

# America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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## Whose Land?

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM RUNS UP  
AGAINST 'LAUDATO SI'

JOHN D. WILSEY

THE EDITORS ON THE  
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

I followed the returns on election night from a hotel room in Barcelona. As the evening evolved (or devolved, depending on one's perspective), it was increasingly clear that a huge swath of voters was sending a powerful message to another huge swath in the only way it now could: through the blunt instrument of the ballot box. In those halcyon though still imperfect pre-Google days of American politicking, such messages were also exchanged before the balloting through reasoned public debate, informed by objective data, established by universally credible sources. This was known as public discourse. And it is very nearly gone.

Some Spaniards told me that looking at the United States from abroad, it seems that politics has become our national pastime, our principle social and cultural pursuit. But it is a politics without argument, I replied, which is the most dangerous kind of politics. While it might seem as if we were engaged in a vigorous public argument for the past 20 months about the direction of our country, what this election actually revealed was the extent to which public argument, in the truest sense of the term, is nearly impossible in the current American political climate.

The theologian John Courtney Murray, S.J., reminded us that "disagreement and argument are rare achievements, and most of what is called disagreement and argument is simply confusion." An argument, in the classical sense, requires allegiance to a shared set of principles, as well as general agreement about the data of experience or, to put it more simply, the facts of the matter. Yet the partisans who now command our attention claim a right not only to their own opinions but to their own facts. This is a consequence of the overpowering and destructive influence of post-factual ideological partisanship, which has reduced public discourse to a street

fight in which victory has displaced the common good as the ultimate end. Yet the common good is something to which we can all aspire, while victory obviously is not.

"Victory is a myth," David Neuhaus, S.J., recently told *America*: "The idea that you can be victorious gets in the way of pulling down the walls. And when we speak as church of pulling down the walls, we are speaking first of a process that we must undergo." In other words, prescinding from the fact that neither political party represents the totality of a Catholic social worldview, and that Catholics who are committed to that totality are politically homeless, the crisis in our public discourse is so profound and poses such a clear and present danger to the body politic that Catholics must fundamentally reassess our public engagement. We must ask how we have been complicit in the demise of public discourse and what distinct and essentially Catholic contribution we can make to fixing it.

Now is the time not to rebut but to reframe the question. We must ask not what our country can do for us but what it is doing to us and what we can do for it in turn. It starts by remembering, as William T. Cavanaugh has observed, that there is more to the church's public witness than the tired quadrennial debate about whom we can vote for. Such questions, while important, are mere politics. Yet if our democracy is to survive and prosper, then our politics must become less important. It must yield to public argument about the ends of our common existence rather than the mere means. Make no mistake: The end of true public argument presents a profound crisis for democracy, a greater threat to the health of the body politic than that posed by the worst of the policy proposals of either major party.

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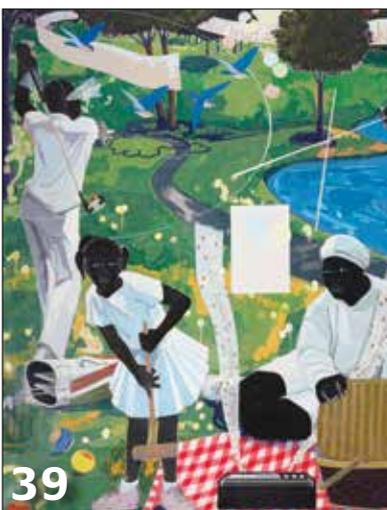
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## ON THE WEB

America and the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture present a three-part video web series, "**Deacons, Women and the Call to Serve the Church.**" Plus, how Catholics are responding to the election of **Donald J. Trump**. Full digital highlights on page 38 and at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org)



### Suffering Children

The demolition of the Calais “Jungle,” a vast migrant camp that had grown up around the entrance to the tunnel connecting France and the United Kingdom, left scores of children adrift amid smoldering ruins in October. Like the adult migrants around them, these unaccompanied minors, some as young as 8, had made it as far as Calais, hoping to find sanctuary in Great Britain. The plight of these children and teens highlights the growing problem of unaccompanied child migrants throughout Europe.

Nearly 90,000 children unaccompanied by parents or other guardians sought asylum in Europe in 2015—four times the number in 2014. Thirteen percent of them were under the age of 14. Most are boys between the ages of 16 and 17; many represent the one family member sent off, after pooling meager family resources, to escape conflict zones to a better life. That hope can be misplaced. In January, the E.U. police intelligence agency Europol estimated that at least 10,000 child refugees have gone missing since arriving in Europe. It is feared many have become victims of exploitation by human traffickers and criminal gangs, who force them into prostitution, child labor and the drug trade.

These children and teens have been making their way through Europe in flight from war and ISIS terror in the Middle East or escaping other conflicts and extreme poverty in Africa. The United States experiences much the same desperate phenomenon at its southern border as unaccompanied children flee north to escape poverty and gang- and narco-violence. Perhaps putting heads together at the United Nations on this shared dilemma can lead to an effective and humane global response to this especially heartbreaking migration challenge.

### Check Your Preference

As the United States chose an unorthodox new president, the citizens of Maine quietly approved an unorthodox way of electing people to office. Ranked-choice voting is used in a few municipalities, but Maine would be the first state to use the system for gubernatorial, congressional and legislative races (if the referendum proposal withstands any court challenges). As *The Bangor Daily News* describes the rather complex process, “A winner is declared if a majority picks a candidate as their first choice. But if not, the candidate with the lowest share of first-place votes is eliminated and second-place votes for that candidate are reallocated, a process that will be

repeated until a majority is won.”

Under such a system, candidates who do not fit the rigid two-party model could have a path to election—candidates, for example, who support Democratic Party economics but are pro-life, or who support the Republican Party on spending and taxation but also back environmental protection measures. But ranked-choice voting could also lead to a proliferation of niche candidates hoping to slip into office with little scrutiny, and the system may not be compatible with the compromise and coalition-building that are essential in a working democracy. Maine, where independent candidates are unusually popular and several state officeholders have recently won with far less than a majority of the vote, is a good state for this experiment. But it would be wise for other states to see what happens in Maine before adopting this innovation themselves.

### Death Watch

Slowly, the death penalty is gaining ground again. Though many states have abolished the practice, residents of Oklahoma, California and Nebraska voted in favor of the death penalty on Election Day.

Nov. 7 marked the start of the federal death penalty trial of Dylann S. Roof, the white 22-year-old who a year and a half ago shot and killed nine African-American worshippers in a church in Charleston, S.C. Meanwhile, at the trials both of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev for the Boston Marathon bombings and of Mr. Roof, relatives of the victims have asked that the lives of the defendants be spared. The N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Educational Fund, prominent civil rights leaders and a majority of black South Carolinians favor life without parole for Mr. Roof. His execution, some say, would only enforce the legitimacy of a punishment applied disproportionately to black people.

Death penalty trials make it more difficult for victims to heal and recover, and sentences are often poorly administered. According to a study from the Columbia University School of Law, courts found a “serious reversible error” in nearly 70 percent of cases reviewed from between 1973 and 1995. But the strongest moral argument against capital punishment is that vengeance corrupts those who demand the death of a fellow human being. As Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in 2008, “When the law punishes by death, it risks its own sudden descent into brutality, transgressing the constitutional commitment to decency and restraint.” Each person strapped to the table or into the electric chair is redeemable and has a right to live until called by God.

# Solidarity Now

This was an election about class. This was an election about trade, globalization and fears about immigration. This was an election about upheaval and rejection of a distant elite. This was an election about race and gender. All of these statements are true.

Above all, however, this was an election about division. While President-elect Donald J. Trump won convincingly in the Electoral College, and thus requires both our support and our prayers, the harder task still lies ahead. No one should feel complacent about the divisions this election emphasized and exploited, which run far deeper than political allegiances. Mr. Trump said in his victory speech that now was the “time for America to bind the wounds of division,” and he is right. Yet no policy proposal, whether it promises to restore the lost jobs of American manufacturing or to ensure free college for all, will be enough to bridge those rifts. No political figure can now command enough loyalty or respect.

Nor are careful analysis and understanding of these issues sufficient to the task. There is no easy replacement for actual solidarity with others. The geographic, socioeconomic and communication bubbles that too often pass for civic life in modern America have not provided that solidarity and indeed have often worked against it.

As Pope Francis has consistently reminded the church and the world, it is the poor who disproportionately bear the costs of division and inequity. It is the poor, both on our doorstep and around the world, who are most invisible and easiest to ignore when concerns over economic stagnation tempt us to limit our compassion. And as those limits become walls that “close in some and exclude others,” as the pope said recently, we will discover that those who are excluded, whether because of race, nationality or class, are almost always far poorer than the ones raising the barriers.

The poor are on the other side when the barrier is a wall closing off the United States from Mexico. But poor people are also on the other side of the various barriers that divide the financial, governmental, educational and media elites from the rest of the country.

Neither economic stagnation nor the disconnect of the elites tells the whole story. The voting was also starkly divided along racial and geographic lines, with suburban and rural areas and whites voting for Donald Trump while minorities and large urban centers voted for Hillary Clinton. Another way to read this election is to look at which constituencies the parties chose to write off. Mr. Trump ignored minority and

urban voters and focused instead on Rust Belt states in the Midwest. Mrs. Clinton, following today’s conventional political wisdom, worked on increasing turnout among her base while ceding white, non-college-educated voters to Mr. Trump.



The fact that Mr. Trump’s strategy was successful while Mrs. Clinton’s failed does not give legitimacy to either. Neither strategy transcended a politics of division, while Mr. Trump’s added resentment to the mix as well. Instead of seeking to reconcile the divisions from which the country suffers they perpetuated them.

Recognizing these divisions should prompt a national examination of conscience. Republicans, while holding both houses of Congress and the presidency, must ask what they owe to the apparent slim plurality of the electorate that voted for Mrs. Clinton; they must also determine how to encourage Mr. Trump to ameliorate, rather than exploit those divisions. Democrats, recognizing that their party’s concentrated base has isolated them from the concerns of huge swaths of the country, must consider how to prioritize those voters’ concerns alongside other issues. Leaders across society must broaden the range of people to whom they listen and with whom they speak.

The church has an important role to play as the next four years of Mr. Trump’s presidency unfold. It must offer clear and vigorous moral guidance, not limiting itself to the anti-abortion promises to which Mr. Trump must be held but also speaking on issues of immigration, racial discrimination, international peace and social welfare. The church must stand firm in rejecting any return to the insults, misogyny and devaluation of human dignity that characterized much of Mr. Trump’s campaign rhetoric. The church must also offer the wisdom of Catholic social teaching to help shape proposals for addressing legitimate concerns about economic stagnation among those globalization has left behind without scapegoating the poor and retreating into isolationism and xenophobia.

Even more than its public moral witness, the church must encourage Catholics to find practical solidarity with their political opponents, sharing worship and conversation and the works of mercy. That is both more difficult and more costly than simply adopting better political positions, but it offers a hope of reconciliation, not merely the prospect of electoral victory.

## REPLY ALL

### Just Judgment

Re "Unjust Discrimination" (Editorial, 11/7): There are many sins that are public, especially these days. Unmarried couples living together; thieves caught red-handed; witnesses lying under oath; healthy, registered members of the church who never make it to Mass—the list could go on and on. Why indeed are gay people such targets for public censure? Jesus was a just judge, but can we say that about ourselves?

ALFRED CHAVEZ  
*Online Comment*

### For Love Alone

It's incredibly simple. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Jesus gave us a pretty stellar model to follow. What's most important in all this is that we continue to do all things with love, for love alone, as we have each been individually charged. As for me, I am a Christian; and imperfect as I am, my job is to welcome everyone with open heart and the love of Christ.

ANDREW D'AMICO  
*Online Comment*

### Shining the Light

Re "Remedies Beyond Reach," by Fran Quigley (11/7): Shining the light is the best thing we can do, just what is happening here. We should push ethics for all business. Pushing for competition through legislation is another great idea. These patent laws need tweaking. Also drugs derived from public research should have some kind of common-good patent, where costs are kept low. But I do not push for government control of the pharmaceutical business. Innovation requires freedom.

JOHN BAUER  
*Online Comment*

### Pursuit of Ideals

There is at least one point of Mr. Quigley's article that seems accurate, namely that there is a high cost when it comes to drugs. The rest of his article trashes patent law, dismisses the reasonable recovery of research costs, and casts the drug industry as heartless capitalists.

The patent shield clearly exists to recover costs of research into a particular drug, but it is also a mechanism to recover costs associated with all the failed research attempts that would,

hopefully, finally lead to a successful and marketable drug. To take a drug from conception to market is a long and expensive process, littered with many failed attempts. All of this needs to be accounted for in any cost assessment.

If the drug companies cannot recover their costs, then how are they to remain in business? A purported right to a drug does not obligate the drug company to financially ruin itself. There are definite costs that need to be included in any calculus of research and manufacturing of a drug. If the costs are not paid by the users, then who do you expect to step up and pay on their behalf? The state? The international community? Do you want to impose higher taxes to compel us all to pay our "fair" share?

I recognize that there is a problem with the cost of drugs, as there is with education, clothing, even drinking water, and that Mr. Quigley does well to dramatize the issue in his article. However, despite his best efforts, I don't think he gave fair treatment to a very complex issue. Rather he seems to place excessive onus on the drug companies, which are innovative employers of tens of thousands around the world and take seriously their mission to end disease and improve the quality of human life. The pursuit of such ideals should be commended, not ignored or condemned.

R. A. HAMILTON,  
*West Orange, N.J.*

### State the Truth

Re Of Many Things, by Matt Malone, S.J. (11/7): To me as a Catholic, a Jesuit-educated man and sinner, the search for truth and those willing to speak the truth are what guide me during these elections. That as humans we are all fallible is a given. What separates one from the other among those who offer themselves to serve the public good is whether one is willing to state the truth and courageously stand by it



or not. When I apply that standard to our presidential candidates, the choice is clear. All human frailties are forgivable if we acknowledge them rather than concealing them from a public.

