

America

FEBRUARY 2023

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

A HUMBLE SHEPHERD

Remembering Pope Benedict XVI

The Editors

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POPE BENEDICT XVI'S LEGACY

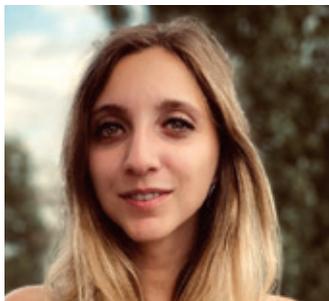
Video interviews with George Weigel, Thomas Reese, S.J., and others:

americamagazine.org/video

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THURS. FEB. 9
UKRAINE CRISIS

DIANA HAIDEMAK
JESUIT REFUGEE
SERVICES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 4PM Central
Welcome and Protect: Jesuit Refugee Services' Response to the Ukraine Crisis

Diana Haidemak, a legal counselor for JRS Romania, will discuss work that JRS is leading in response to the Ukraine crisis-- which includes monitoring activity and incidents at the border regarding migrants and asylum seekers, and leading ongoing efforts in anti-trafficking. Diana will be accompanied by Olena Zinkevych, a Ukrainian who coordinates JRS Romania's Ukraine response.



TUES. MARCH 14
ANNUAL ST. JOHN
HENRY NEWMAN
LECTURE

DR. DAWN EDEN
GOLDSTEIN

TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 7PM Central
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In the conversionary spirit and legacy of St. John Henry Newman, the Hank Center invites scholars each spring to recount their own discovery (or rediscovery) of the Catholic intellectual heritage. Dr. Goldstein will integrate aspects of her own experience with her research for *Fr. Ed: The Story of Bill W's Spiritual Sponsor*--her recently released biography of Fr. Ed Dowling, S.J.



WED. MARCH 22
INAUGURAL
JESUIT LECTURE

FR. BILL
MCCORMICK, S.J.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 7PM Central
The Christian Structure of Politics: On the De Regno of Thomas Aquinas

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TUES. APRIL 11
ANNUAL CARDINAL
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CAUSE LECTURE

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TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 7PM Central
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Benedict, Francis and How We Are Called to Change

In 2009, when Pope Benedict XVI issued his encyclical “*Caritas in Veritate*,” I was in the period of Jesuit formation known as regency, teaching philosophy at Loyola University Maryland. There was a faculty reading group focused on Catholic thought, and it seemed appropriate to read the encyclical together.

I still remember how surprised we were by it. “*Caritas in Veritate*” was Benedict’s contribution to the development of Catholic social teaching, with a particular emphasis on thinking through the implications of “integral human development” in a globalized economy. And with his characteristic clarity and focus, Benedict worked through what a commitment to human dignity and human flourishing means in a world increasingly shaped by the powers of international finance and flows of trade among vastly unequal nations. Among his conclusions: There is a need for the reform of the United Nations and economic institutions, “so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth.” Referring to John XXIII’s “*Pacem in Terris*,” Benedict also said “there is urgent need of a true world political authority,” as part of “the construction of a social order that at last conforms to the moral order.”

We were surprised mostly because we lived in the United States and the idea of taking the United Nations so seriously and investing real hope in it seemed at best utopian, if not outright laughable.

Or, as we realized while talking through the encyclical, the honest version of our reaction was that what Benedict was describing as “inspired by the values of charity in truth” was so far from our comfort with the status quo that it took real effort—in the sense of a religious submission of in-

tellec and will to magisterial teaching—to recognize it as an authentic expression of Catholic social thought that we were not yet fully ready to accept.

Following Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s death, many appraisals of his legacy have been offered. They have generally been positive about his contributions as an individual theologian and his pontifical encyclicals, but more mixed and critical about his 24 years in charge of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under St. John Paul II and his governance of the Vatican Curia as pope.

Benedict’s approach at the C.D.F., where he investigated and silenced a number of theologians whom he saw as straying outside the bounds of orthodox Catholic teaching, and his inability to bring the curial bureaucracy to heel have both been contrasted with Pope Francis’ approach, which is far more tolerant of theological exploration and also more willing to wield papal authority to restructure the Curia and sideline those who obstruct his reforms. While these analyses are reasonable, they can tend to be reduced (depending on the commentator) to “Benedict bad, Francis good” or “Benedict good, Francis bad.”

In addition to being desolating and tinged with despair, treating the life of the church as a zero-sum game about who is in power, these takes on the contrast between Benedict and Francis also wind up being boring. They flatten the Petrine ministry into a question about agendas and programs, as if popes come into office with a plan or platform and the question of their success is about how much of it they manage to implement.

In 2013, after Benedict’s stunning resignation—an act of fidelity, courage and change that no one predicted—and Francis’ election, when I was in

my theology studies, I wrote a piece for The Jesuit Post’s series on the new pope. It was headlined “What Pope Francis Wants to Change,” and I answered that rhetorical question in the first paragraph: “What does this pope want to change? Us. That’s his plan, his agenda for the church.”

I could have said then, and I will say now, the same about Benedict XVI. What unites Benedict and Francis is their common fidelity to God calling us to conversion. They did not always imagine the path of conversion the same way—Benedict often accentuated discipline where Francis stresses discernment, or evoked the beauty of the liturgy where Francis calls for an openness to encounter—but they both hope for conversion as a response to grace in relationship with God rather than just a recognition of abstract truth. This shared hope explains their steadfast support for each other during the 10 years of having a pope and pope emeritus both wearing white.

Shared fidelity, of course, does not eliminate the possibility of disagreement. I can well imagine that Benedict may have been saddened by or skeptical of some of Francis’ decisions. But I think Benedict would have recognized such a response as calling for further conversion on his own part and not solely for critique of the decisions of his successor. One of the most significant gifts of his teaching and example is the freedom to hear how the Catholic tradition calls us to conversion—to hope for change not just in the church, but also in ourselves.

Sam Sawyer, S.J.
Twitter: @SSawyerSJ



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CNS photo/Vatican Media

The body of the late Pope Benedict XVI is transferred to St. Peter's Basilica on the morning of Jan. 2.

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The eucharistic mysticism of Pope Benedict XVI

Cover image: Pope Benedict XVI greets the crowd from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica after his election on April 19, 2005.

AP Photo/Andrew Medichini, File

Pope Francis and the role of women in the church

On Nov. 22, five representatives of America Media interviewed Pope Francis in his residence at Santa Marta at the Vatican. They discussed a range of issues, including polarization in the U.S. church, racism and the Vatican's relations with China. The pope's comments on the ordination of women in particular drew a strong response from readers.

Pope Francis was finally asked the question we have always wanted to hear him answer—what would he say to a woman feeling the pain of a sincerely discerned and unfulfilled call to priesthood? Unfortunately, when asked that pastoral question by Executive Editor Kerry Weber, the pope did not give a pastoral answer. Instead, he gave a clumsy theological discourse on Marian and Petrine theories, which the average Catholic would be forgiven for not knowing by heart, and cast women as creatures with preternatural senses for church administration and sniffing out bad priests.

Francis' suggestion that “woman is more, she looks more like the church, which is mother and spouse” relies on a literal interpretation of the “spousal metaphor” that reduces the extravagance of one's relationship with God and discipleship to plastic figurines on a wedding cake. Not just a disservice to the Catholic imagination, this literalism becomes a tool of oppression. The call to priesthood comes from God, not from one's body parts.

The pope's meandering defense is unsatisfying to anyone paying attention to the movements of the church today. Francis' lack of understanding of women's ministerial gifts stands in jarring contrast with synod reports from around the world, which reflect a collective longing for women in ministry.

