside Dwight Eisenhower, one of the military heroes of World War II, as Ike's vice president-to-be.)

We can still feel Nixon's shadow hovering over our culture and political landscape. In perhaps the best of three recent books on Nixon, the former New York Times reporter Tim Weiner

notes that later events have Nixon written all over them. "Ronald Reagan ran covert wars overseas with clandestine funds. His top national security aides were indicted, then pardoned, by George H. W. Bush. Bill Clinton was impeached for perjury," Weiner writes in *One Man Against the World: The Tragedy of Richard Nixon*.

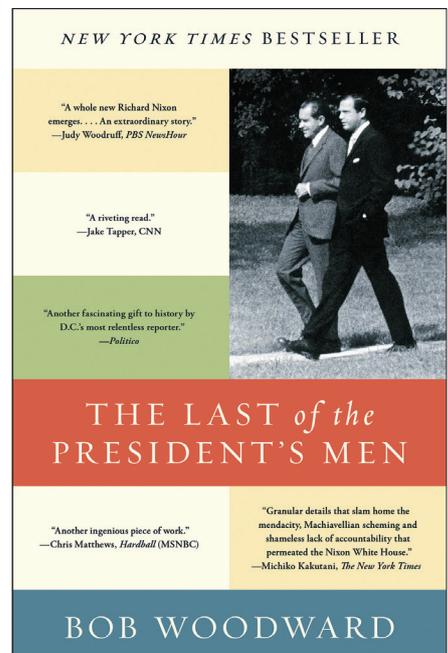


He adds, "George W. Bush's abuses of power dwarfed Nixon's—secret prisons, sanctioned torture, limitless eavesdropping, all supported by presidential fiat and secret statutes, aided and abetted by Vice President Dick Cheney." Weiner does not exempt President Obama from criticism, either. "Barack Obama's administration tormented more reporters and their sources under threat of subpoena or prison than Nixon's ever did," Weiner writes.

In the current election, Hillary Clinton might be said to occupy a place similar to Nixon's when he ran for president in 1968: too familiar to a large swath of the electorate and dogged by

a reputation many find questionable. Ted Cruz evoked memories of Nixon's malevolence. And, of course, Donald J. Trump's campaign of resentment can be traced back to Nixon's "Southern Strategy" that pulled white blue-collar voters out of the Democratic column and into the Republican Party.

None of these new books—which also include *Being Nixon: A Man Divided*, by Evan Thomas, and *The Last of the President's Men*, by Bob Woodward—fundamentally alter our



view of Nixon, though in the case of Weiner's book, in particular, the picture darkens. "He dropped bombs and napalm without remorse; he believed they delivered a political message beyond blood and fire," writes Weiner in his unblinkered portrait of Nixon as he engaged in the tragic and unnecessary (and many would say criminal) bombing of North Vietnam in December 1972. (Much of the book is based on recently declassified documents.)

Fresh from a re-election that could have provided Nixon with a measure of freedom to try something new in Vietnam, Nixon reverted to form—"an unprecedented attack by squadrons of B-52 bombers aimed directly at the

capital of North Vietnam, civilian casualties be damned,” Weiner writes. “Start bombing the bejeezus out of them,” Nixon said during planning for the attacks. As the bombing intensified, Nixon crowed: “They are going to scream. They always do.” James Reston of *The New York Times*, Evan Thomas notes, called the bombing “war by tantrum.” At another point, Nixon told his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, “The best legacy we could leave is to kick the hell out of Vietnam.”

Instead, the legacy proved shameful. During the Christmas bombing, Weiner notes, U.S. planes dropped 15,000 tons of bombs in and around North Vietnam’s capital—“a force greater than each of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” he writes.