MATTHIAS MENDEZONA  
*Online Comment*

### The Common Good

“It is remarkable, then, that these two men, Francis Xavier and Ignatius Loyola, separated by 10 years, born into warring factions and of markedly different temperaments, would, with the aid of Faber and several other companions, found the Society of Jesus.” Well written, Father Malone. I would add that something similar could be written about Christ’s disciples, who came from diverse social and

political backgrounds. At one extreme we have Simon, a zealot, and at the other we have Matthew, the publican. For Ignatius, for Christ, as well as for Thomas Becket, the “honor of God” and the “things of God” are at the heart of the common good.

EGBERTO BERMUDEZ  
*Online Comment*

### Grateful for Bruce

Re “A Great and Harsh Beauty,” by Angelo Alaimo O’Donnell (10/31): This is a wonderfully written piece, as poetic as Bruce Springsteen’s songs. I was brought back to the years when I taught *The Grapes of Wrath* to 11th graders and used especially Springsteen’s song, “The Ghost of Tom Joad.” The entire album had songs that my

students grasped and liked. I have often been grateful for Bruce, and this essay reminds me of this. Thanks.

FRANCESCA HEARTFIELD  
*Online Comment*

### “No Worse”

Re “Hate.Net,” by James Martin, S.J. (10/31): I don’t use social media, but every now and then I read comments on articles and journals and it doesn’t take long for hatefulness to rear its head—from the right and the left, from secular and sacred spaces.

Of course Christians, Catholic and other, should be better than others, and not simply “no worse.” Why aren’t we? Could it be our fault?

NICHOLAS CLIFFORD  
*Online Comment*

### f Status Update

*On America’s blog In All Things, Natalia Imperatori-Lee commented on the theological arguments underlying the debate on women’s ordination (“It’s Not a Complement,” 11/6). She argues that theologies of rigid complementarity cheat both men and women of their full humanity. Readers weigh in.*

It seems to me that the reasoning presented in this article, while compelling on its own terms, would not simply lead to the ordination of women priests but would rather eliminate the symbolic or spiritual meaning of sexual difference altogether. At some point the academic-disciplinary perspectives of biology, psychology and so on miss the point. They are too immanent, or too theoretical. Sometimes, working within objective constraints—especially those of revelation—is the way that truth and beauty first emerges.

TOM SPENCER  
*Online Comment*

Amen! Complementarity and a masculine-feminine duality do not make sense even on an intellectual level.

Every human trait in every person is on a spectrum, there is no “either/or,” just “both/and.” “Both/and” is the Catholic way in many things. When you are sure you know what is true about God, you are almost assuredly wrong. We need to always ask questions and trust grace to help us balance what we believe and the inevitable uncertainty of what we can’t know in this lifetime. We must always pray, listen and discuss our differences with great love.

JULIE FARLEY SUTTON  
*Online Comment*

I think this piece needs a much expanded view of the feminine within the church. If obedience and receptivity (in the shallow way they are cast here) is all that make up the “feminine,” then it is not surprising that the “masculine” is seen as so much better in this context.

I agree that an understanding of women’s roles in the church and the faith needs to be much enhanced. But throwing out the duality of gender fails to do this—it just leaves us in our current state of recognizing the masculine as most desirable, encouraging attempts to “elevate” women to what

men have. What we really need is to dive more deeply into the significance of the feminine (or Marian) influence that women have in the church.

SAMANTHA POVLOCK  
*Online Comment*

This certainly is an interesting article. One small point, however. The author states “the Petrine dimension centers on leadership and initiative.” While the focus on initiative is obvious in the Gospels, we are left in the dark as to what type of leadership it refers to.

JAMES MACGREGOR  
*Online Comment*

Interesting article! Complementarity seems to be excessively narrow and rigid, plus it also has a practical translation as “men lead, speak and make all the decisions while women pick up the messes and make coffee.” The issue of ordaining women to the priesthood blocks useful discussion about the role of women in the church. If women are ordained as deacons, they will have the most important part of what women need in the church—namely, the right to preach at Mass.

LISA WEBER  
*Online Comment*

FOR CHRISTMAS

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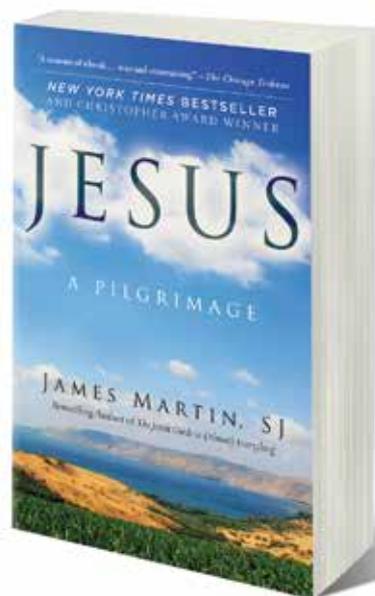
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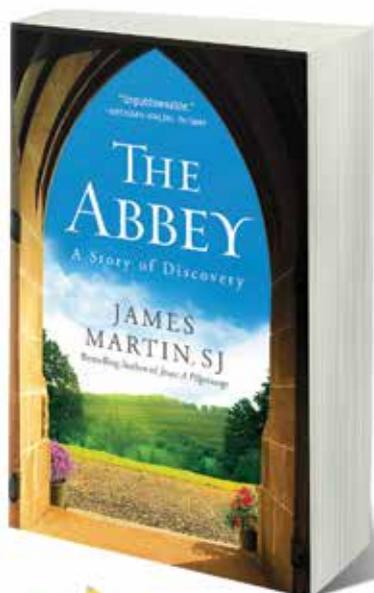
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# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

ELECTION 2016

## Cupich Calls Church to Promote Solidarity After Trump Victory



**A COUNTRY DIVIDED.** Students at Texas State University in San Marcos, Tex., protest Donald Trump's presidential election victory.

“Every election reveals the divisions in society,” Cardinal-designate Blase Cupich of Chicago said a few days after American voters elected Donald J. Trump the next president of the United States. “This one in particular showed the depth of the discontent in the American family,” he added. Cardinal-designate Cupich spoke with *America* in Rome on Nov. 11 on his way back to the United States after a meeting of the Vatican’s Congregation for Bishops.

Civil divisions based on race have long been a problem characteristic of U.S. life. The cardinal-designate said that this election demonstrated, however, that “there has also been a division based on the disparity in the economy, and that is even more pronounced today as many feel trapped in a system that does not work for them.”

“The pope has spoken about this as it pertains to the entire world,” said Cardinal-designate Cupich. “There is inequity in the system, and many are of the opinion that there is no way forward for them or their families.

“In Chicago, that is experienced by those living in neighborhoods that are segregated, where people are convinced that they have no way of moving out and up onto another level on the economic ladder.”

How can the church respond? “I think that we have to first of all re-establish a greater sense of solidarity, revitalizing our democracy, as the pope said to the

Popular Movements last week, and emphasizing the factors that unite us rather than divide us. My hope and aspiration would be that the leaders of the country now would be able to raise up those factors that make us a United States, and which draw us together. We don’t need more divisive language or programs and policies that are going to tear the fabric of the nation apart.”

He urged U.S. bishops to “speak in a pastoral way to calm the fears of people and let them know that we are advocates for them, that we will be their voice, defending them. So for starters, we have to come out [of the fall meeting in Baltimore] with that very clear message to our people.”

The election also indicated divides within the U.S. bishops conference. “I think we have always had that kind of division in the episcopal conference when it comes to how some take up the various issues and give single focus to some over others,” he said. “There are always some who would like us to make one issue, or a set of issues, the non-negotiables.

“The bishops have rejected that approach in each reframing of the ‘Faithful Citizenship’ document.”

But this election cycle a number of bishops issued statements that were close to outright endorsements of then-candidate Trump. That was a phenomenon that the cardinal-designate found worrisome. “We always spoke about principles and the issues,” he said, “but we never used the opportunity of addressing issues related to the campaign by actually naming and criticizing individual politicians by name.

“I think that’s a very disturbing departure from the way we have done things in the past,” the cardinal-designate added. “I am convinced that in the long run this tactic does not suit us well, and it really is not what we

should be doing as bishops.” He said that he hoped the matter would be addressed at the fall meeting of the U.S. bishops in Baltimore; “otherwise our voice will be even further marginalized in the public square.”

ELECTION 2016

## Church Advocates on the Alert As Transition Begins in Washington

**W**hile Catholic advocates said the issues that they prioritize will not change, they will be looking for cues from President-elect Donald Trump’s transition team so that they can shape their messages on concerns as diverse as religious liberty, human dignity and climate change. That requires putting aside the feistiness and anger that arose during the campaign, these officials suggested a day after an election on Nov. 8 that unexpectedly hurtled Mr. Trump into national leadership.

“Two priorities that we have are unity and governance,” said Jonathan Reyes, executive director of the U.S. Catholic bishops’ Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development. “So this divisive election—we somehow have to

get to the other side. That will not be easy, but it’s essential to governance.”

Healing and unity must be achieved among elected officials as well as voters, he added.

Brian Corbin, executive vice president of membership services at Catholic Charities USA, echoed Mr. Reyes. “As we’ve done for 100 years or more, Catholic Charities will continue to work in a bipartisan and bicameral fashion with the House and the Senate and the administration,” Mr. Corbin said hours after Mr. Trump’s win was confirmed. “Helping families and persons who are poor is a non-partisan issue. Everyone should have a stake in it.”

Officials who work on legislative issues for Catholic Relief Services are looking to learn more about the future Trump administration’s positions on a variety of fronts. Bill O’Keefe, vice president for government relations and advocacy at C.R.S., said the agency has closely worked with congressional Republicans and Democrats on foreign assistance bills funding H.I.V./AIDS treatment, human trafficking and hunger. Mr. O’Keefe said he hopes those good relations will carry over to the Trump administra-

tion, especially when it comes to the effects of climate change on poor farming communities and the need to assist refugees from the world’s war zones.

“The incoming administration does not have a clear record on many of these issues, and we do look forward to contributing our Catholic experience and our approaches as they form their plans and policies,” Mr. O’Keefe said. “We will be seeking meetings with the [Trump] transition team with the objective of sharing our experience and helping them see the importance of the really wonderful bipartisan efforts to help the poor around the world.”

Two other advocates said the anger that many voters have felt will not be easy for the country to overcome. Eric LeCompte, a Catholic who is executive director of Jubilee USA, and Sister Simone Campbell, executive director of Network, would like to see the new Congress and the incoming administration go to the people who have felt neglected by the country’s policies on jobs and trade especially.

“Part of what this election shows is there is deep suffering in the country and there are so many people left out by the political system and the economic system,” Mr. LeCompte said.

Sister Campbell said the anger that fueled the Trump victory “is based on the result of failed economic policies” since the 1980s. “It has left a swath of our nation struggling,” she said.

Mr. LeCompte hopes that the practices of predatory hedge funds, trade agreements that fail to consider the needs of workers and corporate tax avoidance that his agency has addressed with Congress and past White House administrations will resonate with Trump’s staff. “We expect all of our issues we work on in terms of how the global economic system works [will receive] a welcome from the White House,” LeCompte said.



**POWER COUPLE.** President-elect Donald Trump and House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wis., meet on Capitol Hill on Nov. 10. Catholic advocates say they can adapt to new political terrain in Washington.

AP PHOTO/ALEX BRANDON

## Catholic Ballot Issues Defeated in Most States

In this year's election, voters went against nearly all of the ballot initiatives backed by Catholic leaders and advocates, except referendums on minimum wage increases and gun control measures in four states. They voted in favor of legalized recreational marijuana in four states and against it in one. In Colorado, voters passed a measure to legalize assisted suicide, making the state the sixth in the nation with a so-called right-to-die law, joining Washington, Oregon, California, Vermont and Montana. Three death penalty referendums all ended in favor of capital punishment. Oklahoma voters re-approved the use of the death penalty after the state's attorney general had suspended executions last year. Nebraska voters also reinstated the death penalty, which had been banned by state lawmakers last year. In California, voters defeated a ballot measure to repeal the death penalty and narrowly passed an initiative aiming to speed up executions of death row convictions.

## Refugees Outweigh Other Concerns

The day before Donald Trump was elected president of the United States, Pope Francis said he would make no judgments about the candidate and was interested only in the impact his policies would have on the poor. Eugenio Scalfari, co-founder and former editor of *La Repubblica*, said he discussed the president-elect with Pope Francis on Nov. 7. "I don't give judgments about persons and politicians; I only want to understand what sufferings their way of proceeding will cause the poor and excluded," the pope said. Mr. Scalfari said the pope's great-

## NEWS BRIEFS

The **Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference**, which includes the bishops of Sudan and South Sudan, said in a statement released on Nov. 8 that "there is nothing more needed than forgiveness" to heal the divisions both countries have experienced over decades of conflict. + A congressional committee in Mexico on Nov. 9 voted down a presidential proposal to **legalize same-sex marriages** across the nation. + Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state, extended "good wishes" to President-elect Donald J. Trump on Nov. 9 and assured him of prayers so that his government "may be fruitful" in **the service of his country** and "well-being and peace" in the world. + The Diocese of Amarillo, Tex., said it was investigating the Rev. Frank Pavone, director of Priests for Life, after he **placed the body** of an aborted fetus on an altar and broadcast an endorsement for the Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump on Facebook Live on Nov. 7. + Aging priests across Ireland are suffering **depression and mental health problems**, say the leaders of Ireland's Association of Catholic Priests, who add that establishing a welfare plan for "Ireland's lost tribe of priests" will be the primary objective of the A.C.P.'s annual meeting on Nov. 16.



Healing in Sudan

est concern was for refugees and immigrants. Christians must do what they can to solve the underlying problems forcing so many to flee their homelands, the pope said. "There are poor people in wealthy countries who are afraid of welcoming people like them from poor countries," the pope said. "It is a perverse cycle that must be interrupted. We must tear down the walls that divide, try to increase well-being and make it more widespread."