The synod has implored the global church to “enlarge the space of your tent.” We cannot continue to allow the institution to build walls of bad theology, decorated with stained-glass abstractions of women, instead of making room to encounter them as incarnate equals in Christ.

Kate McElwee and Katie Lacz
Women's Ordination Conference

The Holy Father's remarks on women's ordination make a few things clear. Women are not called to the priesthood, but our gifts are still very much needed, and not only around the hearth or in the parish altar society. The influence of women should be felt throughout the church. We are still in the process of discerning how this should happen.

It is beautiful to contemplate the Holy Father's suggestion that women mirror the church herself in our femininity. Admittedly, though, it is a bit difficult to grasp the implications of this for a young woman trying to discern her

vocation in life, and I confess that I also do not entirely understand what he means when he talks about “the Marian principle.” I do understand that in modern societies, women have proven that we have an enormous range of gifts, abilities and interests, far more than has generally been recognized historically. I think the Holy Father sees this too, and is eager to draw on those gifts for building Christ's kingdom and saving more souls.

We absolutely do not want young women to feel ashamed of having a wide range of gifts, along with a sincere desire to serve the church. However, they should be encouraged to be open to grace and providential guidance, as they consider how God intends for those gifts to be used.

Rachel Lu
Associate editor at Law & Liberty

In the interview with Pope Francis, **America's** editors were right to ask a question about women in the church, since in the global synod process “almost all reports raise the issue of full and equal participation of women” (No. 64). However, the editors chose to focus on women and the priesthood, a question that often tempts us into old, tired scripts, and inflames division and discouragement.

Which questions can open up a wider road for us to journey together? The synod's working document, which was fully endorsed by Pope Francis, identifies three specific areas for discernment—women in governance, women preaching and the female diaconate.

The church has a documented history of ordaining women as deacons. The topic emerged at the Amazon Synod in 2019, and the presidents of at least three bishops' conferences (Australia, Belgium and Germany) support it.

While the priesthood may be rooted in the “Petrine church” that the pope speaks of, the diaconate emerged in response to pastoral needs in the early church, and it included women. Perhaps we can imagine the diaconate as part of a synodal church where the Spirit pours out gifts “upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17) and church leaders encourage the faithful to “receive” women as deacons as St. Paul did with the Christian community in Rome (Rom 16:1-2).

Casey Stanton and Ellie Hidalgo
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Remembering Pope Benedict, Brilliant Scholar and Humble Shepherd

After the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, the church mourns a dedicated pastor whose papal witness, especially his courageous final act as pope, stands as a model of grace and humility for his successors.

It was a papacy few would have predicted in Benedict's life before he became pontiff. Scholarly popes are relatively rare—the papal office requires a pastor-administrator more than a priest-professor—and for most of his life Joseph Ratzinger was the latter. He had quickly established himself during and after the Second Vatican Council as one of the most respected and influential theologians of the late 20th century. His *Introduction to Christianity*, published in 1968, still stands as the best single-volume account of our faith. In the wake of Vatican II, where he had served as a theological advisor to the council fathers, Father Ratzinger joined with some of the greatest European Catholic scholars of his generation to found *Communio*, a prominent and influential theological journal. His extensive literary output extended into his papacy and included three timely and eloquent encyclicals, as well as three best-selling books about Jesus of Nazareth.

Despite his own misgivings about his talents for governance and administration, Father Ratzinger also served as vice president of the University of Regensburg in 1976-1977, and as archbishop of Munich and Freising from 1977 to 1982. That year, Pope John Paul II called him to Rome to be prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a position he would hold for 24 eventful years, during which time he sought to clarify the doctrinal boundaries of theological

thought, which John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger believed had become blurred in the years following Vatican II.

During Cardinal Ratzinger's more than two decades as the church's principal doctrinal enforcer, the editors of **America** sometimes found reasons to disagree with his opinions and with the pronouncements of the Vatican office he led. (It is safe to say he found reasons to disagree with **America** as well.) Cardinal Ratzinger was a distinguished interlocutor in those days, but also an aggressive and self-assured one, and more than a few theologians found their scholarship restricted or their work subject to years of investigation and censorship. **America** was itself the object of such scrutiny. The resignation of Thomas J. Reese, S.J., as editor in chief in 2005 resulted from Cardinal Ratzinger's disapproval of **America's** editorial direction.

After his election as Pope Benedict XVI, many theologians and members of the Catholic press in the United States feared that this doctrinal policing would only intensify. Benedict's tenure as pope, however, revealed a different dimension of his personality. The demands and the grace of his new office challenged him to overcome his natural introversion and his shyness before crowds. As pope he demonstrated that he had a pastor's heart and a grandfatherly gentleness, which came as a surprise to some who had known him only as "God's Rottweiler." He was also a skilled preacher, emphasizing the essential relationship between faith and reason, but also stressing time and again that discipleship is fundamentally personal, involving a deep and abiding friendship with God.

At the time of his election, Bene-

dict XVI was the oldest man to ascend the throne of Peter in three centuries, and he was already beginning to experience the physical travails of old age. Nevertheless, he traveled widely as pope and was generous with his time during his many international trips. His visit to the United States in 2008 was a signal moment for American Catholics, as they watched the intelligence, dignity and sheer stamina with which he undertook an intense program of engagements that would have exhausted even a younger pontiff.

Benedict's papacy was not without its troubles. He faced pervasive corruption in the Vatican, which he was unable to reform. Pope Benedict himself seemed to recognize at times that the governance of the Vatican, a sclerotic and unwieldy bureaucracy, was beyond his natural capabilities as an administrator. While he moved much more decisively than John Paul II to respond to the crisis of clerical sexual abuse, including removing the disgraced Marcial Maciel from active ministry, there was also a widespread perception that the Vatican's approach to the sexual abuse crisis seemed more concerned with the church's reputation than with the well-being of survivors. And there was also the occasional public gaffe: His well-intentioned but ill-received address in Regensburg in 2006 angered many Muslims and hampered the church's interfaith efforts.

Curiously, Pope Benedict's great moment of public "weakness"—his admission at the time of his resignation in February 2013 that he was no longer physically capable of doing the job—was also his greatest moment of strength and a lasting gift to the church. It was a stunning historical develop-

ment, one that required great wisdom and courage, as he asked “pardon for my defects” and told the world that his “strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry.”

“[I]n today’s world,” he wrote in his letter of resignation, “subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the barque of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me.”

There are few examples either in history or in the present day of a powerful leader voluntarily surrendering his or her authority. Benedict’s reasoning was simple and unassailable: Someone else could meet the demands of his ministry better than he. The pope’s resignation, then, was a powerful witness to his character and discipleship, to the depth of his humility and to his deep respect for the central importance of the Petrine office. No one person stands above the body of Christ, his actions said, even in a church that often holds up the pope as a larger-than-life figure.

On the occasion of his passing, we give thanks to God for this shy, brilliant scholar and pastor who was led reluctantly into a larger-than-life role. We are grateful for his service and his example. In the years ahead, accounting for all the lights and shadows of his long and eventful life, Catholics will affectionately remember Pope Benedict XVI in just the way he described himself upon his election to the papacy: “a simple, humble laborer in the vineyard of the Lord.” R.I.P.

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The language of war can inspire action—but it can also lead us astray

Today, the metaphor to rule them all is that of war. We read about “liturgy wars” in the church and “battles” over the interpretation of the Second Vatican Council, as well as political and cultural wars and the “War for the Soul of America,” as one book title put it. With the ubiquity of this metaphor, Christians might ask why it is so enticing. Why does it dominate our social imagination?