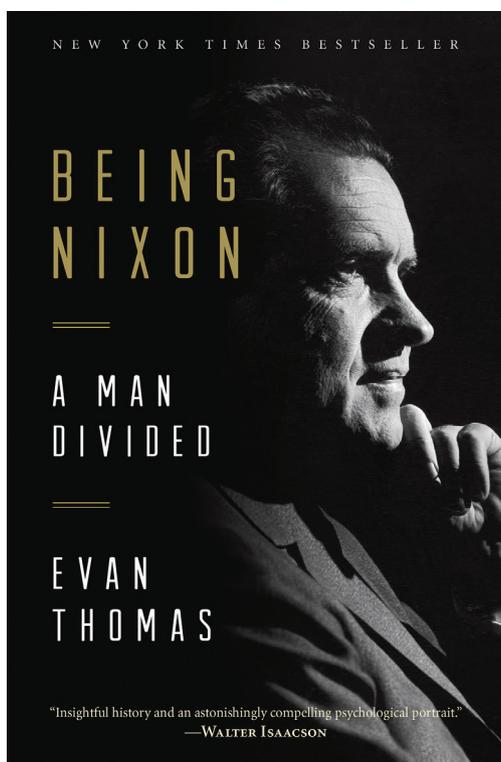
On the day before Christmas, Nixon wrote in his diary that it was “God’s great gift to me to have the opportunity to exert leadership, not only for America but on the world.” He also wrote: “This, on the one hand, imposes a great responsibility but, of course, at the same time the greatest opportunity an individual could have...the glorious burden of the presidency.”

This is disturbing stuff—as if Vietnam took the brunt of Nixon’s many neuroses, and Nixon saw himself doing God’s work as a “Great Man of History.” The reality was different. Weiner notes that Nixon was often depressed, even unhinged and drank too much as the pressures of Vietnam and Watergate increased.

Weiner paints a similarly troubling portrait of Nixon during the U.S. bombing of Cambodia, in which 2.7 million tons of bombs were dropped—“exceeding the tonnage of all Allied bombing during World War II, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”

There was something of the Walter Mitty in Nixon, as Thomas notes in

his biography—a fine one-volume introduction to the 37th president that, in its quest to be fair to Nixon, misses some of the tragic Shakespearean quality of the man. (Thomas’s book, like the other two, will never supplant Garry Wills’s *Nixon Agonistes*, the superb meditation on Nixon, America and post-war power that remains *sui generis* in the literature about the man.)



In Thomas’s telling, Nixon comes off as shy and awkward, often kind to others in private yet never able to master basic social graces. It is not hard to feel a bit of sympathy for the grocer’s son from Whittier who was offered a scholarship to Harvard but could not take it because his family did not have the money for the trip from California to Cambridge—and then found himself eventually shunned by the Eastern establishment.

That shunning led to paranoia, vindictive spite and fury, as Woodward notes in his book-length portrait of Alexander Butterfield, the White House aide who disclosed the exis-

tence of the White House taping system, the ultimate undoing of Nixon’s legal defense in Watergate.

The man Butterfield saw day-to-day was far from sympathetic. As Nixon aged, Butterfield told Woodward, “instead of mellowing, the neuroses intensified and he lumped them all together.” In one of the more absurd examples, Nixon raged over Derek Bok, president of Harvard University, who, with dozens of others, attended a White House ceremony at the invitation of first lady, Pat Nixon. Bok was on Nixon’s enemies list, and Nixon told Butterfield, “I don’t ever want that [expletive] back here on the White House grounds.”

As to the Nixons’ marriage, the president often ignored his wife, both in public and private, Butterfield recalled. In a book that feels a bit like a stretched-out magazine article, Woodward says that Butterfield “concluded that Pat was what he called a ‘borderline abused’ wife.”

Butterfield said Nixon was too often self-absorbed—not an unusual trait in a president, certainly. But Nixon seemed to take that self-absorption to new heights. Even Thomas, in his attempt to be fair to Nixon, sees Nixon as a broody loner who seemed not to enjoy even being president. Eternally plagued by insomnia, Nixon was a self-punishing and isolated figure, thinking of himself, pathetically, as a historic figure along the lines of Mao Zedong or Charles de Gaulle.