## Assisted Suicide Count In Canada Challenged

Euthanasia is occurring in Quebec at three times the rate the government predicted, but obtaining accurate statistics on medically assisted deaths across Canada is almost impossible and could lead to abuse, according to opponents of the practice. Alex Schadenberg,

executive director of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, said that even in Quebec, where the requirements for reporting and oversight are the most rigorous, euthanasia deaths are likely being underreported. A recent report from the Quebec government showed 262 euthanasia deaths in the first seven months after the province legalized the practice last December. In Quebec, the government report included three cases of euthanasia that did not comply with the law, but there is no information on what, if anything, will happen in those cases, said Aubert Martin, executive director of the province's grassroots anti-euthanasia organization, Living with Dignity. "We're talking about killing a human being," Martin said. "This is criminal. Is there going to be any follow-up?"

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

DISPATCH | MIAMI

## New Respect for Haiti's *Kamoken*

**H**aitian expatriates have long considered themselves a “dis-sected” diaspora—in both their new country and the old.

In the United States, the mostly black Haitian-American community has been pushed to the background among other immigrant groups. That is especially true in Miami, where Cuban clout eclipses that of Haitians.

Ironically, things are often worse for Haitian-Americans in Haiti itself. Haitian expats send \$2 billion in remittances to the Western Hemisphere's poorest country each year. Yet despite that, or perhaps because of it, Haiti's political and business elite tend to treat Haitian-Americans with suspicion, if not contempt—to the detriment of Haiti's development, which could sorely use their resources and know-how. During Haiti's brutal Duvalier dictatorship, from 1957 to 1986, Haitian expats were branded a liberal and traitorous threat to the regime, and even the new democratic Haiti has continued to keep them at arm's length.

Finally, however, Haitian-Americans are coming into their own as an expatriate force. It is perhaps most apparent in the political theater.

Jean-Robert Lafortune, head of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition in Miami, says, “In Haiti the elite called us *kamoken*,” which in Creole means “troublemakers.” A big reason: Expats might bring their Americanized notions of transparency into one of the world's clubbiest and most corrupt political-economic systems.

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

As a result, Haiti has refused to offer its diaspora benefits that most expat groups enjoy, like dual citizenship or the right to vote in Haitian elections from abroad. But this year, Haiti's leadership is changing its attitude—largely because it has rarely been so internationally isolated.

Haiti's politics have become so dysfunctional and volatile that the country is still trying to pull off a presidential

Haiti's political and business elite tend to treat Haitian-Americans with suspicion.

election that should have been completed almost a year ago. Exasperated foreign donor nations like the United States and Canada have refused to give any more electoral aid, leaving Haiti looking elsewhere for help when it attempts an election do-over on Nov. 20.

Haitian-Americans are stepping up. In exchange for Haiti's pledge to deliver more diaspora rights, the expats will send a large mission of poll observers to help safeguard the election's credibility. It is the first time the diaspora has been allowed to take part in Haitian politics in this way.

The change reflects a new sense of empowerment back in Miami as well. In recent years, Haitian-Americans have won unprecedented U.S. government seats: North Miami's first Haitian mayor, Florida's first Haitian state representative and the Miami-Dade County Commission's first Haitian chairman. This month Daphne Campbell was elected

Florida's first Haitian state senator.

Haitian-Americans are also using a stronger voice in Washington. In September, the Obama administration announced it would resume deportations of illegal Haitian migrants, because, it claimed rather astonishingly, Haiti's living conditions had markedly improved. Miami's Haitian leaders decried the decision and got it reversed—at least temporarily—soon after Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti in early October.

It is in Matthew's wake that Haitian expats may be starting their most important work: disaster and anti-poverty relief. After the 2010 earthquake, Haiti all but ceded control of the recovery effort to international donors and non-governmental organizations, and the result was largely a debacle. Haitian expats say this time they are determined not to be sidelined.

“No international group knows Haiti better than we do,” says Sandy Dorsainvil of the Haitian-American charity Man Dodo Humanitarian Foundation, which sent a large mission to southwest Haiti days after the hurricane.

The expats have had unusually strong support from someone else who knows Haiti well: Miami's Creole-speaking Catholic archbishop, Thomas Wenski.

Archbishop Wenski, appointed to Miami in 2010, championed the selection of Chibly Langlois as Haiti's first-ever cardinal in 2014. Though the archbishop is of Polish descent, he this year received a lifetime achievement award from Fanm Ayisyen nan Miyami (Haitian Women of Miami), one of Miami's leading Haitian organizations. His efforts are a reminder that Haiti needs to consider Miami a well of comrades—not a nest of *kamoken*.

**TIM PADGETT**

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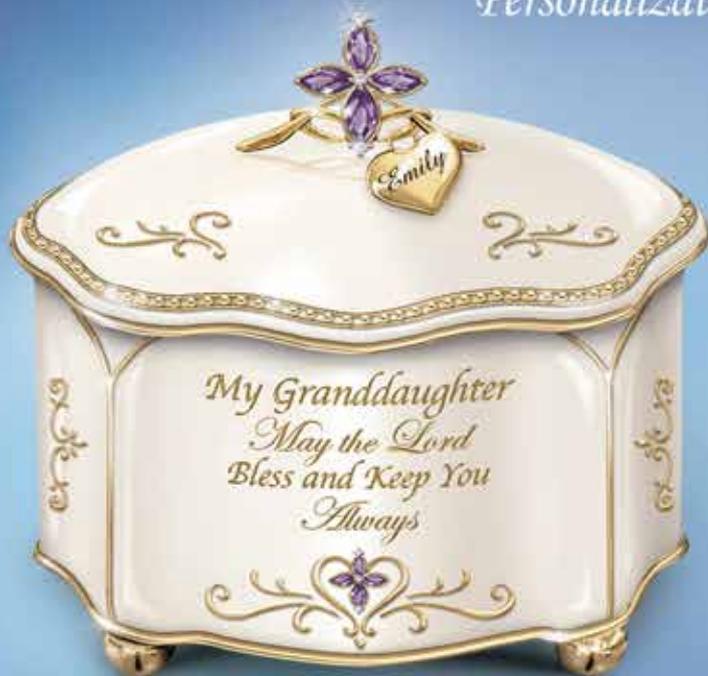
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# Find Your Tribe

In the years following my baptism as a teenager, I had a lot to learn in order to pass for a Roman Catholic follower of Christ—prayers, motions, habits of mind. I had to cultivate friendships with saints, acquire rosaries and read Flannery O'Connor. I had to figure out what to say when people asked why I believed in God. But it wasn't long before I noticed that merely being Catholic would be insufficient. One has to be a particular kind of Catholic.

As much as my newfound co-religionists were Catholic, I discovered, they were also Irish Catholic or Mexican Catholic or Italian Catholic or some mix of those, along with various allegiances to Vatican II or the Latin Mass. Partisans of each subcategory derived a substantial sense of what it meant to be Catholic from the strategies that their immigrant forebears had adopted to gain a foothold in the American middle class. Sometimes these inheritances struck me as treasures I could share, sometimes as closed doors I would never be able to open.

I had no such Catholic inheritance to draw from. Half my family is Jewish, and the other half has been proudly Protestant for centuries. Sometimes I felt angry. Like Jesus before the money changers' carefully laid tables, I wanted to rattle all the self-satisfied, inaccessible Catholic traditions out of the pure and holy church I was trying to join. "Your church is not *the* church!" I wanted to say. Then I got rattled myself.

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NATHAN SCHNEIDER is the author of *Thank You, Anarchy and God in Proof*. Website: [nathanschneider.info](http://nathanschneider.info). Twitter: @ntnsndr.

I took my first trip to Central America a few months after my baptism. The first stop in Guatemala was a city with an old colonial chapel at the top of a hill. One morning, alone, I climbed the long, cracked stairs to reach it and, inside, sat in a pew to rehearse some prayer I had recently memorized. Indigenous families came and went, and I tried not to let them distract me, but they did.

That's when I noticed that they were not just lighting candles and crossing themselves. One or two at a time, they would go behind the ancient altar and come out the other side. Finally I stood up and walked over to that altar, then slowly made my way behind it. There I saw: The whole backside of the altar was covered in wax and chicken feathers.

This church, I realized, was at least two different churches at once. I had been trying to pray in the colonial one, with the prayers, motions and habits of mind I had been learning back home. But there was also an indigenous church there, with another set of prayers, motions and habits of mind entirely—yet somehow the same building, the same God, the same universal church.

Perhaps the convert's chronic discomfort makes it easier for me to see the false comforts people wrap around their Catholicism. There are those who denounce "cafeteria Catholicism" while coddling their own narrow subset of Catholic tradition, much of it borrowed from the American

evangelicalism around them. There are the cradle Catholics who have decided they know the church well enough to reject it—on the basis, usually, of only what they gleaned in adolescence from some poor priest too overworked to take their good, hard questions seriously. There are the innovators who demand that their billion fellow Catholics immediately adopt the well-meaning social experiments that happen to be underway in their corners of the world. The church is so, so much bigger than any of these.

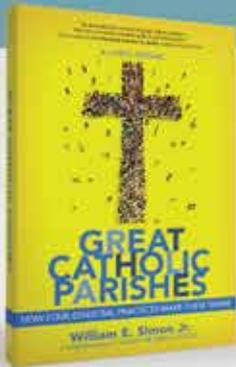
Yet we need our little churches. I don't think I could really call my faith my own until I found the mentorship of a band of marginal, war-resisting

Manhattan Jesuits. With our shared, narrow commitments and living room Masses, we could go deep. But on Sundays I went to my neighborhood cathedral, whose pastor offered the opening prayer at Donald J. Trump's convention. There I would pray and mingle and make friends with souls from all over the world—never entirely easily. That unease disclosed the miracle in God's unhesitating embrace of us all.

For those who feel lost in the church, frustrated by it and tempted to leave, the best advice my experience can offer is this: Find a tribe, a band, a micro-church, however small it needs to be to feel like home—then challenge it relentlessly and habitually in the mystery of the universal whole.

Find a tribe,  
a band, a  
micro-  
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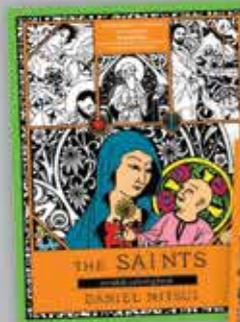
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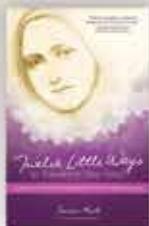
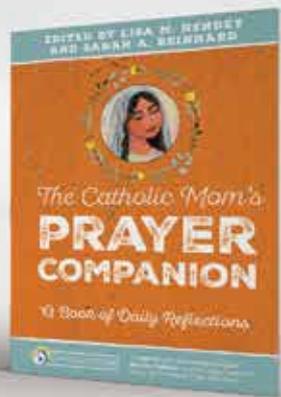
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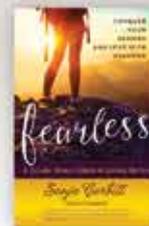
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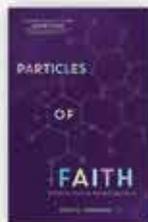
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# Not in Our Name

State power can lead to groundless morality.

BY JOHN GALLAGHER

**T**he state has increasingly assumed the role of arbiter of morals in Western democracies. On issues like abortion, same-sex marriage and assisted suicide, governments have enacted laws contrary to moral norms that until recently were part of a near-consensus. More intrusively, states may require citizens to act against their consciences. The state of California bans health insurance companies from offering employers coverage that limits or excludes abortion. And in the Province of Alberta in Canada, health care providers are not required to participate directly in medically assisted suicide (essentially legalized last year by the Supreme Court of Canada), but they must help refer patients to providers who will carry out the practice. A year ago, referring a patient for this purpose would constitute complicity in a crime. Today it is still complicity in an immoral procedure.

We can sympathize with legislators in a diverse society who must deal with issues in which the law conflicts with the ethical views of some citizens. (It is harder to have sympathy for officials who press citizens to act contrary to their consciences.) But any involvement of the state in moral issues raises the question: Are the public officials qualified to do this? Surveys show that politicians are not among the most trusted of people; they are rated on a par with used-car salesmen. Do we really want those who wield the coercive power of the state also to make moral judgments for us?

Of course, much of the involvement of government in

ethical issues comes not from elected legislators but from judges, especially those on the highest courts in the United States and Canada. If they are going to be our arbiters of moral right and wrong, we need a different selection process for members. Let them pass a comprehensive examination at least as rigorous as one a doctoral candidate in ethics might undergo. Test them on Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas and more modern works, like Reinhold Niebuhr's *Nature and Destiny of Man*. Require candidates not only to explain their ethical beliefs but also to show how these beliefs are based on fundamental principles, on what they take to be the meaning of life, on what they believe it means to be human. Without such a basis, moral beliefs are little more than "gut feelings," and I have little reason to prefer someone else's gut feelings to my own.

If the above suggestion seems outlandish, it is because we have wandered so far into an intellectual wilderness that it seems weird to require those about to

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**JOHN GALLAGHER**, a Roman Catholic priest and member of the Basilian Fathers, is a writer and retired professor of moral theology currently assisting at St. Alphonsus Parish in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.



assume supreme authority to demonstrate their competence to exercise that authority.

How have we come to this pass?

## The Religious Challenge to State Authority

The ancient Greeks and Romans accepted a dominant role for the state in ethical matters. They did not share our clear distinction between moral law and civil law. For them, civil law was a stable reality; legislatures did not meet annually to issue new regulations for this or that profession or industry. Kings applied and perhaps interpreted the law, but they were not expected to be constantly changing it.

To be a good person was to a great extent to be a faithful follower of the law, which was, after all, a code of right conduct. For Aristotle, the law fostered moral virtue. Compel recalcitrant adults and the young to do what is right, and they should develop the virtues that will cause them to obey the law without external compulsion. Compulsion is for those who lack virtue.