We might also ponder whether the war metaphor, so frequently used by Christian writers, benefits or hurts the church’s engagement in the world. In order to approach these questions, it is necessary to appreciate the ways in which language and metaphors have a powerful, intoxicating effect on us.

The metaphors that people live by, in both speech and thought, do more than serve people’s ability to communicate. They form, at a fundamental level, how people understand and relate to the world. When the metaphor of “war” infuses headlines, surfaces in conversations, and saturates the minds of journalists, theologians and many Christians, it can have a profound influence on the life of the church—often with unintended consequences.

What does this influence look like? First, we must recognize why war imagery is so tempting.

It stresses a sense of urgency for engagement in the world today and, in doing so, can motivate people to act. In some circumstances, conflict arises because what people value, cherish and love is being threatened.

Few would disagree that the times in which the church finds herself today in the United States invite a sense of urgency. Many Christians lament the decline in faith and religious affiliation, fear the challenges to Chris-

tian morality from an increasingly non-Christian populace, and deplore the ways in which the poor, marginalized and vulnerable continue to be forgotten in one of the most prosperous nations in the world. The war metaphor taps into these feelings while prompting Christians to engage. But even granting this charitable read of the war metaphor, the dangers existing when it is appropriated to inform Christian living are legion.

The war metaphor can shape both our image of the “other,” and our missionary engagement with that “other,” in a manner inconsistent with the Gospel. In war, the other is almost always posited as a clearly defined enemy, with little room for distinctions or nuances. Often, great efforts are made to reduce the other to something less than human, or lacking dignity.

What is more, through the metaphorical lens of war, engagement in Christian mission is predicated as the creation of bastions, the placing of armaments, the construction of security measures, or the systematic use of killing mechanisms, all to reinforce separation from, bolster protection against and, ultimately, destroy the enemy.

From my experience as a missionary priest serving areas of the United States with few Catholics, it is nearly impossible to share the good news, let alone have a meaningful conversation, when I view the “other” as an enemy who needs to be destroyed at all costs. Similar challenges exist when I, as a theologian, attempt, under the influence of the war metaphor, to engage an intellectual interlocutor espousing different perspectives than my own.

In seeing the pregnant dangers associated with the war metaphor, the most fundamental question Christians should ask, especially in an age of

both political and religious polarization and enmity, is whether our own tradition provides a different metaphor to live by. To answer this inquiry, the wisdom of St. Paul is a guiding light (Phil 2:5-8). When his community at Philippi was facing its own inner turmoil (including polarization), along with persecution from the outside world, the “missioner to the Gentiles” invited people not to consider war, but to model their discipleship after Christ’s *kenosis*, as seen in his incarnational movement.

The Son of God, in the face of the endemic suffering, sinfulness, danger and sadness of existence, did not forsake the created world or place distance between himself and creation. Neither did he choose to obliterate the world. Instead, he chose to draw close to the world and to embrace it in all things but sin. He counted the cost and took the risk required to stand in solidarity with us so that he could save us.

Christians have reasons to be hopeful, even in an age of bitter divisions. Rather than succumb to the enticement of using the war metaphor and risk the intensification of polarization, we can embrace our own tradition. Jesus’ incarnational movement can be our metaphor to live by, inviting us not to destroy but to draw closer to our “others.” Doing so might begin to provide a way out of the divisions of our day.

—
The Rev. Robert Aaron Wessman is the vicar general and director of formation for the Glenmary Home Missioners. He explores many of the themes in the above essay in his book *The Church’s Mission in a Polarized World* (New City Press), which will be published on Feb. 20.

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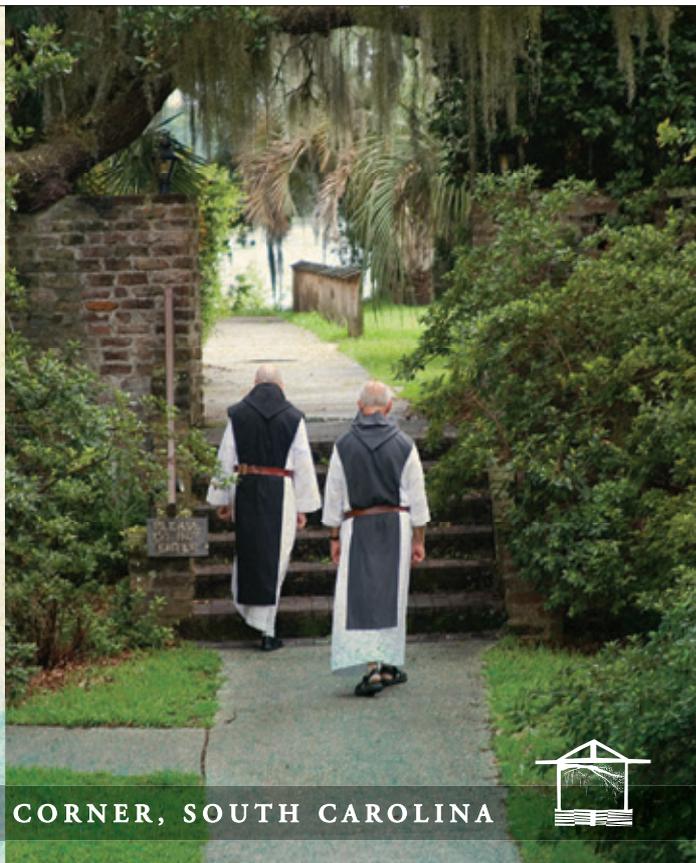
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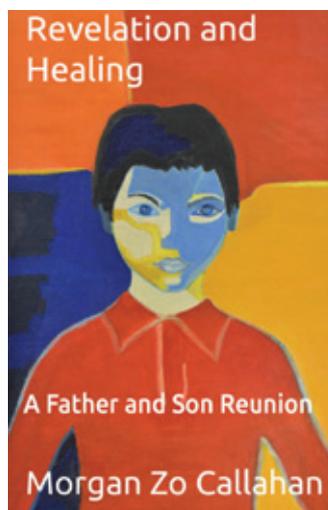
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CLASSIFIEDS MARKETPLACE

Revelation and Healing:

A Father and Son Reunion recounts the author's slow journey from an adoption that left him longing for his biological parents and wondering if he had any Black blood. He was assured he did not. Discovering, while in high school, his mother's identity, years later he found that of his biological father, Lionel Durand (1920-1961), a Black man born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Suddenly the author realized the source of his own immediate empathy as a boy with Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement he led. The author shares the often-shocking details of his adoption and the grounding therapies which facilitated self-acceptance. With filial admiration, the author traces the life of his beloved father, Lionel Durand, friends with Jean Cocteau and Picasso, an internationally acclaimed newsman and journalist, who fought in the French Resistance during World War II, twice imprisoned, twice escaped. Welcome to this reading journey and its wondrous surprises.

*Paperback and Kindle editions available on Amazon.
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Lionel Durand's cover painting of his mixed-race daughter, Barbara. Same Black father as the author, a different White mom.



Lionel Durand broadcasting for Voice of America

In El Salvador a state of emergency grinds on

By Dany Díaz Mejía

Carlos Herrera was arrested on Espíritu Santo Island in El Salvador on May 13, 2022. Since then, his family has been unable to contact him.

Mr. Herrera is 21 years old. He had been working as a *lanchero*, a harbor boat skipper, since he dropped out of high school, supporting his family by moving people and goods back and forth from the mainland and Espíritu Santo, an island in El Salvador's Jiquilisco Bay. Esperanza Pineda, Mr. Herrera's aunt, described him as a fun-loving young man who is always making people laugh and teasing her by mussing her hair.