“Nixon’s strengths were his weaknesses,” Thomas concludes. “The drive that propelled him also crippled him. The underdog’s sensitivity that made him farsighted also blinded him. He wanted to show that he was hard because he felt soft. He learned how to be popular because he felt rejected. He was the lonely everyman to the end.”

Unfortunately, those weaknesses led to Nixon’s downfall: The paranoia over Vietnam seamlessly resulted

in the dirty tricks of Watergate. They also had deleterious consequences for the North Vietnamese and others who dared to defy this strange, troubled and tragic figure—a man who, almost

a quarter-century since his death, still casts a shadow over our national life.

CHRIS HERLINGER is the international correspondent for *The National Catholic Reporter's Global Sisters Report*.

COLBY DICKINSON

DEATH OF A PHILOSOPHER

WITHOUT THE LEAST TREMOR The Sacrifice of Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*

By M. Ross Romero, S.J.
SUNY Press. 176p. \$75

In this most classic of philosophical tales, Socrates dies a death that has been the subject of so much speculation and controversy that it has been fairly difficult over the years to determine what exactly, if anything, philosophically speaking, was accomplished through his singular death. Nonetheless, the question still remains an important one: Why did Socrates do it? Why did he drink from the cup that would lead to his imminent death. Moreover, since we are told that Socrates held the cup of poison he was soon to drink “without the least tremor,” was he signaling through this steadfast resolve, perhaps, his desire to produce another way of perceiving death, and in this case in particular, the death of the philosopher? What M. Ross Romero attempts to do in this book, whose title reflects the significance of Plato's phrasing, is nothing short of enabling an interpretation for the ages, one wherein our glimpse of the context of ancient Greek sacrificial rituals, if seen from a religious perspective, might enable us to gather in the realization that Socrates' actions may have been intended to “transform the purpose of sacrifice” altogether.

From Søren Kierkegaard to Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida (though only the last of these authors is taken

up in the book directly), the death of Socrates and the radical rereading of the ancient Greek care of the self that such an act might prompt us to reconsider have been a major point of both comparison and contrast with theology. Here such discussions are recounted by Romero as a final confirmation of Socrates' willingness to push philosophy to its boundaries—in this case the boundary between life and death as much as between the body and the soul. Taking the death of the philosopher as potentially being any philosopher's, not just Socrates' alone, also gives us a reason to pause and reflect on the manner by which Socrates' actions instruct those searching to live the examined life—the philosophical life—above all else.

What we witness in Romero's fine study is a rich textual and close reading of Plato's *Phaedo* as well as a number of significant commentaries upon this dialogue in the hopes of advancing a luminous interpretation of Socrates' death. From the start, Romero is clear that in some ways, his is an advancement of the analysis offered a short while ago by Catherine Pickstock, as well as an attempt to infuse commentary on Socrates' actions with a religious dimension often found to be lacking, an insight he develops directly from the work of Adriaan Pepperzak.

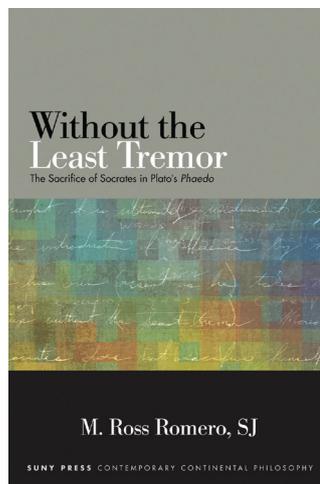
By exploring the often unnoted parallels between ancient ritualistic sacrifice in a Greek context and Socrates' words and actions leading up to his death, Romero guides us in a poignant reconsideration of just how Socrates' death both intentionally *does* and *does not* reflect such sacrifices—that is, “This way of receiving the death scene beholds it as a careful mixing, a careful weaving, of sameness and difference—of ritual sacrifice and its other.”