A significant curb on the moral authority of the state arose in ancient Israel. There the concern was less to foster obedience to the king and more to get people to obey a higher and better authority. The leaders in this effort were not the kings, who were by and large a sorry lot when judged by the standards of the Mosaic law. It was the prophets, those who brought God's message to bear on the present situation, who took the lead. So there was a separation between the

ethical authorities and those who exercised coercive power.

This separation became even more distinct when Israel was conquered and was no longer led by kings, who at least nominally were subject to the Mosaic law. During the Babylonian exile the pagan leaders, though they could be sympathetic to the Israelites on one point or other, were hardly reliable conduits for the voice of God. Ezekiel, the great prophet during the Exile, insisted that while living under pagan rulers, Israelites would have to be individually responsible. To use our contemporary terms, they had to follow their consciences.

The first Christians were in the same situation that had prevailed in Judaism for several centuries. They constituted a small minority under pagan rulers, a minority that received moral teaching not from the state but from their religion. With Emperor Constantine, who became a Christian, the possibility arose for Christendom—a regime in which the state would embody Christianity. The Christian emperors were expected to exercise authority in matters of religion, as their pagan predecessors had done, but there was already a structure in place that exercised religious and moral authority for Christians.

It would take volumes to unravel the often adversarial relations between church and state in Europe after Constantine and through the Middle Ages. But there was now the possibility of a convergence between moral authority and coercive power. Popes and bishops often tried to keep their hands clean by turning punitive measures over to civil authorities; but so long as the state could be expected to do what the church wanted, the effect was to combine moral teaching with coercive power, with some of the most unseemly results in the history of Christianity. This was not the church sent forth by the Savior with the warning that the disciples would be sheep among wolves, with no other weapons than the Holy Spirit and the word of God.

## The Foundation of Democracy

At the time of the Protestant Reformation, the alliance between church and state was causing major problems. Calvinists and Lutherans objected to being ruled by Catholics, who might enact laws violating Protestant consciences. Catholics had similar objections to living under Protestant regimes. The result was a series of religious wars. One solution was suggested by the principle *cuius regio eius religio* ("whatever your region, this is your religion"). That is, if you are a Lutheran living in Bavaria, either become a Catholic or move to Brandenburg. A parallel solution was available for Catholics in Brandenburg.

**O CANADA. Opponents of the assisted suicide bill rally on June 1 on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario.**



CNS PHOTO/ART BABYC

Another solution, with which we have been living in Western democracies for generations, has been called the separation of church and state. But if that phrase is taken to mean that the state will deal only with issues that have no religious implications, and the church will deal only with issues that have no secular legal implications, it presumes a distinction that does not exist in the actual world. On the important issues with which the state deals—war and peace, unjust discrimination, protection from crime, care of the weak and helpless and so on—Christianity and Judaism propose principles that have practical moral implications.

A more nuanced understanding would admit that the state must deal with many issues that have religious implications, but it must exclude religious considerations when enacting laws. The theory is that it is religious differences which cause unmanageable divisions, so the state must operate on the basis of reason only. Since all people possess reason, it is a unifying agent.

Again, the theory does not hold in the actual world. The great tyrannies of the 20th century that caused the most misery and death were Bolshevik Russia, Nazism and Maoism. All three firmly rejected religion. Trying to exclude religion did not bring about peace and tranquility.

The system, or perhaps it is only a practice, that has allowed Western democracies to operate in relative internal peace is more complicated than the phrase “separation of church and state” suggests. Its basis is the agreement that while citizens may work to achieve (or prevent) a particular law, all will accept the outcome of the political process—at least in the limited sense that they will not violently oppose it.

This acquiescence in the results of the political process makes no sense unless certain conditions are observed. The first is that the state not violate individual conscience. The ancient Greeks and Romans apparently did not worry about individual conscience, but within the Judaeo-Christian tradition it has a sacred quality. It is the voice of God, although normally that voice is discerned indirectly. The command of God trumps edicts issued by the state.

Our secular world has retained some respect for conscience, but the original source of that respect has become obscured. You cannot honestly agree to accept the decrees of the state if you are bound in conscience to disobey some of them; my agreement to accept state laws must presume that they will not coerce me to act against my conscience. This coercion may take various forms: imprisonment, heavy fines, loss of employment or of privileges accorded to other citizens among them.

If the state persists in demanding that certain of its cit-

izens act contrary to their consciences, the only response short of violence is disobedience. If the law goes against the consciences of a considerable portion of the population, it should meet massive civil disobedience. When governments have lost all sense of the sacredness of conscience and believe that the religious commitment of citizens is weak, only then will they presume to pass laws that violate consciences.

What of those cases, such as allowing abortion, when the state may not command particular individuals to act against their moral judgment but does enact laws that go contrary to deeply held moral beliefs of many citizens? Such instances are unavoidable in a nation that lacks a strong moral consensus. Even in such cases, reason requires that officials tread extremely carefully. They must recognize that many of their subjects follow authorities that they believe are more competent, more time-tested and more truthful than the state. Officials should ask themselves: Am I qualified to make the moral judgments that will underlie my decisions? That brings us to back to that fundamental issue—competence.

### **The Contemporary Problem**

The English historian Christopher Dawson believed that so long as Western society held to the Judeo-Christian ethical tradition, there was enough consensus for citizens to live together in relative harmony and take part in the complex process of making and enforcing laws. If religious faith fades, the ethical beliefs that it engendered will persist for some time, but they are gradually eroded and the imperfect but powerful ethical consensus that undergirds peaceful co-existence disappears. Dawson thought that this point had arrived with the appearance of state absolutism in the 20th century, first with the Bolsheviks and then with Fascism.

It has occurred in our time and not only in someone else's country. Differences of opinion on ethical questions have become so acute that many people have grave misgivings about the direction in which governments and courts are leading us.

The problem is not only that the ethical beliefs of our citizens are increasingly diverse. A troubling number of politicians and judges are making moral decisions with no articulated basis at all. A recent development in the Canadian Province of Alberta is typical. The minister of education has proposed a law (not yet implemented) to which both secular and Catholic schools are expected to conform, stating that the sole and sufficient condition for determining the gender of a student is her or his perception of his or her gender identity. If individuals with bodies of one sex identify as members of the opposite sex, then they have the right to be treated as members of that sex. Further, students who

## **A troubling number of politicians and judges are making moral decisions with no articulated basis at all.**

identify as transgender are tended to by school personnel without notifying their parents. When a dispute broke out at a Catholic school about how to deal with the issue, the minister threatened to place the school under the direct governance of the provincial Department of Education.

But the minister's proposal does not provide argumentation in support of its ethical positions. It does not even go into the scientific basis for its stand. Specialists have argued that except for cases where there are chromosomal or serious hormonal abnormalities, there is evidence that going along with a child's self-identification as belonging to a gender contrary to her or his bodily structure is likely to cause more harm than good. (See a recent article by Dr. Blaine Achen and Dr. Theodore Fenske of the faculty of medicine of the University of Alberta: "A Medical Response to Alberta Education's 'Gender Diversity Guidelines and Best Practices.'") The unsupported assumption of competence by government authorities apparently is not confined to the area of ethics.

It seems likely that the minister declined to give any satisfactory arguments for his position because he did not see the need for them. It is a common enough phenomenon. When a stance on some issue has gained support from a number of people who are considered enlightened (usually because they are sympathetic to some group's insistent demands), then for many the matter is settled. It is a sort of "gut feeling." Any further ratiocination on the issue is less an argument from principle than a justification of a position already arrived at on the basis of this feeling.

Serious ethical discourse begins with the realization that my gut feeling about an issue may be very different from yours. This fact has led some to conclude that there is no objective basis for ethics. But the logic of this position is that might makes right because we are bound by no code that transcends our own desires. That way lies chaos and with it endless conflict, unless a despot rescues us by enforcing order.

The alternative is to use our minds to begin from solid starting points and demonstrate, definitively or as very likely, that a particular ethical position is valid or invalid. Many contemporaries seem to avoid this stark choice by simply following their gut feelings and deciding that those who disagree with them are hopeless troglodytes.

## Is There a Solution?

If we are going to use reason as our ally, a first step is to require those with whom we disagree to give the rational basis for their positions. We also have to make sure our own arguments have a cogent rational basis. Our arguments against physician-assisted suicide, for example, have often focused on the slippery slope argument (allow this practice now, and in time the grounds for the practice will widen). This argu-

ment has a factual basis, but it looks like a rear-guard action designed to cover an eventual withdrawal from the battle. If you cannot show that regardless of the consequences, it is wrong to put people to death on the basis that their lives are not living, then the slippery slope is not only unavoidable but is also logical. Instead, we should insist that the advocates of assisted suicide give their criteria for deciding that some lives are not worth living and that they must be ready to defend those criteria.

To change people's thinking will be difficult. The Catholic Church, however, is well positioned to help bring about such a change. We have a tradition of principled argumentation in ethics, a tradition that has been neglected to some extent recently and needs to be recovered. The Catholic Church in North America also has an impressive number of educational institutions, from kindergarten to graduate schools. The challenge is to mobilize an array of potential resources. This will mean convincing a great many people that such mobilization is necessary, including the hierarchy, clergy, deans of theology in seminaries, graduate faculties, publishing houses and whoever is responsible for teaching people how to think logically and critically.

Perhaps we could appoint Gilbert Keith Chesterton to be the heavenly patron of this effort, he whose Father Brown was able to unmask a man posing as a priest because the latter had no respect for reason. ▲



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# Whose Land?

American exceptionalism runs up against ‘Laudato Si’

BY JOHN D. WILSEY

In 1846, Representative John Quincy Adams asked the clerk of the House of Representatives to read aloud Gn 1:28 (“Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky...”). Adams was arguing for the United States to take control of the entire Oregon territory, even at the risk of war with Great Britain, and he used the dominion mandate of Genesis as his justification: “We claim that country [Oregon]...to make the wilderness bloom as the rose, to establish laws, to increase, multiply, and subdue the earth, which we are commanded to do by the first behest of God Almighty.”

Since the Colonial period, Americans have seen themselves as an exceptional people, a view that has taken two forms: manifest destiny and exemplarism. Manifest destiny is the belief that God has chosen Americans as his special people and has ordained that they control the North American continent. Adams’s views on Oregon are consistent with manifest destiny, as was President James K. Polk’s motivation to go to war against Mexico. (Ironically, that war forced the United States to compromise and divide the Oregon Territory with the British.) But John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, articulated the exemplarist form of exceptionalism when he referred to the colony as a “city upon a hill” in 1630. In this view, America must serve as an example to the world, of faithfulness to high ideals. Abraham Lincoln fits within this exemplarist framework. He consistently pointed, in his many critiques of the institution of slavery, to the necessity of being true to the equality clause of the Declaration of Independence.

I have called these two articulations of American identity “closed” and “open.” Closed exceptionalism hijacks Christian doctrines and imagery to cast Americans as divinely chosen, morally innocent and entrusted by God with a land to act upon and dispose of however suits them. But open exceptionalism is a political and social expression of true American identity. It does not rely on contrived religiosity to advance a unifying vision for how Americans see themselves in relation to the world, or how to interact with the bountiful and beautiful land that they occupy.

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JOHN D. WILSEY is assistant professor of history and Christian apologetics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Tex. This article is adapted from his book *American Exceptionalism and Civil Religion: Reassessing the History of an Idea*.

Pope Francis’ “Laudato Si’” presents a challenge to closed American exceptionalism. The encyclical offers a potent critique of the “drill, baby, drill” mindset of Americans who believe that if a natural resource is available, we are obliged to exploit it, whatever the cost. It also critiques the “throwaway culture” of which we are all a part, and explains how that culture is contributing to the general destruction of the good gift of creation given to us by a loving God. Pope Francis stresses that the Christian understanding of the dominion mandate is that God gave humans responsibility over creation not for purely utilitarian purposes, but to be stewards of it as a good in itself. After all, God called the world he made “good” six times in the creation story.

“Laudato Si’” offers a developed theology of creation, consistent with Scripture, church tradition and a tradition of American conservationist thought that includes the writings of Henry David Thoreau, W. E. B. Du Bois, George Washington Carver, Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir. In particular, his articulation of the dominion mandate captures the essence of what Francis calls “integral ecology.” Francis teaches that justice and injustice among human persons have direct ramifications for the environment. Where there is injustice inflicted on one group of persons by another, the land also suffers. Human flourishing does not occur separate from the flourishing of the earth.

Despite Francis’ eloquent and thoroughly Christian articulation of the dominion mandate, it seems unlikely that “Laudato Si’” will advance a productive dialogue about environmental stewardship in the United States without profound national self-examination and a fundamental reassessment of American identity. “Laudato Si’” has been described as a *cri de coeur* by R. R. Reno, but it is really more of a prophetic word along the lines of Ezekiel, as the Rev. James Kurzynski writes, indicting American religious nationalism or, more specifically, closed American exceptionalism. Because closed exceptionalism is so deeply ingrained in the history of how Americans imagine themselves, this myth stands as a serious stumbling block to American en-





"WESTWARD THE COURSE OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY (MURAL STUDY, U.S. CAPITOL)," BY EMANUEL LEUTZE, (1861). PHOTO: SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM. BEQUEST OF SARA CARR UPTON

gagement with “*Laudato Si*.” But open exceptionalism is historically and theologically in agreement with Pope Francis’ articulation of the dominion mandate and does provide a basis for civil discourse.

Francis’ understanding of the dominion mandate is linked with the goodness of creation and the *imago dei*, both of which are declared in Genesis 1. He also finds its roots in Jeremiah 1, in which God affirms, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.” But he goes on to tie God’s relationship to humans as their creator to a multidimensional relational pattern. He writes, “Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself.” Reality is thus grounded in this inextricable three-dimensional relational link. Adam and Eve were given the responsibility in Genesis 2 to till and keep the garden. Francis writes, “‘Tilling’ refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while ‘keeping’ means caring, protecting, overseeing, and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature” (Nos. 66, 67). But human sin “disrupted” the “harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole,” and “distorted our mandate to ‘have dominion’ over the earth....” Thus, “the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together” and “we have to realize

that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*” (Nos. 48, 49).