He is one of the 22 men from Espíritu Santo Island who were arrested between May and July last year under President Nayib Bukele's state-of-emergency decree, issued in March 2022 after a weekend of unprecedented gang violence left 87 people dead. The families of the men say they are not gang members or criminals and have been demanding that they be released.

The state of emergency suspended civil liberties, like the right to legal counsel and allowing family visits at detention sites. In a report released in December, Human Rights

Watch and the Salvadoran human rights organization Cristosal said that by the end of November, Salvadoran security forces had arrested over 58,000 people under the decree. The report documents cases of large-scale, arbitrary detentions, torture and other abuses of detainees, including 90 deaths in custody.

Abraham Abrego, the director of strategic litigation at Cristosal, said the government has confused Salvadorans—equating supporting anti-gang efforts with supporting the state of emergency. But most Salvadorans do not support arbitrary detentions, he said.

“There’s a tendency in this country to think that you can’t fight crime and respect human rights,” Mr. Abrego said. “But a human rights approach strengthens the investigation process while protecting vulnerable groups.”

Espíritu Santo Island is home to about 1,400 people. Most of the older residents moved to the island in the early 1980s, fleeing the country's civil war. Its primary economic activities are subsistence agriculture and fishing.

The Center for International Solidarity began an economic development program on the island in 1998 after the



CNS photo/José Cabezas, Reuters

Part of a vast anti-gang mobilization, Salvadoran troops patrol a residential area in Soyapango on Dec. 5.

destruction caused by Hurricane Mitch. Leslie Schuld, C.I.S. director, said Espiritu Santo is one of the few places in El Salvador with no crime, gangs or violent homicides to trouble it. She attributes the peacefulness to the collective efforts of the island's residents.

"The island has been organizing to take care of its own citizen-security for years," she said.

Espiritu Santo's relative immunity to the gang violence that is a plague to other Salvadoran communities makes the arrests here that much harder to understand, residents say.

There is no high school on Espiritu Santo. Young people who wish to continue their education after elementary school must travel by boat to nearby Puerto El Triunfo. C.I.S. started a scholarship program for those students in 2011 and another program for college-bound students in 2014, according to Ms. Schuld.

Samuel Pérez has been the *lanchero* for the C.I.S. students since the scholarship program started. He was arrested the same day as Carlos Herrera while delivering a consignment of coconuts. The island's scholarship stu-

dents have been deprived of a regular harbor skipper ever since.

Marta Pérez, Samuel's sister, said the family moved to the island in 1982 because rebel guerrillas were trying to recruit her brothers into joining them in El Salvador's civil war. She described Samuel as dynamic and friendly—someone everyone speaks highly of.

According to Ms. Pérez, at the time of his arrest, police told her brother that if he were innocent of gang ties, he would be released within a day. Months later, no one in his family has been able to see him or speak with him.

"When they took the 22 men, everyone in the island wept," Ms. Pérez said. "Now we are afraid every time we see the police come. We don't know whom they might take next."

Despite the suffering the state of emergency has created for some, an opinion poll conducted by the University of Central America, a Jesuit university in San Salvador, found that 76 percent of Salvadorans supported the decree.

Pamela, who asked that her real name not be used, has lived in Soyapango all her life. In December, the city, long dominated by gangs, was sealed off by Salvadoran security forces in the largest military mobilization since the civil war.

Critics have charged that under Mr. Bukele's decree, young men are being arrested merely because of their age, the way they dress or because their addresses are associated with gang-controlled communities or neighborhoods. But Pamela says she understands why people support the state of emergency despite such apparent abuses.

"There is a lot of hurt in my town," she said, "and people have a right to feel safe and free. I remember when I was a little girl, I used to walk to school. But as I grew older, I could no longer do it because gangs started to control neighborhoods."

Because of the emergency declaration and the arrests that followed, she said she is once again able to take walks with her mom on the streets of Soyapango.

But José Tojeira, S.J., pastor of El Carmen Church in the Salvadoran city of Santa Tecla and a longtime human rights defender, believes the government's focus on revenge instead of justice is counter to the Gospel's fundamental commandment to love our neighbors.

"The government speaks of human rights violations as collateral damage [from the anti-gang crusade], effectively inciting people toward vengeance," Father Tojeira said. The Gospel calls us to pursue dialogue, he said, but the gov-

Jesuit alumni in Congress 2023

The 118th Congress got off to a wobbly start in 2023 with historic mayhem snarling the election of the speaker of the House through 15 ballots. Despite the drama, it remains a point of pride for Jesuit colleges and universities that for the fifth consecutive session, Jesuit-educated members account for about 10 percent of Congress. Among the current 534 members (and six non-voting delegates) of the 118th Congress, 54 graduated from Jesuit colleges and universities. There are 14 Jesuit alumni in the Senate and 40 in the House of Representatives; 15 of the nation's Jesuit colleges and universities are currently represented by alumni in the 118th U.S. Congress.

THE JESUIT SCORECARD IN CONGRESS

26: Georgetown University
5: Boston College
5: Fordham University*
3: The College of the Holy Cross
2: Loyola University Chicago
2: Marquette University
2: Santa Clara University
2: University of Detroit Mercy
1: Creighton University, Gonzaga University, Loyola Marymount University, Regis University, Saint Louis University, Saint Peter's University and the University of San Francisco

* Representative Rosa DeLauro is an alumna of Marymount College, which was later incorporated by Fordham University.

THERE ARE ...

148 Catholics in the 118th Congress
—28 percent of the total membership.
303 Protestants—57 percent.
33 Jews—6 percent.

Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim members represent 1 percent each.

Other faiths, the unaffiliated and the undeclared make up the rest.

Source: The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities; Pew Research Center

ernment has shut down that possibility.

Father Tojeira said that at the pastoral level, priests are comforting families and victims of extrajudicial detentions and violence by police and national security forces, but he laments the lack of stronger, prophetic voices from the institutional church.

“In the church there is a cardinal virtue called prudence,” he said. “It has to do with wisdom. Unfortunately, throughout history, we have confused prudence with fear—fear that persecution against the church might increase for speaking out.

“We need to rethink our understanding of prudence in our churches,” Father Tojeira said. C.I.S. hired a lawyer to support island residents seeking the release of the 22 men from Espiritu Santo. The lawyer has gathered documents—police background checks, arrest records and character statements from community members—and presented them in a recent court hearing. Instead of releasing the men, however, the judge ordered six more months of pretrial detention.

But C.I.S. and the island residents are not giving up. “We’re going to keep on fighting. We’re going to keep the pressure on,” Ms. Schuld said.

Each time there is a judicial hearing, family members must make a three-hour trip to the courthouse in San Miguel. Ms. Pineda, Carlos Herrera’s aunt, traveled to a hearing on Oct. 10 hoping for news of her nephew, but his attorney was the only person allowed into the court. Four harbor skippers arrested the same day as her nephew appeared by video conference, but “Carlitos,” as she calls him, was not among them. No explanation for his absence was provided to the family’s attorney.

In November a person who had been released from the prison where Mr. Herrera is held came to the island to tell Ms. Pineda that her nephew was depressed and had suffered a dramatic weight loss. That former detainee told Ms. Pineda that Mr. Herrera believed his family had forsaken him. Ms. Pineda said she has become desperate to reach him.

“If I could speak to President Bukele, I would first congratulate him for the good he’s doing for the country,” Esperanza said. “Then I would ask him to please investigate those he has arrested and to let the innocent go free. I can say, with God as my witness, that Carlitos is not a gang member. I just want to know that he’s alive and healthy.”

Dany Díaz Mejía contributes from Honduras. Twitter: @ddiazmejia.