By imitating ancient sacrificial rituals specifically (much of Romero's timely meditation rests upon this comparison), Socrates is able to produce a significant contrast with such rites by effectively mimicking what is central to their use while also deviating in very specific ways. By demonstrating how ritualistic sacrifice maintains a proper relationship, or proportionality, between humans and the divine, Romero is able to detect underneath Socrates'

apparent self-sacrifice another level that is not commensurate with such interpretations. By focusing on the disproportion between the body and the soul, Socrates' speech in the *Phaedo* actually undermines any established sense of proportionality (human/divine, body/soul) as maintained by the ritualistic spectacle of sacrifice. What Socrates

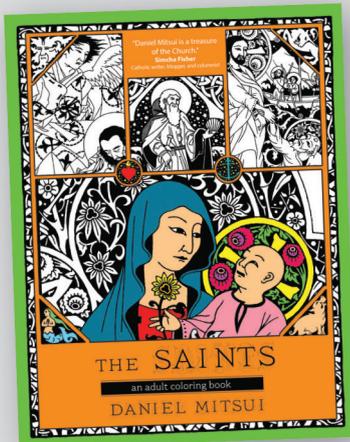
presents to his listeners instead of an expected proportionality is, then, in Romero's wording, a “*logos* of the soul” that portrays itself “as if” it were not itself, as then *other to itself*. Such an inversion of sacrificial codes is nothing short of a radical contestation of those cultural and political sacrificial mechanisms that govern society, as much during Socrates' time as in our own.

To what degree this deliberate inversion of the codes of ritual sacrifice in



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ancient Greece points likewise toward the challenge to sacrifice (not to mention the various theories of atonement) within the history of Christianity is not brought to bear in his reading as much as the reader might desire to see it. Such a contrast was precisely what had intrigued Kierkegaard so many years ago. Nonetheless, what we do see is a radical parody of sacrifice that opens up other ways through which to perceive Socrates's actions. In essence, Socrates's death points his most ardent

followers toward taking more seriously than ever the vigilance necessary to lead the examined life and to overcome the obstacles of hubris and despair in order to learn to care for the gift of oneself and to understand one's self as an “embodied logos.”

COLBY DICKINSON is an assistant professor of theology at Loyola University Chicago. He is the author of *Agamben and Theology, Between the Canon and the Messiah: The Structure of Faith in Contemporary Continental Thought and Words Fail: Theology, Poetry, and the Challenge of Representation*.

ANTHONY F. LANG JR.

ISLAMIC OVERTURES

THE SULTAN AND THE QUEEN The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam

By Jerry Brotton
Viking, 357p \$15

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, many Americans wondered, “Why do they hate us?” Answers suggesting that perhaps U.S. policies in the region had generated the plotters' hostility only increased the befuddlement, which soon morphed into fear and anger. Politicians turned those simmering resentments into policy proposals of exclusion and cultural conflict, drawing on well-worn stereotypes about Islam and Arabs. The call by the Republican presidential candidate, Donald J. Trump, to ban Muslims from the United States for security reasons is only the most recent example of these efforts.

Mixing religion and politics is nothing new, particularly in how the West relates to the Islamic world. A new book by Jerry Brotton, a professor of Renaissance studies at Queen Mary University in London, describes the attempts by Queen Elizabeth I of England to open up relations with the sultan of Morocco in order to increase

trade links and block the Portuguese, whose trading empire was monopolizing both North African and South Asian routes.

Religion, though not central, was always part of this process. When challenged about her efforts to trade with the heathens, Elizabeth innocently replied that “the more Christian people that shall resort to the Gentiles and Saracens, the more faith shall increase.” Though it is unlikely that Elizabeth was driven by a desire to convert Muslims to Christianity, it is true that religion played an important part in her engagement with the Muslim world. Having been excommunicated by Pope Pius V in 1570 and threatened by the Spanish King Philip II, Elizabeth turned to those in the Mediterranean who were similarly threatened.