Francis’ prophetic word confronts closed American exceptionalist accounts of the environment. Closed exceptionalism regards America as God’s chosen people, innocent of social problems and dwelling on a land set aside for them and their children forever. It is an exclusivist rendering of American identity, informed by religious language, manipulated to suit a nationalistic purpose. As closed exceptionalism relates to the environment, the land is to be acted upon in, as Francis describes, “the unbridled exploitation of nature” (No. 67).

### A Plantation Mentality

In thinking historically about closed exceptionalist accounts of the land, perhaps nothing is more obvious regarding this attitude of “acting upon” than the plantation economies of the antebellum South. The invention of the cotton gin, the Louisiana Purchase and the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 opened the way for Americans to expand the cultivation of cotton into the territories of the old Southwest, particularly in Alabama and Mississippi. In 1800, the United

States was producing 73,000 bales; by 1820, the yield was 10 times that number, and the nation became the leading producer of cotton, passing British India. Because land was becoming available in such vastness to so many at so little a cost, many viewed it as limitless and disposable. As Daniel Walker Howe wrote, the settlers “gave little thought to preserving the natural environment for future use.... They employed profligate methods of agriculture and land-clearing, heedlessly burning timber and valuable ground cover, leaving precious topsoil to wash or blow away.” Because farmers and plantation owners took the short view, when the land was exhausted, they simply packed up and moved elsewhere. Virginia led the nation in out-migration in the decades leading up to the Civil War, sending a million or so people west in search of fertile lands.

The application of chattel slavery did particular violence to the land. Once planters claimed land and designated it for cotton cultivation, slaves cleared the ancient forests and plowed in long, straight rows. Cotton planters rarely rotated their crops or improved their fields. When the soil’s nutrients had been exhausted by overcultivation, landowners purchased new lands and moved on. “Migration was *driven* by soil loss and soil sickening and *drawn* by cheap land,” writes the historian Roger Kennedy. “Cheap land was treated as disposable. Cheap things usually are.”

The Southern plantation economy is a historical exam-

ple of how Americans saw the land. Manifest destiny, the 19th-century notion that God had ordained the North American continent be dominated by the United States, was fueled by greed and by the desire to exhaust natural resources and extend slavery farther and farther west.

But other voices from history present an articulation of exceptionalism that corresponds more closely with Francis’ theology of creation and the dominion mandate. George Washington Carver (1864–1943), the famous African-American botanist at Tuskegee University, sought to make right some of the wrongs slavery perpetrated against both the people and the land. Kimberly Smith wrote that Carver “saw humans as ‘copartners’ with God in the creation—and junior partners at that, whose scientific study of nature is inspired by God and justified by its charitable purpose of relieving human suffering.” Carver’s biographer, the historian Mark Hersey, wrote that “Carver’s deep religious sensibilities, which blended Christianity with a profound veneration of the natural world that bordered on mysticism, shaped his work” along with “ideas about how impoverished African American farmers could overcome the obstacles facing them.” Carver’s notion of conservation was thus informed by the dominion mandate. For Carver, God’s command to humans to fill, rule and subdue the earth was not to be understood in the closed exceptionalist sense of conquest. Rather, the dominion mandate should be carried out with patient care and nurturing that benefitted the many, rather than the few.

Carver’s view of the dominion mandate—that the land is to be cared for, stewarded, husbanded and conserved for the benefit of those who live on it—is an open exceptionalist view of the land. Everyone knew that North America was unique and held immense potential in the years of settlement. But while some who held a closed exceptionalist view of the land meant to conquer and exploit it, all the while denying it to those they deemed outsiders, others had an open exceptionalist view that did not separate the land from its people when it came to justice and flourishing.

Closed American exceptionalist figures like Rush Limbaugh cast “Laudato Si” as an un-American diatribe, an attempt to undermine American sovereignty and intrude on the American way of life. But open American exceptionalism, while regarding the land as special, deems it the heritage of a pluralistic society, a gift of God for all people. Closed exceptionalism is a stumbling block to engagement, but this understanding of American identity has been the historical default for Americans. Whenever Americans have seen themselves through an open exceptionalist paradigm, they have had to struggle to do so. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 1835, “Nothing is more embarrassing in the ordinary intercourse of life than this irritable patriotism of the Americans.” Perhaps American patriotism rightly considered can still win the day. **A**

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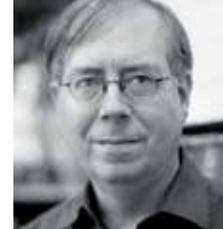
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# The Change Is Us

This campaign year has been unusually heavy on nostalgia and worries that our nation's best days are behind us. In a widely cited Pew Research Center poll, 46 percent of voters said that life has gotten worse for "people like them" over the past 50 years, and the Republican president-elect, Donald J. Trump, based his campaign on a promise to make the United States "great again."

I can appreciate the disorientation caused by social change. In the 1970s, I grew up in a neighborhood just north of Boston that could serve as an example of the good old days. It was more urban than the television town of Mayberry or the settings of Norman Rockwell paintings, but it was a place where neighbors looked after each other, where kids could play in the street and walk to school without fear and where families had friendly rivalries over who put up the best Christmas decorations. Our neighbors included a police officer, the friendly owner of a coffee shop in the nearby business district and a woman who amazed us with her singing ability at the annual Italian festival honoring St. Rocco.

The houses in the neighborhood look much the same now, but where it was once mostly Irish and Italian, it is now largely an immigrant community, with new Asian and Middle Eastern residents. About half the conversations on the street are in languages other than English.

What accounts for the change? The government had nothing to do with it, nor did political correctness. What hap-

pened is that when my generation grew up, we did not want to live in my neighborhood anymore. The houses, many of them double- or triple-deckers requiring frequent paint jobs, were too old and did not have enough bathrooms. The driveways could not accommodate separate cars for everyone over 16. Our neighbor's coffee shop did not have the low prices or wide selection of sugary treats found at Dunkin' Donuts, and the two nearby Catholic churches had tiny parking lots, which created frustrating bottlenecks when people raced to leave after Mass.

My generation preferred to raise families (with fewer children) in newer, much bigger houses near the highways and shopping malls. Front porches were out, traded for identical lawns and for sprawling backyards that afforded privacy from pesky neighbors. Sidewalks were unnecessary when everyone drove everywhere, and there was no good reason for an adult to be wandering around without a car anyway. The neighborhood I grew up in got grayer and emptier, and the city's downtown died, one store closing at a time.

But my hometown must have good bone structure. It stayed safe and intact, and in the new century it attracted new residents. It is, after all, still a good place to raise a family, with a grand old public library and a subway line into Boston. Immigrants began to fix up downtown buildings and open shops and restaurants, many with Chinese or Arabic signs. The old-fashioned coffee shop is long gone, but now people congre-

gate over bubble tea, and young men in white robes walk together to services at the Islamic center. The neighborhood is not better or worse than when I grew up, but it is reassuring that a sense of community has been restored.

There have been a lot of changes in the United States over the past century that seem to have been imposed upon us—most notably, the collapse of the manufacturing sector, which wiped out employment opportunities in entire cities and counties, and an increasingly distant and unresponsive political system. But we have gone for other big changes with gusto (to borrow a word from the 1970s commercials urging us to stock up on Schlitz beer). We largely chose to live farther and

I can appreciate the disorientation caused by social change.

farther apart from each other—both literally and figuratively—and to buy stuff from big-box stores or Amazon rather than from shop owners who live down the street. Social research now tells us that having fewer opportunities for face-to-face meetings with our neighbors is causing loneliness and depression. But we chose to close out the world with earbuds and to watch TV and listen to music alone rather than participate in our communities. No one came into our country to make us do these things.

Maybe our nostalgia for "better days," and the unfortunate bitterness toward immigrants and younger Americans that so often surfaced this year, is simply a case of buyer's remorse.

**ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN**

**ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN** is an associate editor of *America*.



# The Ecumenical Pope

When Pope Francis flew to Sweden on Oct. 31 to participate in the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, Marcelo Figueroa, 59, a member of the Evangelical Church in Argentina and an old friend, was on the plane too. He was there as the recently appointed director of a new and original Argentine edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican daily, that will bring the pope's words to his homeland every week.

For Mr. Figueroa, the pope's participation in the ecumenical commemoration of the Reformation at the Lutheran cathedral in Lund was not only a truly historic moment, it was also for him a profoundly emotional one, given their personal relationship and work together in the field of ecumenism in Buenos Aires for 17 years.

They have known each other since 1998, when Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J., became archbishop of that metropolis. Mr. Figueroa, then director of the United Bible Society in Argentina, believed it was "very important" to have an ecumenical relationship with the Catholic Church and felt convinced this could be developed around the Bible. He proposed to the new archbishop that they "work together" around the Bible, and he received an enthusiastic response. Subsequently they created events like The Day of the Bible in Buenos Aires and produced papers on biblical texts. "In this way, we came close together, we became very close friends," Mr. Figueroa confided over

dinner after the recent trip to Sweden.

Many years later, after Mr. Figueroa left his job with the U.B.S., Archbishop Bergoglio invited him to work for the archdiocese as "a biblical consultant." For the next three years, this Protestant layman-cum-biblical scholar prepared reflections on the Bible every day for Catholics in Buenos Aires, using the *lectio divina* method, and posted them on the archdiocesan website.

In 2010 Cardinal Bergoglio invited him to work as assistant to the director of the archdiocese's television Channel 21. That September, Mr. Figueroa proposed that the archbishop participate in an interreligious television program to discuss social problems in the light of Scripture. Cardinal Bergoglio at first hesitated but finally agreed to do four programs when he understood that it would be a discussion with his friend Rabbi Abraham Skorka and with Mr. Figueroa as the Protestant anchorman. The project worked well. They made 31 hourlong programs between October 2010 and February 2013. In the November after the papal election, Mr. Figueroa published their conversations in Spanish (now in English as *The Bible: Living Dialogue, Religious Faith in Modern Times*).

It was hardly surprising, then, that Marcelo Figueroa was profoundly moved when Pope Francis declared in his homily at the Lutheran Cathedral in Lund: "With gratitude we acknowledge that the Reformation helped give great-

er centrality to sacred Scripture in the church's life. Through shared hearing of the word of God in the Scriptures, important steps forward have been taken in the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, whose 50th anniversary we are presently celebrating."

Commenting on the ecumenical commemoration afterward, Mr.

Figueroa hailed Francis' presence as "most significant" and "an important part of ecumenical history." He noted that the pope participated in a truly humble way throughout, wearing the same stoles as the Lutheran bishops. He interpreted all this as Francis' way of saying to the Lutherans, "Yes, I am the pope, but, first of all,

'Yes, I am the pope, but, first of all, I am your brother!'

I am your brother!"

Mr. Figueroa emphasized that this ecumenical event was "a commemoration, not a celebration" because "we do not celebrate this division." On the contrary, he said, in Lund "we recognized the scandal of this division in the world and in the heart of Christ, we acknowledged our sins, and we accepted to work together in 'the ecumenism of mercy' to help all who suffer or are excluded, and especially today migrants and refugees."

Marcelo Figueroa concluded with this significant remark: "Bergoglio did not discover ecumenism when he became pope; he had practiced it as bishop in Buenos Aires for many years, even in the face of opposition."

GERARD O'CONNELL

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

# Such Great Heights

Growing up with my boys at Mass

BY BRIAN DOYLE

I am standing in the middle pew, far left side, at Mass. We choose this pew when possible for the light pouring and puddling through the stained-glass windows. The late-morning Mass is best because the sun finally makes it over the castlements of the vast hospital up the hill, and the sun has a direct, irresistible shot at the windows, and as my twin sons used to say, the sun looves jumping through the windows and does so with the headlong pleasure of a child.

They used to be small enough to choose different sun-shot colors on the floor and jump from one color to another, my sons. They would do this before Mass and after Mass and occasionally during Mass on the way back from being blessed by Father John in the years before their own First Communion.

Sometimes they would rustle and fidget impatiently in the pews and fiddle with missals and fold the parish newsletter into ships and trumpets and bang the kneeler up and down, until they were arrested by the wither of the maternal glare, but then came Communion, which meant Father John bending down from his great height like a tree in a storm and blessing them with his hand as big as a hat on their heads. They loved that and loved whispering loudly Hi Johnny! to him, which would make him grin, which they counted as a win, to make

the sturdy dignified celebrant grin like a kid right in the middle of Communion!

When they were 3 and 4 years old, they used to stand on the pew next to me and lean on me as if I were a tree and they were birds. Sometimes one would fall asleep and I would sense this through my arm and shoulder so that when I sat down I would be sure to haul the sleeper down safely. Sometimes they would lean hard against me to try to make me grin like Father John grinned during Communion.

Once I discovered that they had conspired before Mass to lean on dad so hard that they would squish Dad! And he would get six inches taller right there in the church! Wouldn't that be funny? Sometimes they would lean against me just from a sheer simple mammalian affection, the wordless pleasure of leaning against someone you love and trust. But always I was bigger and they were smaller, then.

Then came years during which there was no leaning because generally they were leaning away from their parents and from the church and from authority in all its figments and forms and constitutions and generally they sat silent and surly and solitary, even during the Sign of Peace, which distressed their parents, which was the point.

But now they are 20 and one is much taller than me and the other is much more muscular. One is lanky and one is sinewy. One is willowy and



the other is burly. And the other day in Mass I leaned against one and then the other and I was moved, touched, pierced down to the fundamentals of my soul. What were once pebbles are now mountains. They are tall and strong and stalwart and charming and at the Sign of Peace people in all directions reach for them smiling.