GOODNEWS: In Bethlehem, there is room at this inn

There's a new star in the constellation of Bethlehem, Jesus' birthplace: an inn with a purpose beyond mere hospitality.

The latest boutique hotel to open its doors in Bethlehem's Old City, just minutes away from Manger Square, is the Morcos Nassar Palace, which doubles as a humanitarian project unique in Palestine and possibly in the Arab world. The ornate structure was built between 1899 and 1910 as a family mansion by the Paris-trained architect Morcos Nassar, a native son who died in 1936. The home changed hands numerous times, ending up in 2013, in some disrepair, as the office space for L'Arche, known locally as Ma'an lil-Hayat, "Together for Life." The Bethlehem program is part of the international federation of L'Arche communities, where people with and without intellectual disabilities live and work together.

Ma'an lil-Hayat's director, Mahera Nassar Ghareeb—no relation to the palace's original owner—noted that in Palestine there is no support structure specifically for families with intellectually disabled members. "If they don't come to Ma'an lil-Hayat, they are locked in at home watching TV or running around on the streets," she said, adding that disabled people in Palestine still face social stigma, though that is being mitigated with the growing awareness of the dignity of intellectually disabled people that her organization promotes.

It was Ms. Nassar Ghareeb who looked up at her dilapidated surroundings about eight years ago, saw the magnificence lying just beneath its surface, and thought: "This should not be our workshop. This masterpiece should be shared with the world."

Thus a new mission was born—to turn the rundown palace into a boutique hotel that would draw visitors from all four corners of the world and showcase Palestinian society while offering a sense of purpose and, crucially for her, visibility, to the Palestinians with disabilities who would staff the establishment.

After a soft opening over the summer, the Morcos Nassar Palace's 12 rooms were at full capacity by mid-November, staffed by four fully abled professionals and three of Ma'an lil-Hayat's "core members," including the hotel chef, who is a deaf and mute person.

The other L'Arche members handle room cleaning, breakfast service and clearing tables. One core member handles the gardening.

The reception desk, logistics and most guest interactions are handled by members of the fully abled staff. The hotel aims to attract pilgrims who seek a more meaningful interaction with Bethlehem and its people than what they



Photo courtesy of L'Arche-Bethlehem, Ma'an lil-Hayat

The team at Morcos Nassar Palace

might experience in the usual one-hour stop at the Church of the Nativity, and visitors seeking a deeper experience of Bethlehem's heritage and culture.

The building's painstaking overhaul, led by Italian artisans, took several years to complete, the work delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. After that travail, however, the result is a stunner.

The hotel's floors, all made up of the villa's original decoratively tinted tiles, shine. The dining room's windows open onto a breathtaking view of the semi-arid biblical slopes that spread out around Bethlehem, and its walls are adorned with a meticulously restored trompe l'oeil fresco of a colonnade. An elevator has been added to the building to conform to modern accessibility requirements, and Morcos Nassar's lush gardens are now open to hotel guests, who sometimes sneak an orange off the trees.

Despite continuing worries of possible unrest erupting in the West Bank, and fears that the Covid-19 tourism collapse would persist into 2023, pilgrims—mostly Christians from the Americas—returned to Bethlehem as soon as pandemic restrictions were lifted.

Thus far, Ms. Nassar Ghareeb said, there have been "no stumbles" at the boutique hotel. She said the new employees "are very happy at their jobs, very proud of what they are doing."

Noga Tarnopolsky contributes from Jerusalem. Twitter: @NTarnopolsky.

Cardinal Gregory says Catholics should be 'outraged' by rising antisemitism

Antisemitic incidents reached a historic high in 2021, according to the Anti-Defamation League, and a series of high-profile incidents at the close of 2022 suggest that this unfortunate trend has likely continued. For example, the musician Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, espoused particularly virulent antisemitic views during interviews and through social media, expressing admiration for Adolf Hitler and claiming that the Holocaust did not happen.

Days before he made those comments, Mr. West dined with former President Donald Trump in Florida, bringing along as his guest the online provocateur Nick Fuentes, a Catholic who regularly expresses antisemitic and white supremacist views.

Cardinal Wilton Gregory, the archbishop of Washington and the Catholic co-chair of the National Council of Synagogues–U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Consultation, told **America** that Catholic political figures “should be outraged and embarrassed and concerned [about antisemitism] in their position as leaders, and as Catholics in the public arena.”

The U.S.C.C.B. released a statement condemning antisemitism in November.

“The rising trend of antisemitic incidents has become even more painful in light of the Church’s relationship to the Jewish tradition and our connections to the Jewish people in dialogue and friendship,” the statement read.

“In unequivocal terms, we condemn any and all violence directed at the Jewish people, whether motivated by religious, racial, or political grievances,” the bishops continued. “We furthermore denounce any rhetoric which seeks to demonize or dehumanize the Jewish people or Judaism as a religious tradition.”

Malka Z. Simkovich chairs the Jewish studies program at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. She said that Catholics have a singular role in condemning anti-Jewish statements and actions because of the church’s historic role in persecuting Jews.

“The church has already provided Catholics with precedent to do that,” Dr. Simkovich told **America**, pointing to “Nostra Aetate,” the Second Vatican Council’s teaching document that condemns antisemitism. “It’s very disheartening that there’s still resistance among Catholics to admit



to the unique role that the church has had in regards to the suffering of the Jews.”

Catholics who came of age after Vatican II may not be as attuned to the church’s historic antisemitism, which can cause some younger believers to view anti-Jewish hatred as simply one more social ill that needs addressing, Dr. Simkovich said.

“I really resist it when people say, ‘Oh, we have to combat antisemitism because it could lead to other forms of hatred against other minorities,’” she said. “Antisemitism has to be taken on its own as a scourge that needs to be addressed.”

In 2025, 60 years will have passed since the publication of “Nostra Aetate,” which means there are fewer Catholics today who remember a time when Catholic teaching was far less hospitable to Jews and other religious groups than it is today. So it is especially important for younger Catholics to learn about that history, however painful that experience may be.

“We don’t know our own history,” Cardinal Gregory said. “The farther away we get from a terrible moment in history, there are fewer people who have firsthand knowledge of it.” Future leaders, especially, must educate themselves about past challenges if they want to effectively ad-

Nick Fuentes, far-right activist, hosting an America First rally in Lansing, Mich., in November 2020

Nicole Hester/Ann Arbor News via AP, File

Pope Francis puts Matteo Ricci on path to sainthood

Recognizing that Matteo Ricci “lived the Christian virtues to a heroic degree,” Pope Francis officially put the famous 16th-century Italian Jesuit missionary to China on the path to sainthood on Dec. 17.

Pope Francis is known to be inspired by Ricci, declaring him “venerable” on

the pope’s 86th birthday. In a meeting last May with a delegation from the University of Macerata in central Italy, Pope Francis described Ricci as a “champion” of the “culture of dialogue.” The Jesuit missionary, he said, is famed not only for his actions and his writings but for being “a man of encounters, who went beyond being a foreigner and became a citizen of the world.”

Ricci began his missionary work in China in 1582 when he arrived in Macau, then a Portuguese colony. Moving to mainland China, where he adopted the Chinese style of life and became fluent in Mandarin, he spent the remaining 27 years of his life in China.

Ricci made history in 1601 by becoming the first European to enter Beijing’s Forbidden City; Wanli, emperor of China’s Ming dynasty, had invited him because of his knowledge of astronomy and calendrical science. Known as “Li Madou” to the Chinese, Ricci produced scholarly works in optics, astronomy, music, geography, geometry and numerous other fields.