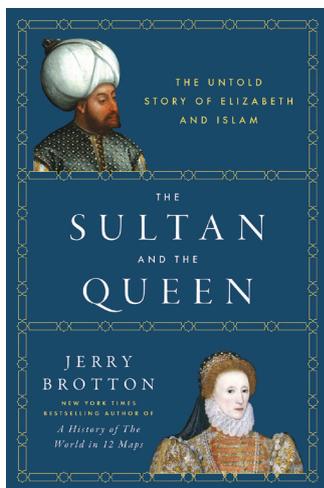
Those initial efforts soon expanded toward other parts of the Islamic world. In 1571, the Holy League, created by Pope Pius V and including naval forces from various Catholic states in Europe, defeated the Ottomans at the Battle of Lepanto. This victory emboldened those Catholics in England who sought to topple, and indeed assassinate, Elizabeth. She soon realized that she needed more help than the Moroccan sultan could provide. She worked hard

to cultivate an alliance with Murad III, the sultan of the Ottoman Empire and formally the caliph of all Muslims. The English exported material for guns and ammunition, and Murad believed that Protestant iconoclasm mirrored the Muslim refusal to represent the human form. Once more, religious beliefs underpinned strategic interactions.

The combination of religion and politics then, just as today, was reinforced in cultural practices. While Brotton provides an insightful study of the politics and diplomacy between Elizabeth and various Islamic rulers, it is when he turns to the stage that the book becomes something more interesting. William Shakespeare created characters who reflected many of the English fears of the heathens. In “Titus Andronicus” Shakespeare introduces us to one of the most violent characters in one of his most violent plays, Aaron the Moor. Though the play is set in ancient Rome, before the advent of Islam, and Aaron is actually a Jew, he embodies stereotypes about both Jews and Muslims. But as with the more famous Moor, Othello, Shakespeare creates a character that “audiences should despise; and they are also drawn irresistibly to him.” Brotton describes an Elizabethan England where goods from the Ottoman Empire circulated, where plays had heroes and villains from the Muslim world and where Islam was simultaneously a source of desire, wonder and threat. From Aladdin to “American Sniper,” popular culture today similarly vacillates between attraction and repulsion to the Islamic world.

What Brotton does so well, though, is explore this complex history through narratives of individuals and how their

often self-interested motives drove forward state policies. Sir Anthony Sherley was an English knight, explorer and sometime diplomat who appears briefly in Shakespeare’s “Twelfth Night” in a reference to a “fencer with the Sophy.” Sir Anthony was indeed a confidant of the “Sophy”—a bastardized designation for the Shah of Persia—about whom he wrote in his celebrated memoir of his time in the region. Many in London knew of Sherley, who used



whatever means possible to ingratiate himself to Shah Abbas, who had been fighting the Ottomans and so looked to the English for aid. Yet Sherley never really represented English interests, being out more for himself than anyone else.

Indeed, Sherley’s story provides yet another parallel with today. President Ronald Reagan’s efforts to reach out

to Iran during the 1980s relied on a rogues’ gallery of individuals who sold arms and used the money to enrich themselves. Just as Reagan gave himself plausible deniability, so Elizabeth distanced herself from Sherley. And, in the same way that the faltering efforts of Oliver North and others created more problems and misunderstandings, so Sherley’s efforts were no less helpful, especially as he turned to Spain and the papacy after feeling under-appreciated by Elizabeth.

Brotton’s book is well worth the read. It reminds us that when high politics and religion come together, they are often in the hands of adventurers and playwrights or rogue colonels and Hollywood producers. Neither gives us an accurate understanding of religious belief or international affairs—yet we must remember that it is often these players who shape the world in which we live.

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CLASSIFIED

Pilgrimage

PILGRIMAGE—POLAND. WARSAW, Czestochowa and Black Madonna, Wadowice (birthplace of St. John Paul II), Krakow, Auschwitz and more, ending in Berlin, May 15-24, 2017. Michel Cooper, S.J., email Michael.cooperinf@gmail.com, Ph.: (727) 644- 5544; Caroline Cervený, S.S.J. [T.O.S.F.], email: c.cervený@verizon.net, Ph.: (727) 744- 4684.

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Stay Awake!