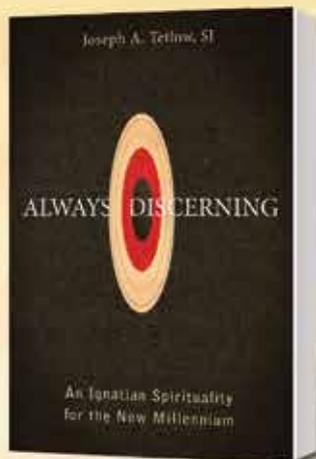
When I lean against them, they do not budge and now I am the one leaning against men whom I love and trust and admire. Sometimes I lean too hard against them on purpose just to make them grin. Sometimes by chance I am the first one back from Communion and I watch as they approach, wading gracefully through the shivered colors of the sun streaming through the windows. Time stutters and reverses and it is always yesterday and today. Maybe the greatest miracle is memory. Think about that this morning, quietly, as you watch the world flitter and tremble and beam. ■

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**BRIAN DOYLE** is the editor of *Portland Magazine* at the University of Portland and the author, most recently, of *So Very Much the Best of Us* (ACTA).

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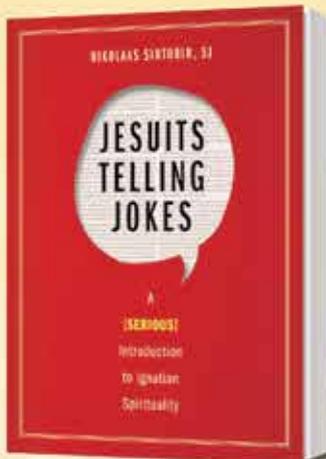


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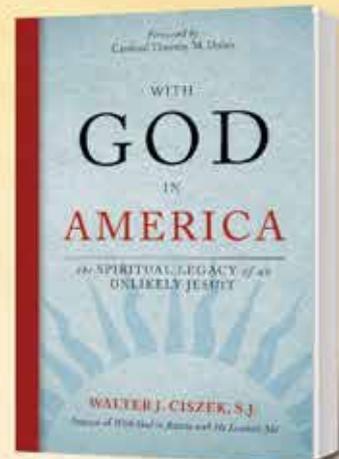


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# Through the Motions

My patient journey with depression

BY NICOLE BAZIS

I was 13 years old when I took my first steps inside the lobby of Cardinal O'Hara High School. It was just after the New Year, and returning students were already stationed at their desks. Peeking into the classrooms, I saw orderly, uniformed rows facing the crucifix, ready to chant in unison the Our Father and Hail Mary. There was no cue from the P.A. system to begin the prayers; there were no pamphlets to guide the recitation of those well-ingrained verses.

I was an invader in this place. But as I walked down the first-floor hallway of administrative offices alongside my hesitant parents, I could not help but feel the rhythmic pulse that beat deep within the foundation. To the students, staff and faculty, the pulse was familiar, perhaps no longer even detectable. They spoke, signed, sat and stood with the ease of being gently guided by an old friend. I was not so naïve as to believe that each person went along willingly. But, as an outsider looking in, I could see no sign of dissent or rebellion. Everyone went through the movements. Everyone passed as someone who belonged.

They sat facing the whiteboard, waiting to start their lessons. I sat before the principal, waiting to be accepted as a member of their community.

I was 13 years old when I became depressed. The light that had once

shone in my eyes when I woke each morning ready to conquer the day slowly burned down. It was a period of time that I can only recall as tortur-

fort and gave up on homework assignments, extracurricular activities and even personal hygiene. I did not care if I missed school, and, when confront-



ous and confusing. I was not the happy person I tried so hard to be when winning the approval of my teachers and peers. I had been a clarinetist in the concert, pit and marching bands for many years and a dedicated performer for a local dance studio since age 3. But I could no longer talk endlessly about the hobbies I was once proud to pursue. I was slowly becoming more and more withdrawn from the person I had always been, and frightfully, no one seemed to notice or care.

By the time anyone noticed I was not acting normally, I was very sick. I had no desire for anything that took ef-

ed by counselors and therapists, I was forced to conclude that I did not care if I lived or died. My friends drew their own conclusions, whatever they were, and collectively decided that I was not worth their concern. Everything and everyone that I turned to for love and acceptance was missing when I needed it. To this day, I believe it was that realization, more than being suicidal, that broke something deep within me.

## Life as an Outsider

I transferred to this Catholic high school as a last resort. I had the grades, the recommendations and the tuition

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**NICOLE BAZIS**, a native of the greater Philadelphia area, graduated from Fordham University Lincoln Center in 2016. She is working toward a master of arts in theological studies with a concentration in early church history at Princeton Theological Seminary.

money necessary to start as a freshman that winter. I was handed a class schedule with room numbers that meant nothing. I was shuffled away to the lunch period already in progress to introduce myself to future classmates whose names meant nothing. I was instructed on where to shop for the appropriate attire. The brands and colors were as unfamiliar as every pair of eyes that looked with curiosity upon the quiet new girl.

But, like my new classmates, I went through the motions. I did all that was asked of me. Despite what my family believed, I did this not because I had faith in my decisions and the path that I was choosing for myself. Rather, I was numb enough to accept that nothing that I wandered into, no matter how uncertain the situation, could leave me as defeated as the environment I was choosing to walk away from.

Just a semester before, I had been

no different from the students I was now meeting. I attended a public school in the district I had belonged to since kindergarten. My older siblings set the pace and tested the waters. It

## Religion played no positive role in my life; it just further separated me from the inclusion I craved.

was expected that my transition, as the youngest, through all of the same milestones would be the smoothest. There were friend groups, fallouts, failures and phases—all of which were unique to my journey but nothing so out of the ordinary as to unsettle unsuspecting adults and relatives. I was happy to be included and loved by those who mattered to me.

In middle school, it did not make a difference to my social and academic

life whether or not I could count on religion. My parents, one a non-practicing Methodist and the other a non-practicing Presbyterian, did not baptize their children into a specific church. My siblings and I were told that the decision was ultimately ours to make, and whatever we chose would be respected—as long as we identified as “some sort of” Christian. My friends had parents who took the opposite approach when it came to their children’s spiritual journeys. They were forced into Catholicism at birth, and eventually most were turned off by organized religion.

I was told I was lucky to be exempt. But in my public high school, when different social cliques came together on Thursday mornings to rant about the nuns who ran last night’s C.C.D. class, and when attendance dropped conspicuously on holy days, it was difficult not to feel like I was missing out. Even in that secular setting, I sensed



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a pulse that reverberated through the playground blacktop, the hallway lockers and the cafeteria food lines. But it was not my own. Religion played no positive role in my life; it just further separated me from the inclusion I craved.

I occasionally asked myself whether or not I believed in God, and thought back to various services I attended over the years. I could sing fun little songs from Presbyterian summer Bible camp and admired the stained-glass windows inside the Lutheran church I sometimes frequented. But I found I was searching for something that refused to make itself known. It was frustrating to witness others being called to worship. If God existed, I concluded, God was not interested in my soul. God did not include me, but my too-cool-for-religion friend group did.

That is, until they didn't.

### **A New Beginning**

My decision to transfer came as a surprise to many, as I kept many things secret during that dark period. When I started classes at Cardinal O'Hara, I was not interested in a new beginning. I simply wanted to finish my required time. I was not interested in new friends, either. But it turned out God had a different plan. It took time and patience, but new friends found me. They did not give up on the moody and disconnected new student. Nothing was easy, but I was taught how to assimilate. It was a new form of love I had not yet known.

I was 18 years old when I was baptized into the Catholic Church. The first person I was introduced to on my first day of class stood next to me at the baptismal font as my chosen godmother. Since then, I have decided that my faith lies in my journey. I do not fear a lack of acceptance because I know that God has a plan in motion. With God, I am no longer an outsider looking in. With God, I have found my missing community. 



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## BOOKS & CULTURE

ART | KAREN SUE SMITH

### NO ORDINARY LIFE

*Kerry James Marshall: the experience of black America*

**K**erry James Marshall (b. 1955) has a vocation within a vocation. For 30 years he has worked to fill a gaping hole in the Western art tradition, a virtual absence of black people featured in the works on the walls of museums. As cultural arbiters, museum curators determine not only what is (and is not) beautiful but

which art is (and is not) important and worthy of being shown. The absence of black artists and figures in most museums is one more example of how, and to some extent why, black lives have been overlooked for centuries. That is precisely Marshall's point. To correct the problem, he has spent his life making black life visible through excellent

painting. It is a tremendous achievement that edifies us all.

"Kerry James Marshall: Mastry" is a ravishingly beautiful art show that can stir the emotions and challenge thinking. This retrospective by a living artist fills two floors of the Met Breuer Museum in New York City. The exhibition, mostly paintings, is beautiful simply because Marshall's colors, techniques and compositions are masterful. But the main reason to go is to see how Marshall, who is black, depicts the lives and experiences of ordinary black Americans—to see how he paints

PHOTO: THE MET BREUER/ COLLECTION OF RICK HUNTING AND JOLANDA HUNTING

childhood, family, neighborhoods, romantic love and courtship, Black Power, the civil rights movement, death and mourning. You will also find a small pantheon of black heroes or secular saints, some with halos. (The artist's education at a Catholic grammar school is evident in these and other early works.) We see Marshall's personal viewpoint on canvas, of course. But given the racial tensions voiced during this year's presidential race, the violence that prompted the Black Lives Matter movement and the continuing confrontations between black Americans and police around the nation, Marshall's perspective could not be timelier.

After graduating from Otis Art Institute in 1978, Marshall taught art in Los Angeles and Chicago. He has received a number of awards and residencies, including a MacArthur fellowship in 1997. His work has been shown throughout the United States and in Italy and Germany. As an educator, he continues to work on a graphic novel and animated film called "Rythm Mastr," the idiosyncratic spelling from which the exhibition's title is derived. These are part of his ongoing outreach to young people.

Distinctively, Marshall paints black people using black paint, without tints. The artist also uses highly saturated complementary colors (red/green, blue/orange) and sometimes bold patterns on clothing and in backgrounds to further heighten the color contrast. Conversely, in two or three works, Marshall paints a black person on a black background, as if daring viewers to look long enough to find the subject. This takes effort and time. As every great artist does, Marshall shows the viewer exactly where to look.



PHOTO: THE MET BREUER/METROPOLITAN PIER AND EXHIBITION AUTHORITY; MCCORMICK PLACE ART COLLECTION

Opposite: "The Lost Boys" (1993); above: "Past Times"; below: "De Style" (1997)



PHOTO: THE MET BREUER/ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

Marshall also works on what he calls "the grand scale." In art history, size often conveys importance. An epic battle scene, a royal coronation or a miracle of Jesus may demand a large canvas.

Jacques-Louis David's painting "The Coronation of Napoleon" (1807) is 32 feet wide. Marshall's painting of people at a local barbershop ("De Style" 1993) is over 10 feet wide. What many would

consider a quotidian event, Marshall deems important.

He also treats events of historical magnitude—slavery, lynchings and the civil rights movement that marked his generation. Marshall's family was living in Birmingham, Ala., in 1963 when four girls were killed there by a bomb detonated in a Baptist church. They moved to the Watts area of Los Angeles when Marshall was 9 years old, just before race riots torched much of the neighborhood in 1965, leaving 34 dead and 1,000 injured. His family lived in Nickerson Gardens, a low-income housing project the artist depicted in "The Garden Project," a series of paintings. In "Watts 1963," three children play on green grass under palms, a blue sky and sunshine. An overhead banner promises "more of everything." Yet the artist visually communicates that the utopian promise falls short. Note the children's serious expressions, the fetal position one boy takes and the opaque drips and surface smears that deface the landscape.

While many of Marshall's works are deeply affecting, "The Lost Boys" (1993) moved me to tears. Here the artist memorializes the deaths of two children. A larger-than-life-size boy sits in a toy car, the kind you put a coin in to have a quick ride in place. The second boy recalls a real-life child killed by police in his home while holding a water pistol they mistook for a gun. In the artwork, the child holds a pink pistol, obviously a toy. Nearby, the trunk of a Tree of Life is beset by serpentine yellow tape: "Police line, do not cross," it reads. The dates bracket summer vacation, Marshall told the literary editor Charles Rowell in an interview, when children "spend the most time simply being children and playing and experiencing things without a lot of structure around them."

A great retrospective like "Mastry" offers an entire body of work developed over time. It shows well how Marshall

simplified and distilled his work after 2000. As contemporary museums expand their holdings by black artists, Marshall and his peers—Carrie Mae Weems, Kehinde Wiley, Kara Walker, Mickalene Thomas and others whose images reflect black experience—enable others to see what they have been missing.

BOOKS | PAUL ALMONTE

## HOW THE WORLD WILL END

### MR. BLUE

By Myles Connolly  
Cluny Media. 246p \$17.95

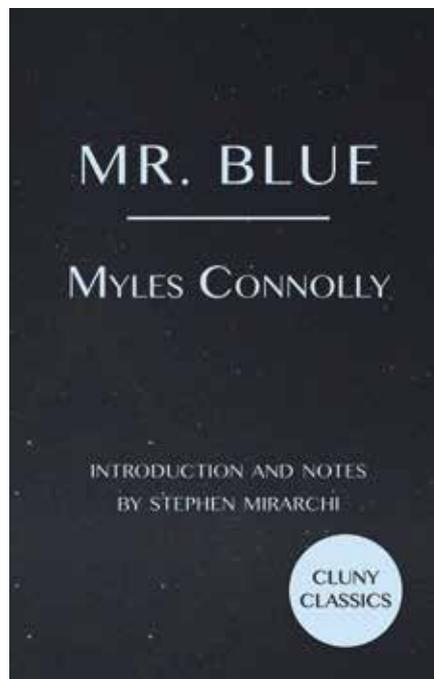
In her preface to the recent reissue of Myles Connolly's *Mr. Blue* by Cluny Classics, Mary Connolly Breiner, his daughter, poses two immediate challenges to a reader of the novel (let alone a reviewer). First is her assertion that Pope Francis (*Pope Francis!*) would love the character of Blue (imagining them as "true brothers in spirit"). Second is that the novel's tale of Christian/spiritual self-sacrifice competing against the forces of selfish, "business world" materialism is a competition that threatens the world's very soul. Choosing the easier of the two challenges, I will address the latter claim of relevance and answer with a definite yes. Close to 90 years after its publication, *Mr. Blue* speaks directly to matters of personal and collective importance. The book is concerned with individual responsibility and the role of religion and faith in a world that appears to be either godless or one in which the voices of competing gods (charity versus economic success, say) incite conflict rather than build community.