In an unprecedented honor, at his death he became the first Westerner to be buried on imperial ground in the capital city by a special decree of the emperor. The Chinese recognize Ricci as a bridge-builder between East and West and have honored him by commemorating him in the Millenium Monument in Beijing. The only other Westerner so honored is Marco Polo.

In order for the pope to declare Ricci blessed, the next step on the path to sainthood, the postulator of his cause will need to provide evidence of a miracle through Ricci’s intercession; by Vatican convention, a second miracle will be needed for him to be declared a saint.

Gerard O’Connell, *Vatican correspondent*. Twitter: @gerryorome.



CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec

Matteo Ricci, S.J.

dress contemporary issues, he added.

“We won’t be able to get beyond our history, we won’t be able to get about the job of healing, of reconciliation, if we don’t recognize the causes that drove us apart,” Cardinal Gregory said.

Cardinal Gregory said that while not all Catholics will have the opportunity to engage in projects aimed at dialogue with the Jewish community, they should nonetheless seek to learn about Judaism’s impact on their faith. He pointed to the liturgy and Catholic prayer life as good examples.

“Our Catholic liturgy has a great debt that goes back to the first Christians, including our Lord and Blessed Mother herself: They were Jewish,” he said. “And when they prayed, they prayed in the Jewish context.”

Michael J. O’Loughlin, *national correspondent*. Twitter: @MikeOLoughlin.

A historic and unprecedented farewell for Benedict XVI



Archbishop Georg Gänswein kisses Benedict's casket in St. Peter's Basilica on Jan. 4.

CNS photo/Vatican Media

The bells tolled, the organ played, and the congregation of 50,000 Romans and pilgrims from Germany, Italy and many other countries applauded warmly as pallbearers brought the casket of Benedict XVI, the emeritus pope who died on Dec. 31, onto the steps of St. Peter's Basilica.

The simple cypress coffin, with Benedict's coat of arms emblazoned on it, was placed in front of the altar looking out on the square, on the cool, misty morning of Jan. 5.

A small ceremony had taken place in the basilica the previous evening when Benedict's corpse was placed in the coffin. A 1,000-word resume of his life (known in Latin as his *rogito*), was then read and subsequently inserted into a metal tube and placed in the coffin, together with the pallium and a collection of the coins of his pontificate. These items were to be buried with him, as is the tradition for the burial of popes.

The following morning, once the pallbearers placed the casket on the steps in front of the altar, an open book of the Gospels was placed on it. The people then joined in reciting the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary.

When the rosary ended, Pope Francis, 86, arrived in a wheelchair and took his place on a chair in front of the altar, looking out at the coffin. Next, 125 cardinals processed out from the basilica and took their seats at the right-hand side of the altar. Cardinal Zen, who had arrived from Hong Kong early that morning, made it just in time.

All the cardinals concelebrated the solemn, sung Lat-

in Mass together with 400 other bishops and 3,700 priests from all continents.

The two official delegations from Germany and Italy sat on the left of the altar together with the presidents of Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Lithuania and Togo, and three monarchs from Spain and Belgium, as well as other guests who had come in their private capacity. Seated at the end of the front row was Archbishop Georg Gänswein, who had served Benedict as private secretary throughout his eight-year pontificate and almost 10 years of retirement, together with the four consecrated women of the *Memores Domini*, the two nurses and others who had cared for Benedict over these years.

Pope Francis, wearing a red cope, began the liturgy with the sign of the cross and the words "Peace be with you!" After the readings of the Scriptures in Spanish, English and Italian, he delivered a profoundly spiritual reflection starting from the Gospel (Lk 23:29-46), in which Jesus on the cross said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Francis recalled: "These were the final words spoken by the Lord on the cross, his last breath, as it were, which summed up what had been his entire life: a ceaseless self-entrustment into the hands of his Father."

Pope Francis said those words are "the invitation and the program of life that he [Jesus] quietly inspires in us" and with which "he wishes to shape the heart of every pastor."

He went on to paint a portrait of the pastor that Jesus



Cardinals and bishops from around the world at the funeral Mass in St. Peter's Square on Jan. 5



A German pilgrim in St. Peter's Square



A contingent of pilgrims urge "Santo Subito" ("Sainthood Now").



As Mass concludes, Pope Francis touches Benedict's casket.

desires, suggesting that this was in fact the kind of pastor that Benedict had been. He recalled that Jesus “entrusts himself to the frail hands of his disciples, so that they can feed his people,” through “prayerful devotion, silently shaped and refined amid the challenges and resistance that every pastor must face.” He said that “like the Master, a shepherd bears the burden of interceding and the strain of anointing his people, especially in situations where goodness must struggle to prevail and the dignity of our brothers and sisters is threatened.”

Then, referring to Benedict without naming him, Francis said:

God's faithful people, gathered here, now accompanies and entrusts to him the life of the one who was their pastor. Like the women at the tomb, we, too, have come with the fragrance of gratitude and the balm of hope, in order to show him once more the love that is undying. We want to do this with the same wisdom, tenderness and devotion that he bestowed upon us over the years. Together, we want to say: “Father, into your hands we commend his spirit.”

Then, for the only time in the homily, Francis named his predecessor as he concluded with these words full of hope: “Benedict, faithful friend of the Bridegroom, may your joy be complete as you hear his voice, now and forever!”

By the end of the Mass, the mist had lifted, the sky had turned blue, as Pope Francis imparted the final commendation and farewell. He entrusted his predecessor to “God our merciful Father” and prayed that through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit, he “may deliver Pope Emeritus Benedict from death, that he may sing God's praises in the heavenly Jerusalem, in expectation of the resurrection of his mortal body on the last day.”

Ten pallbearers lifted the coffin, and Francis put his right hand on it, in a final gesture of fond farewell. As the pallbearers carried the casket away into the basilica, everyone in the square—bishops, priests, religious, lay faithful and dignitaries—applauded warmly in gratitude for Benedict's great service to the church and humanity.

Thus ended a historic and unprecedented funeral of an emeritus pope—the first of its kind—in the Vatican.

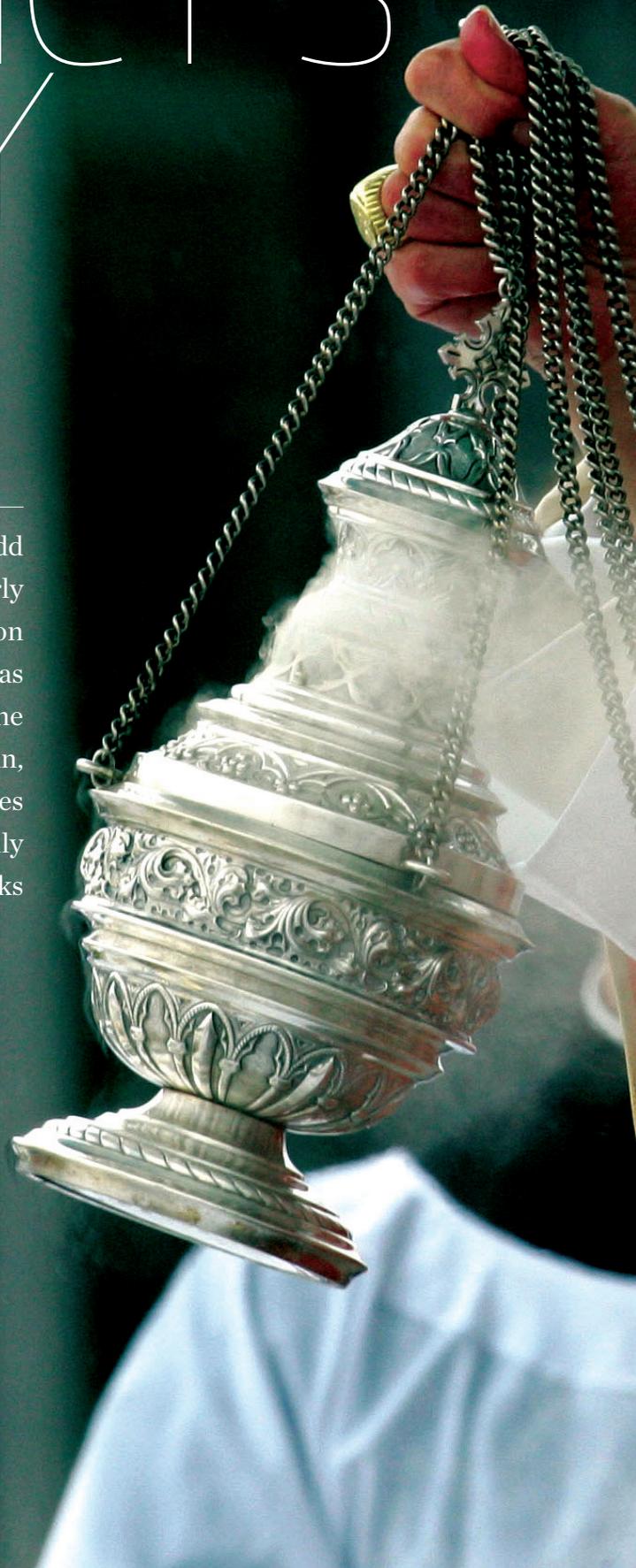
Gerard O'Connell, *Vatican correspondent*. *Twitter*: @gerryrome.