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (A), NOV. 27, 2016

Readings: Is 1-5, Ps 122, Rom 13:11-14, Mt 24:37-44

At an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come. (Mt 24:44)

The message of this week's Gospel reading is simple: "Stay awake! Christ is on his way." Be prepared like Noah, who alone of his generation believed God's promises to be true. Be prepared, even if your preparation mystifies your friends and family. Be prepared, even in the midst of mundane activities. Be prepared like a householder who knows that thieves prowl the night, but not when they will be at his door.

The Gospel of Matthew addresses a crisis. The generation for which it was written, 50 years or more after Jesus' death and resurrection, was the first to accept that the Lord's return would be delayed. Fervent belief in Christ's imminent arrival energized an earlier generation of Christians. By Matthew's time that same belief brought Christians mockery and doubt. "What do we mean when we say Christ will come again?" Matthew's response lays the groundwork for Christian ethics. "Stay awake! No one knows the day or the hour. Act always as if Christ were near." Christ's arrival is not about the future, but the present. Christians must live in such a way that Christ could come at any moment and find them ready to go.

Matthew's language also reminds us that for early Christians, Christ's return was a new Exodus. God had seen their suffering, and his son, the new Moses,

was coming. The language of this passage recalls the haste in which Israel fled Egypt: "They knew nothing about what would happen"; "One will be taken, the other left"; "Stay awake! You do not know on what day your Lord will come." Matthew repeats the admonition "Stay awake!" several times in this chapter. Christ's future arrival places an obligation on the present. Christians must always be ready to receive Christ.

A rich theology grew from this belief. In addition to his first coming through incarnation, Christ is still to come in several different ways. Foremost, Christ will come at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, just as the early Christians expected. Christ will also come for us at the end of our lives here on earth. Christ comes in the sacraments and actions of the church. In Matthew's insights today, Christ reminds us that he also comes to save us in daily, unseen ways.

Salvation is disruptive. Sometimes, as in Scripture, God's salvation is unmistakable: reticent tongues burn with prophecy, kings lose their thrones, and the meek inherit. After God's revelation, nothing stays the same. In fact, the Greek word for revelation, *apocalypsis*, gives its name to a whole disruptive genre. More often, however, Christ's disruptive salvation comes in quiet ways of daily life. Although nothing stays the same, the moment of our visitation is easy to miss. In his comments on this week's Gospel, St. Hilary of Poitiers urges constant prayer so that we may be in the right frame of mind to recog-

nize Christ. His insights are still valid. Too often, we recognize Christ's arrival long after the fact, if at all. We realize that something changed, that at some unknown point our lives took a different direction, that we have arrived at a future we could not have imagined. An addict hitting rock bottom, for example, might not recognize Christ at work in the experience, but later it will be obvious that everything changed in that moment. Or consider a Christian feeling a vocational call, which may start out subtly—even almost subconsciously—

only to be recognized much later as Christ's gentle nudge onto a certain path of holiness and service. Although Christ's arrival in these moments might, over the long term, reflect a disruption of biblical proportions, it can also be



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- As you rummage through your past, where do you now see that Christ was at work in an unseen way?
- How is God calling you to "train your heart" for Christ's arrival this Advent?

ART: TAD DUNNE

so gentle that it was impossible to catch him in the act.

The four weeks of Advent are a time to recommit to discernment. As the lights of the wreath multiply, we must intensify our search for Christ's subtle light. This is a fitting time to undertake days of reflection, or practices like a daily examen or spiritual inventory. It is also a time for new joy. At times, the childlike happiness of Christmas can give way to adult feelings of nostalgia and regret. Training our hearts throughout Advent to catch sight of Christ's daily arrival will provide new reasons for Christmas joy. Let us stay awake, then! Christ is on his way.