For those unfamiliar with the book, *Mr. Blue* chronicles the life of a young idealist and iconoclast—the eponymous Blue—and is told through the eyes of a narrator, a man who values

"Mastry," first shown in Chicago at the Museum of Contemporary Art, is on view at The Met Breuer in New York City through Jan. 29. After that it travels to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.

KAREN SUE SMITH, the former editorial director of *America*, now writes freelance.

business and plans to succeed in it and who, upon meeting Blue, describes him as a "sort of gay, young, and gallant monk without an order." Exploring the world of the "big city" (two big cities, actually: New York and Boston), the tale describes Blue's pilgrimage among the cosmopolitan rich and working class poor. Our narrator meets Blue in the strangest of places: the roof of a midtown Manhattan skyscraper,



where Blue has convinced the building manager to let him live. He is invited to join Blue at a party for "friends" he has met in the city, including work-

ing-class African-Americans and immigrants with whom he feels a kinship. Our narrator finds a man jumping up and down on the ledge of a 30-story building, extolling the spiritual virtues of his “home” above the streets and sharing a vision in which people of all circumstance, race and creed can live together.

Immediately struck by Blue’s “strange” concern with the “religious aspects of life” in an “age and generation” apparently no longer interested in such considerations, the narrator vows to keep close tabs on his new friend. This initial encounter is followed by a series of meetings, in which the narrator and Blue—who has been alternating in circumstances rich and poor—discuss the meaning and purpose of life. Ultimately, as the narrator and reader learn, Blue decides to forego material success and live among the less fortunate. He plans to spread a gospel of love and good works, not in the “gloomy pile” of bricks in a church, but among the people. This is where our narrator finds Blue and where, in an apocalyptic scene, the novel draws to a close.

From an academic perspective, Stephen Mirarchi’s introduction provides a valuable history of the novel’s popular and critical reception. Indeed, his description of the ebb and flow of the book’s print record is itself useful as a reminder of Catholic educational tastes since the novel’s debut in 1928. Mirarchi’s explanation of the parallels and contrasts Connolly himself sought between *Mr. Blue* and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (published in 1925) is especially interesting in its comparison of *Gatsby*’s increasing isolation and despair as material things prove empty and ultimately deadly to him, body and soul, with *Mr. Blue*’s rejection of material riches and embrace of “Lady Poverty” as an instructive, necessary and demanding guide of suffering as love. Particularly enlightening is the connection Mirarchi

makes between Fitzgerald’s and Connolly’s use of red, white and blue symbolism, which Connolly turns into Christian allegory.

Connolly moves quickly through set pieces. Take Blue’s planned movie of a dystopian world where a man named White (identified in the story as No. 2,757,331, signifying the “vault” in which he was imprisoned) becomes Father White, a new messiah who leads a spiritual awakening against a modern totalitarian regime. The novel works best in context, in its relation to other classic works and genres (Orwell’s *1984*, for example). Connolly’s prescience about the lessening attention to the printed word is also important to note and another example of the novel’s relevance. Blue’s argument about the power of images speaks to the Snapchat/Twitter age as much as it did to Connolly and others, who saw movies as the next revolution: “No printed word shall wring the new masses as did the printed words in the past. They have not the time for the printed word...the printed word is too common to be any longer compelling and too slow to be any longer dynamic. If you want to reach the masses you can reach them through pictures.”

From literary and pedagogical standpoints, there is value, too, in reading *Mr. Blue* in relation not just to *Gatsby* but to two later mid-century literary figures: Flannery O’Connor’s Hazel Motes and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, whose chosen isolation and alienation—like Blue’s—are meant to force readers to question their own actions and values as much as the characters’. Like O’Connor and Ellison’s characters, Connolly’s Blue does not seek a large audience for his preaching. Blue, however, loves his converts, while O’Connor’s Motes mockingly demands distance from his congregation. “If Jesus had redeemed

## Resurrection

After the agony and humiliation  
of crucifixion,  
would you be willing to give up  
the cold comfort of death  
for the pain of rebirth  
and the cell-splitting joy of glory?

MICHELLE BERBERET

*Michelle Berberet is an artist in residence in the arts and humanities program of the Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center in Washington, D.C., where she writes and creates art with patients, family and staff.*

you, what difference would it make to you?” Motes says. “You wouldn’t do nothing about it.... What you need is something to take the place of Jesus, something that would speak plain, The Church Without Christ don’t have a Jesus but it needs one! It needs a new Jesus! It needs one that is all man, without blood to waste.” In spite of their differences, both Motes and Blue die alone and misunderstood, and reading these novels together provokes many questions.

Connolly’s description of Blue’s work among the immigrant and working class poor (characterized in stereotypical language that reads jarringly today: “the Jew,” “Negro Joe,” etc.) also feels best served—despite its idealism—with a counter voice like that which Ellison expresses in *Invisible Man*. Blue’s loving idealism, genuine as it is, with his eyes “shining forth” as he “pledges himself to poverty and to live among the poor,” may ring false to many, especially to the very “invisible” minorities Blue means to serve (Ellison speaks for African-Americans when he says “you refuse to see me,” for example).

*Mr. Blue's* relevance endures because of its call to look deeply inward and compassionately outward, to question oneself while embracing the plight, worries and needs of others. Extreme figures, be they ascetics and loners or media sensations and politicians, are voices in and of our political and cultural climate, and religious leaders (Pope Francis especially) remain an integral part of our American and global

landscape, most obviously during this election cycle. Blue's life—his words, actions and his death—invite us to consider our own place and role among the “new masses.” To read the novel seriously is to embrace the question the narrator asks at the end: “Why are all of us here and not Blue?”

**PAUL ALMONTE** is an associate professor and chairperson of the English department at Saint Peter's University in Jersey City, N.J.

TERRENCE W. TILLEY

## LANDING IN DULLES

### SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY A Roman Catholic Approach

By Thomas P. Rausch, S.J.  
Liturgical Press. 303p \$24.95

Every once in a while, a theological text that is useful, balanced, up to date, well written and respectful of tradition appears. This is one of them.

While evidently designed to be a backbone text for upper-level undergraduates or beginning graduate students, this book can profitably be read by educated laypeople as well. Instead of constructing a theological system in which every chapter is a puzzle piece in an integrated picture, Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., a theology professor at Loyola Marymount University in California, moves from topic to topic to show the lay of the land in contemporary Catholic theology. Where appropriate, he also reflects on ecumenical divergences and convergences. The book is informed by wide reading and honed by much classroom work, which have made it comprehensive and clear.

After introductory chapters on what theology is and how contemporary theologies intersect with some important strands of contemporary intellectual culture, Rausch explores nine major topics in systematic theology.

“The Divine Mystery” exemplifies Rausch's approach. After introducing

the topic, he turns to Scripture to convey the transcendence of God. He then turns to some traditional philosophical approaches to God (“natural theology”—that is, what, if anything, we can know of God apart from faith). Moving to the second and third persons of the Trinity in Scripture and tradition, he explores classical issues in Trinitarian theology. He then surveys a number of contemporary approaches to God and concludes with a thoughtful summation that recognizes divine immanence and transcendence, the roots of Trinitarian doctrine in the prayer of the church and contemporary debates about how we can possibly understand what it means to believe in three persons in one God.

The chapter on Jesus the Christ provides a lucid history of the quests for the historical Jesus, assays the variety of Christologies in the New Testament and devotes sections to classical and contemporary Christologies. Rausch sees “incarnational,” “pluralist” and “praxis” Christologies as setting the

contemporary trajectory in this field.

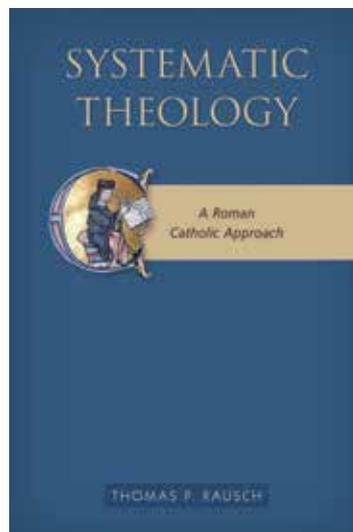
“Revelation and Faith” is deeply influenced by the Second Vatican Council and the work of the late Avery Dulles, S.J., who cogently argued that faith and revelation are correlative: One recognizes revelation only in faith, and faith is the response we make to revelation recognized. Rausch makes good use of Dulles's *Models of Revelation*.

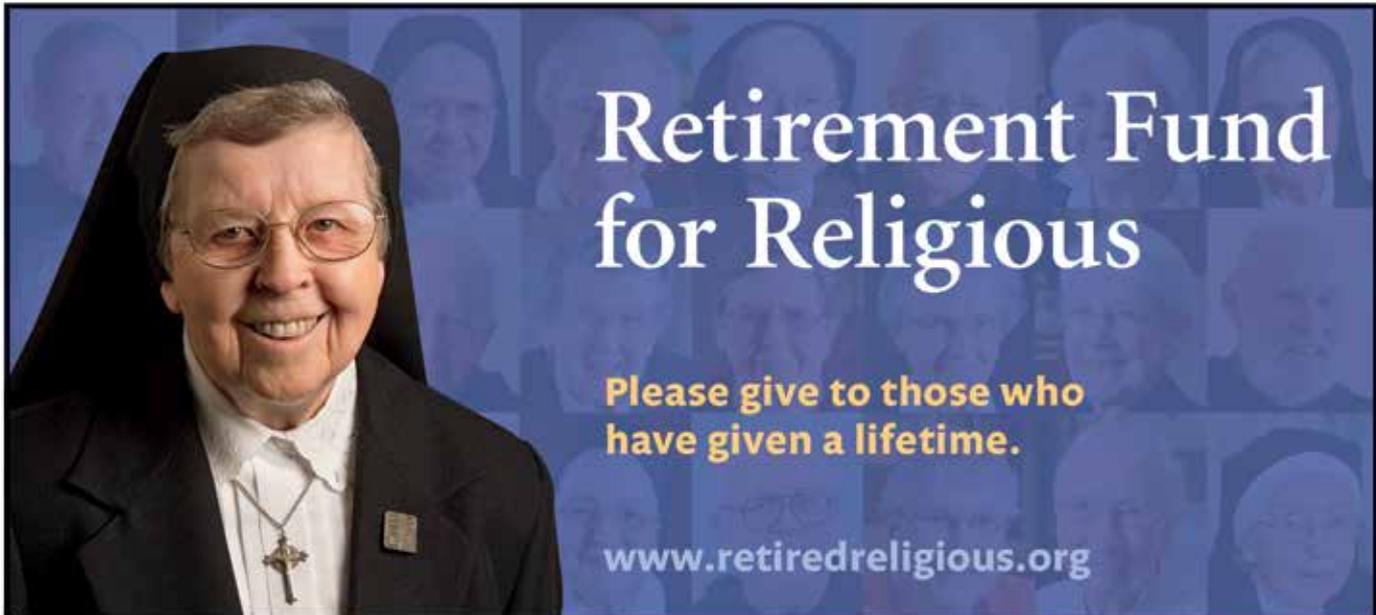
The chapter on anthropology—a Christian view of what it means to be human—rehearses without polemics the classic Catholic-Protestant debate on sin and grace. Rausch is quite sympathetic to contemporary approaches that find original sin a debilitating, enduring set of social structures that afflicts every person in various ways, rather than an inherited sexually transmitted disease. The influence of theologian Karl Rahner, S.J., seems very strong in this chapter.

A short chapter on “Mary and the Communion of Saints” precedes a longer one on “Church.” Beginning with “Communion” wisely sets up an understanding of Mary as rooted in the veneration of saints. The church, then, is the communion of the faithful gathered and sent out in grace and the power of the Spirit. The text lays out both historical and

contemporary perspectives on what it means to be church and on some contemporary controversies—for example, the ordination of women, the relationship of the universal and the local church and the issue of open versus closed Communion.

Two chapters are devoted to sacramentality and the sacraments. Each sacrament receives a historical introduction—and these are not to be slighted. The brief historical discussion





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of anointing, for example, goes by so quickly that one might not notice that it, like marriage, became a sacrament (and was allowed only to the clergy) only in the medieval period. Rausch also judiciously introduces issues around contraception and same-sex marriage while not proffering resolutions of them.

A final chapter, "Creation and Eschatology," not only includes scriptural roots, historical developments and contemporary thought but also an appreciative understanding of the issues involved in discussions about "religion and science." Rausch rightly notes that the questions of "whence" and "whither" with respect to the universe are linked in the Christian tradition. He clearly sees that questions about individual eschatological destinies are best understood in that context.

I will use this book in my own Introduction to Systematic Theology course for beginning graduate students this fall. As a teacher, I can supplement the text where it seems weak to me (for example, not treating the problems evil causes for faith or the challenges of religious diversity). I can also introduce readings that link theology and ethics more closely. While Rausch is good at portraying the roots of Christian

doctrine in the practice of prayer, he is not much concerned with the practical implications for the life of Christians. Readers will find the "for further reading" lists valuable if they, too, want to go further.

Rausch's overall vision is fundamentally Rahnerian, tempered with large contributions from Dulles, Schillebeeckx, Ratzinger and numerous contemporary theologians. He writes using little, if any, jargon. He is quite aware that historical circumstanc-

es have shaped and reshaped our doctrines. Sometimes a bit controversial, but always balanced, Rausch regularly gets to the heart of the matter in each topic he considers.