BENEDICT'S LEGACY

Joseph Ratzinger as theologian, doctrinal enforcer and pope

By David Gibson

Who was Benedict XVI? The question sounds odd because the answer seems so obvious. For nearly eight years, until his stunning decision to resign on the last day of February 2013, Joseph Ratzinger was pope, the most visible exponent of Catholicism in the world—a universal pastor and renowned theologian, who presented his ideas and exhortations in homilies and speeches around the globe and in beautifully crafted encyclicals and deeply researched books about Jesus.





Long before he was pope, Benedict was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and so-called guardian of orthodoxy, who as a career theologian relished the intellectual jousting inherent in that role. Over the course of his 23 years as head of the C.D.F., which was known within the Roman Curia as “la Suprema” for its historic influence, Cardinal Ratzinger made headlines—and enemies—with public campaigns against theologians and theologies he saw as crossing the line into dangerously progressive territory. While much of his work was undertaken at the behest of Pope John Paul II, the German-born cardinal also had an unprecedented sideline in public debates, speeches, writings and books outlining his own vision of the modern world and the perils it posed to Catholicism.

Therefore, many assumed that when Cardinal Ratzinger walked out onto the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica on a chilly April evening in 2005 and was introduced as Pope Benedict XVI, they knew what was coming: more of the same, and then some.

Persona and Principle

Every pope is a paradox to some degree. He is the lead character at center stage of an ongoing historical drama but one so cloaked in tradition and so hedged round by courtiers and customs that, even after he has been years in office, there can remain a remarkable degree of uncertainty about

what he is really trying to do, what he really thinks and how he views the church and the world.

The air of mystery was deeper than usual when it came to Joseph Ratzinger. An introvert and an academic, Ratzinger always engaged with the world most deeply when it came to theological debates; his personality and personal life were revealed only in rare glimpses.

For example, on April 24, 2005, during the homily at his installation Mass in St. Peter’s Square, Benedict elicited laughter when he said that he was not going to present “a program of governance,” a “programma di governo,” which is the Italian phrase for a campaign platform.

That would come later, he added. Instead, he said, “My real program of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole church, to the word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by him, so that he himself will lead the church at this hour of our history.”

As a teacher and pastor, Benedict XVI the theologian could be brilliant. But as the chief governor of the church, Benedict could border on hapless. The basic tasks of administration were apparently beyond his interest and his talent. That gap came at a critical time for the church, when religious choices abounded and “no religion” was a viable and respectable option—when a distrustful public, even a leery flock, was looking for deeds as much as words to convince them that the Roman Catholic Church was indeed

APRIL 16, 1927



Pope Benedict XVI is born on April 16 in his parents’ home in the town of Marktl in the State of Bavaria in southeastern Germany. He is the youngest of three children of Joseph Ratzinger Sr., a police officer, and his wife, Maria. Joseph is baptized on the day of his birth and named Joseph Alois Ratzinger. (In photo: Joseph Ratzinger, second row, third from left, with his classmates of the third grade of the elementary school Aschau am Inn.)

1933-43



Ratzinger’s early life is shaped by the rise of Nazism and, later, by World War II. According to both Joseph Ratzinger and his older brother Georg (also a priest), their family was opposed to the Nazis because of their Catholic faith. His father’s attempt as a policeman to rein in the Nazi “brownshirts” leads to a forced retirement in 1937. One of Ratzinger’s cousins, a 14-year-old with Down syndrome, is taken away in 1941 and never returns, probably murdered as part of the Nazi eugenics program. (In photo: Joseph Ratzinger, back row at right, is pictured with his sister, Maria, brother, Georg, and parents, Maria and Joseph, on July 8, 1951.)

still the bearer of the truth Jesus preached.

Benedict's reputation was further diminished after revelations of the abuse of altar servers and seminarians committed by former cardinal Theodore McCarrick rocked the church in the United States in the summer of 2018. Questions emerged about how Benedict chose to respond to multiple reports delivered to Rome over many years about the former Washington archbishop's behavior.

Benedict's legacy is ambiguous even in the most sympathetic reading. Whether history's verdict will be charitable or damning may depend on whether the influence of his powerful words can compensate for some of the more listless aspects of his administration.

'Management Is Not My Charism'

The pope was never known as a terribly good administrator. As it became clear that voting in the conclave of April 2005 was moving quickly and decisively in his favor, Cardinal Ratzinger was broadcasting that message to his fellow cardinal lectors. "I am not an administrator," he repeated. Cardinal Ratzinger knew as well as anyone that the Vatican needed a strong hand on the tiller after John Paul II's reign. The cardinals knew it, too, but they just assumed that Ratzinger would have that skill set, or that at the least he would certainly be an upgrade.

As pope, Ratzinger adapted to his new public role, kissing babies, blessing crowds and serving as a pastor rather

than just an ecclesiastical traffic cop. As he told dinner companions early on: "It was easy to know the doctrine. It's much harder to help a billion people live it." Benedict was also humble about his own ambitions. "I am learning to be pope," he quipped in a rare aside to reporters in 2006, a little over a year after his election. Above all, in his pronouncements and writings, he carefully accentuated the positive. His first encyclical (considered the touchstone of any new papacy) was "God Is Love" ("Deus Caritas Est"), and charity became the recurring byword of his pontificate. In addition, in scholarly yet accessible and often lyrical speeches, homilies and writings, Benedict provided thumbnail summaries of the apostles, the Beatitudes and various saints, along with the history and traditions of the church.

Benedict wanted to move from defining Catholicism by what it is *against* to defining it by what it is *for*. "Christianity, Catholicism, isn't a collection of prohibitions: It's a positive option," he told interviewers before his September 2006 trip to his Bavarian homeland. "It's very important that we look at it again because this idea has almost completely disappeared today. We've heard so much about what is not allowed that now it's time to say: We have a positive idea to offer." Yet it was that visit back to Germany that would spark the first serious crisis of Benedict's reign and begin to establish his papacy's reputation for mismanagement, a reputation that would be cemented

1939

At the age of 12, Ratzinger enters the seminary at Traunstein in Bavaria.