MICHAEL R. SIMONE

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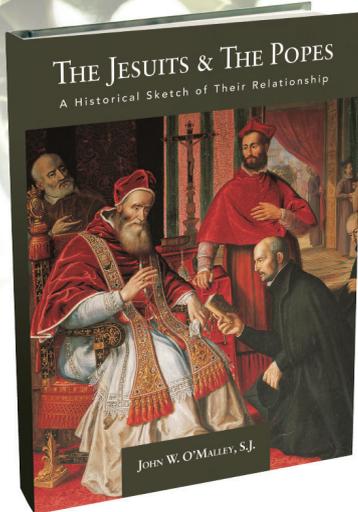
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by John W. O'Malley, S.J.



The Jesuits are known for having an especially close relationship to the papacy. *The Jesuits and the Popes* traces that relationship from the earliest days of the Jesuit order until Pope Francis, the first Jesuit pope. As such, it is the first book in any language to trace this full history and to analyze each phase of it as it unfolded. It covers, therefore, a history of some 450 years and does so in relatively few pages. This means that the book moves at a swift pace that pulls the reader along with it. While the book directly deals with the Jesuits and the popes, it at the same time leads readers into the larger issues of church history that determined how the Jesuits and the popes reacted to one another at any given moment.

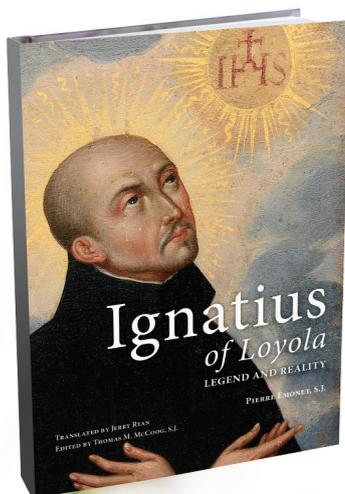
While for the most part the special relationship between the Jesuits and the popes was cordial or more than cordial, it had several tense moments, the most important of which was the church-wide suppression of the order in 1773 by Pope Clement XIV. The book does not hold back in describing those moments. The premier American Catholic and Jesuit church historian of our time, John O'Malley is known for his crisp style, easily accessible to the non-specialist. The style does not fail him in *The Jesuits and the Popes*.

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by Pierre Emonet, S.J., translated by Jerry Ryan and edited by Thomas M. McCoog, S.J.



The original French edition of *Ignatius of Loyola: Legend and Reality*, by Pierre Emonet, S.J., was published in 2013 by Éditions Lessius in Belgium. It has since been translated into Spanish and German. Here is offered an English translation by Jerry Ryan, a freelance writer and translator of Antoine Arjakovsky, *The Way: Religious Thinkers of the Russian Emigration in Paris and Their Journal, 1925-1940* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2013) and Hyacinthe Destivelle, O.P., *The Moscow Council (1917-1918): The Creation of the Conciliar Institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2015). Given all the biographies of Ignatius Loyola already in print, why another one? Unlike many biographies, this is succinct without being superficial. Here one encounters Ignatius, the man and the legend, in almost Hemingwayesque simplicity. Here one sees the traits and characteristics that have attracted, annoyed, alarmed and amused generations.

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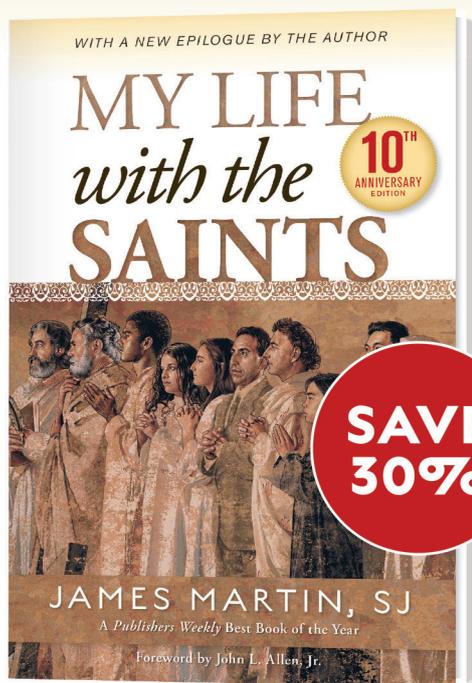
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