When they finish this book, readers will be glad that they have spent time with a master communicator and teacher. I strongly recommend it.

---

TERRENCE W. TILLEY is the Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., professor of Catholic theology at Fordham University.

LUKE HANSEN

## BRINGING DOCTRINE TO LIFE

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH Nature, Reality and Mission

By Walter Kasper

Translated from German by Thomas Hoebel

Edited by R. David Nelson  
Bloomsbury. 488p \$60

### CATHOLIC WOMEN SPEAK Bringing Our Gifts to the Table

Edited by The Catholic Women  
Speak Network  
Paulist Press. 186p \$16.95

writes. "Likewise, doctrine is no dead formula carried about like a monstrosity. Rather, doctrine must be pastorally translated into life and proclamation."

This is exactly what guided Kasper through the contentious debates at the meetings of the Synod of Bishops on the family, where several vocal bishops made it clear they believe doctrine is static and unchanging and can be clearly and deductively applied to pastoral situations. For these bishops, expressions like "objectively disordered" (referring to gay persons) and "living in sin" (referring to cohabitating unmarried persons) easily roll off the tongue. Kasper, meanwhile, without arguing for a radical change in doctrine, draws from more central parts of the tradition, like God's mercy, to bring fresh perspective to challenging pastoral situations.

Kasper begins *The Catholic Church* in unique fashion, with a personal narrative about his "journey in and with the Church," and he later devotes substantial portions of his text to theological methods, the history of salvation, images of the church, the nature of the church and its four fundamental marks (one, holy, catholic and apostolic), con-

Cardinal Walter Kasper, an accomplished German theologian who has written at least 15 books in ecclesiology and Christology, has become known in recent years as the "pope's theologian." His latest book, *The Catholic Church*, sheds light on why Pope Francis has relied on his theological contributions and calls upon him with confidence. This magnum opus in the area of ecclesiology consistently shows great respect for tradition and orthodox theology while also constantly seeking renewal and freshness and a dynamic, living relationship between doctrine and pastoral practice.

"There can be no pastoral orientation without a doctrinal basis," Kasper

## CLASSIFIED

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temporary developments in Catholic theology and the central tasks of the church to be both missionary and engaged in dialogue.

In a section on women in the church, Kasper begins with a mea culpa, admitting the institution's "misogynist tendencies and discrimination against women." Yet in typical Kasper fashion, he balances the criticism with an account of the tremendous strides the Catholic Church has made, including Pope John XXIII's affirmation of the women's liberation movement as a "sign of a time" and the Second Vatican Council's blunt rejection of discrimination based on sex. Kasper concludes the section with great hope for the future of women in the church, suggesting "we are just at the beginning of a development" that will be led by "charismatic and prophetic women."

Among these charismatic and prophetic women are the contributors to the accessible and substantive essays in **Catholic Women Speak**. While the prominence of Cardinal Kasper at the recent synod is well documented, surely just as notable was the underrepresentation of women—even though they are at the center of family life in every part of the world.

Tina Beattie, a professor of Catholic studies at the University of Roehampton, London, wanted to challenge this exclusion. In a recent article in *Commonweal* (3/29), she tells the story of the Catholic Women Speak Network and the origins of this book. She met with an official at the Pontifical Council for Culture and asked how women might have a greater presence at the synod. The person said: Write a book! Within six months, 300 copies of this book of essays were available on a table in the synod hall, and the bishops picked up nearly every copy.

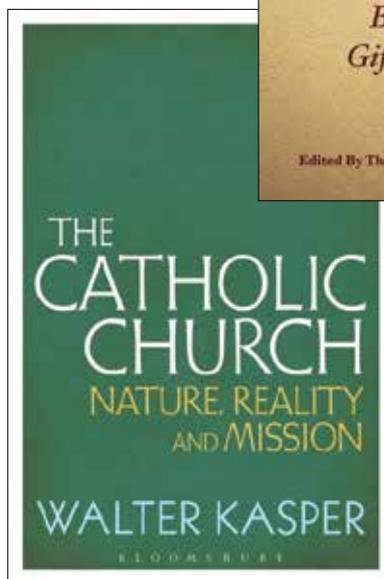
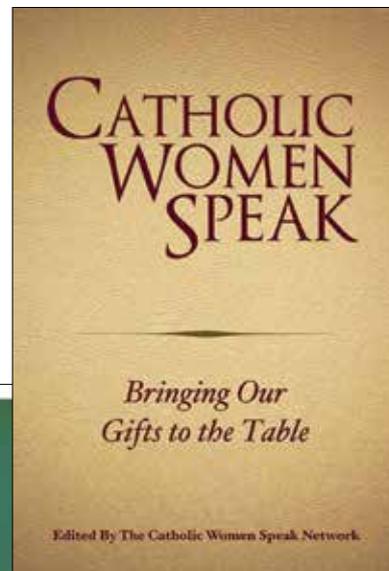
The essays were collected with the bishops in mind, but this book is for all Catholics. Selections are short and accessible—none more than four pages—so that bishops could read an

essay during a coffee break. The women share stories of joy, pain, faith and hope. Pope Francis has repeatedly said that he prefers a church that is "bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church that is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security." These contributors have not been afraid to get dirty in the mud of everyday life.

Like the bishops who attended the synod, this book represents the global diversity of the Catholic Church today. The 44 contributors represent 16 countries and six continents. Each contributor is a practicing Catholic, writes on an issue relevant to the synod and expresses the struggle of Catholic women to live with fidelity and conscience. Some are well-known theologians, like Elizabeth A. Johnson, S.S.J., Lisa Sowle Cahill and Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M. Others are active in parish ministries, social work and other professional fields. The women represent different generations: grandmothers and young women, married and single, religious and lay. The book will introduce you to extraordinary Catholic women whom you do not know but should. Astrid Lobo Gajiwala of Mumbai, for example, not only established India's first tissue bank, but she has also served as a consultant for the Indian Catholic bishops and was instrumental in helping draft the gender policy of the Catholic Church in India.

The essays are grouped under four major themes. "Traditions and Transformations" reviews some of the dramatic social changes for women

in society and the church and mainly highlights the positive role of the church in providing health care and education to so many women and girls. These essays offer theologically rich and sophisticated treatments of topics like "gender theory" (rather than



the general condemnation that topic typically receives). Janet Martin Soskice asks whether we can recognize sexual difference while not taking it to an extreme that calls into question whether women can say, as did the Second Vatican Council's

"Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," that Christ "became truly one of us, like us in everything but sin."

The second section, "Marriage, Families, and Relationships," is the longest, comprising about half the book. It most directly addresses the questions facing the synod, with special attention to the experiences of women and girls within families—often painful but not without hope. These contributors explore the gulf that can exist between ideals and reality, and how family is talked about in

the church versus how it is experienced and lived by most Catholics. They also ask how the church can better account for this reality, meeting people where they are and providing the pastoral accompaniment for which Pope Francis has called. Painful and controversial topics—divorce and remarriage, contraception, same-sex relationships—are not avoided. People share personally and honestly and with fidelity and nuance.

The third section, “Poverty, Exclusion, and Marginalization,” is certainly close to Pope Francis’ heart, for it raises voices from the margins in Argentina, India, Africa and the Philippines. The writers emphasize that a poor church for the poor must take serious account of the effect of poverty on women and girls. The fourth section, “Institutions and Structures,” is the briefest but no less important. It

is not about organization in itself, but how “the absence of women limits the capacity of the institutional church in its mission of evangelization and pastoral care.” The writers in this section call for the greater participation of women in future synods, for greater inclusion of biblical stories of women in the Lectionary, and for the voices of women to be heard from the pulpit. In the final essay, Catherine Cavanagh takes up the issue of ordination in a refreshing and respectful way: she examines the possible consequences for families that only men can be priests, preach and make final decisions.

A broad range of personal testimonies on controversial topics was largely missing from the synod, and this is where Catholic Women Speak makes its most important contribution. The bishops at the synod talked about people who are divorced and remarried or

gay, but too often the bishops did not talk with the people themselves and listen to them. These essays bring the bishops one step closer to the pastoral encounter that Pope Francis repeatedly emphasizes. Yet the relevance of the book extends beyond bishops. It is an aid for any person who wants to explore the experiences, joys and struggles of women in the church.

Cardinal Kasper’s tome, meanwhile, is better suited for professors and graduate students of theology. It is dense, long and quite expensive. If, however, you are looking for an in-depth treatment of ecclesiology that puts the Catholic theological tradition in conversation with today’s pastoral challenges, then it fits the bill.

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# Let's Try This Again

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (A), DEC. 4, 2016

Readings: Is 11:1-10, Ps 72, Rom 15:4-9, Mt 3:1-12

*Return to me with all your heart (Jl 2:12)*

Anyone who has studied music knows the need for repetition. The days before a performance include countless attempts to give voice to the notes on the page. First attempts are fraught with errors in technique and interpretation. Only after many tries can a musician bring to life something that had, until then, existed only in the mind of a composer.

In different ways, our readings this week describe a similar predicament for those who follow God. Isaiah's prophecy begins with a dead stump sprouting new life. The stump is David's kingdom, destroyed by Israel's infidelity. The life that rises from it anew brings hope and a new set of rules. Animosity of predator and prey will cease, and God's promises will be open even to gentiles. In his letter Paul applies this promise to his own day. That new shoot is Jesus Christ. Just as his fellow Jews find hope in him, just so must they bring that hope to the gentiles.

These themes come together in John the Baptist's ministry. For him, repentance was total and irrevocable. This comes through in his preaching—"Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"—and his exceptional lifestyle. The Greek word that Matthew uses for repentance is *metanoia*, which means to "change the mind." This is not

a shift of preference among choices, as the phrase means today, but is better understood as the reception of an entirely new mind.

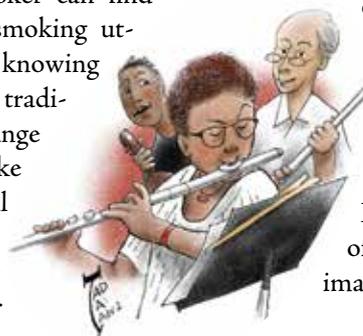
Even a small habits are difficult to break. A repentant smoker can find the first weeks of nonsmoking utterly excruciating. Even knowing this difficulty, Christian tradition teaches that we change our heart entirely to make room for Christ. This call to conversion is daunting, so much so that we might despair of our ability to fulfill it.

The readings today teach that total repentance is an achievable task, but it takes time. In his lifestyle and dress, John the Baptist resembles the prophet Elijah. Like Elijah, John works to bring Israel back to the Lord. Elijah called on Israel to turn away from false worship. By contrast, the Israel of John's day had not abandoned God, but rather was abandoning hope in his promises. John called on them to turn away from weariness and return to the Lord.

This often takes more than one try. Implicit in today's readings is the church's awareness that repentance can take a long time. The Jordan river is a clue, as it plays a role several times in Israel's repentance. Elijah parted the waters before his fiery ascension (2 Kgs 2:8-14). Israel passed through the Jordan on dry land when entering Canaan after 40 years in the desert. (Jos 3:13-17). John's baptism presents both these narratives in a new light. Like musicians preparing for a recital,

God's people had to try again and again to enter their inheritance. In this light, John's ministry was a fresh attempt at an ancient goal: to be ready when God fulfills his promise. John's baptism addressed Israel's false starts, symbolizing their willingness to try again.

The repentance of Advent is a call for transformation. We are like musicians at practice. Trying repeatedly to be ready, we can develop more than just the technical perfection the Pharisees and Sadducees sought. The struggle to "change our minds" can confer a brief glimpse into God's mind, and that is when the transformation takes place. How many times did Isaiah have to repent of hate before he could imagine his conquerors



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- What parts of my life require more "practice?"
- If I could have a "new mind," what would it look like?
- What has a life in the Spirit shown me of God's dream?
- Who would benefit from hearing of this dream?

joining him in the covenant? How many times did Paul have to repent of hardness of heart before he realized the scriptures foretold Christ and fellowship with the uncircumcised?

Following Paul's counsel, we who have glimpsed God's dream must now share that hope. Like John, we have to renew the hopes of an exhausted world. Like Elijah we have to turn the world away from its fascination with idols. With practice, however, we can be like Isaiah, who can see beyond the mess and dream of a world in which all are ready for the arrival of God.

**MICHAEL R. SIMONE**

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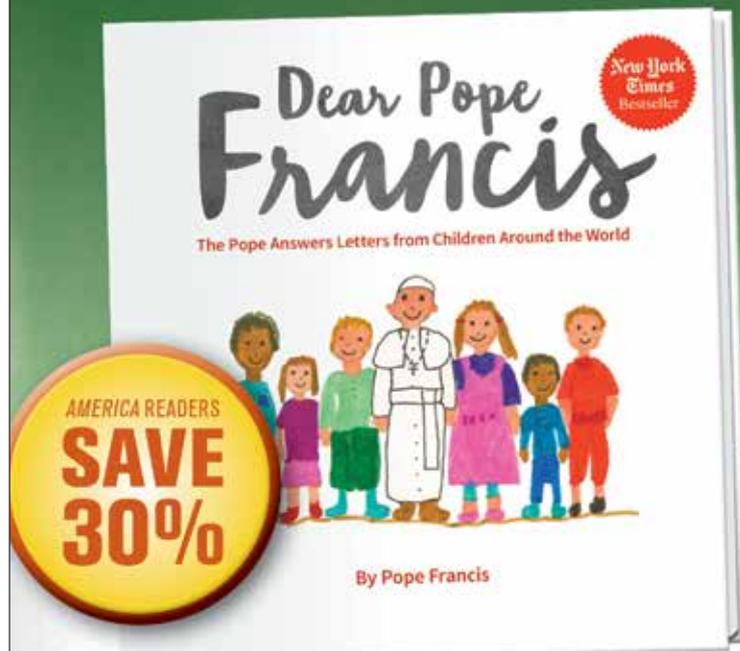


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