1941

At the age of 14, Ratzinger is conscripted into the Hitler Youth, as required by German law after Dec. 1, 1936. Ratzinger states later in his life that he tried to avoid meetings of the Hitler Youth and was helped by a sympathetic teacher who ignored Ratzinger's absences from the meetings.

1943-45

When he is 16 years old, Ratzinger is drafted into the German military, serving first as part of an anti-aircraft gun crew and later being trained as an infantryman. In the final days of the Nazi regime in 1945, Ratzinger deserts his unit and tries to return home. He is briefly detained in an American prisoner-of-war camp before being released at the end of the war in Europe. Upon his release, he re-enters the seminary. (In photo: Joseph Ratzinger in his military uniform.)



1951



Joseph Ratzinger is ordained a priest on June 29 by Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber of Munich, alongside his brother Georg. (In photo: Father Joseph Ratzinger prays during an open air Mass in Ruhpolding, southern Germany, in 1952.)

as Benedict's Vatican lurched from crisis to crisis.

Islam and Catholicism, Faith and Reason

Benedict was returning to Bavaria in 2006 after his election to the papacy the year before. It was natural that he would speak in a lecture hall at the University of Regensburg, where he had spent his happiest days as a theologian. In the address, Benedict highlighted the interplay of faith and reason, a theme long dear to him and one he would frequently stress in his pontificate. Benedict's intent was to show how reason untethered from faith leads to fanaticism and violence, as does the opposite pathology, faith untethered from reason. To illustrate the latter case, Benedict dug up an obscure 14th-century dialogue between a Persian scholar and a long-forgotten Byzantine Christian emperor, Manuel II Paleologus, over the concept of violence in Islam. "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached," Benedict quoted the emperor as saying. The pontiff went on to critique the West and secularism and "progressive" Christian theologians just as sharply, as he held out the Catholic balance between faith in God and reason as set forth in Greek philosophy as the ideal of religious belief.

Given the tinderbox that is the Muslim world today, it was no surprise that Benedict's invocation of Islam, and specifically the Prophet Muhammad, as an exemplar of

religion gone wild touched off a firestorm. Theologically, Vatican relations with Islam would improve significantly over the next few years, in large part thanks to the response from numerous Islamic scholars who petitioned the pope to engage in a broad dialogue in the wake of the Regensburg talk. Politically and diplomatically, the situation grew ever more fraught and tragic as Christians came under increasing threat of violence in many Muslim societies. The cardinals in the conclave had elected Cardinal Ratzinger in part because of his reputation for taking a harder line on Islam than John Paul II had done—but as pope, Benedict seemed unable to stanch attacks on Christians or to expand a zone of even basic religious freedoms. Given the global circumstances, it is doubtful anyone could have done much better.

A Pope From the West

The Regensburg crisis served to highlight other elements of Benedict's character and style that would prove to be keys to interpreting his papacy. Intellectually and culturally, he was a thoroughgoing Western European, and a Bavarian at that, which deeply influenced his approach to faith and to the modern world. If his audience had looked past the post-Regensburg rage of Muslims, they would also have seen the distress of many Catholic leaders of the burgeoning flocks in Asia and Africa, where Benedict's Western European orientation toward the faith was frustrating to them and almost incomprehensible to their people. The

1951-59

Ratzinger studies theology at the University of Munich, earning a doctorate in 1953 and his habilitation in 1957. He begins lecturing as a professor of fundamental theology at the University of Freising in 1958 and moves the next year to the University of Bonn.

1962-65

Ratzinger participates in the Second Vatican Council in Rome as a chief theological advisor, or *peritus*, to Cardinal Josef Frings of Cologne. In 1963 he also begins teaching at the University of Münster. (In photo: Father Joseph Ratzinger, right, with Cardinal Franz König of Vienna during the Second Vatican Council at the Vatican in 1962.)

1966

Ratzinger is given the chair of doctrinal theology at the University of Tübingen (among his colleagues is Hans Küng). Considered a reformist at the time of the council, Ratzinger begins expressing more traditionally minded views later in the decade. Some of his biographers have linked this change in focus to the wave of student uprisings and radical movements that swept through German universities in the late '60s



CNS photo/courtesy Diocese of Mainz archives, KNA



Pope Benedict wanted to move from defining Catholicism by what it is against to what it is for.

same issue surfaced during Benedict’s May 2007 visit to Brazil, when he asserted—against the consensus of scholarship—that European missionaries to the continent “did not at any point involve an alienation of the pre-Columbian cultures, nor...the imposition of a foreign culture.” Rather, he said, the reception of the Gospel in Latin America was the proper fulfillment of that culture’s trajectory.

Benedict made sure the leadership of the church would continue to be dominated by Europeans and in particular by Italians. In his appointments to curial posts, Benedict favored Europeans, and by 2011, Italians had received nearly half the top jobs. The College of Cardinals itself became increasingly Eurocentric during his papacy, even as the center of gravity of the Catholic world continued to shift to Africa and Asia. Indeed, by April 2011, the sixth anniversary of his pontificate, Benedict had named some 49 cardinals, out of about 115 eligible electors. Of those 49 cardinals, 26 were Europeans, and 14 of them were Italians. Moreover, of the 23 non-Europeans, almost all had studied theology in Rome; and half of all his appointments, European and non-European, had experience working in the Roman Curia.

Even Benedict’s choice of ecclesiastical fashion telegraphed his sentiments, as he reintroduced elaborate lace garments and monarchical regalia that had not been seen around Rome in decades, even centuries. For example, he

was once photographed at Mass wearing an elaborate cope and the high mitre of Pius IX. On one Ash Wednesday, he wore a chasuble modeled on one worn by Paul V, a Borghese pope of the 17th century remembered for censuring Galileo. Benedict was known to wear a “fiddleback” vestment dating to the Counter-Reformation era of the 16th century, and used a tall, gilded, papal throne not seen in years. He also commissioned a set of 30 new vestments modeled on those worn by the Medici pope Leo X, a corpulent, corrupt fellow who at his election famously declared, “Let us enjoy the papacy since God has given it to us.”

1969-77

Ratzinger returns to Bavaria to teach at the University of Regensburg in 1969. He is associated during these years with prominent European theologians, including Walter Kasper, Henri de Lubac, S.J., and Hans Urs von Balthasar, and plays a leading role in forming the theological journal *Communio* in 1972. In 1976 he is named vice president of the University of Regensburg.

1977



AP Photo/Diether Erdlicher

Ratzinger is ordained archbishop of Munich and Freising on May 28, choosing as his episcopal motto “Cooperatores Veritatis” (“Cooperators of the Truth”). A month later, on June 27, he is elevated to the College of Cardinals by Pope Paul VI. (In photo: Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger greets onlookers at his arrival in Munich on May 23, 1977.)

The Vatican under Benedict pushed through a thorough-going revision of the Mass in English, insisting on a more literal rather than ‘dynamic’ translation.

Reform of the Reform

For Benedict, as for John Paul II before him, canonizations were a matter of course; something that was once a novelty for the church had become, ironically, a way of reinforcing the idea of continuity over 2,000 years of apostolic Christianity. This “continuity,” Benedict and his allies argued, should undergird every discussion of reform in the church. It was the “unbroken tradition” of Catholic customs and

mores that reinforced the idea of a “kneeling church” of popular devotion rather than one of social activism. In fact, kneeling—and receiving Communion on the tongue rather than in the hand—became a literal manifestation of the pope’s approach to the “reform of the reform,” which tended to focus on liturgical changes rather than the famous theological battles of his days at the C.D.F.

In keeping with that vision, the Vatican under Benedict pushed through a thoroughgoing revision of the Mass in English, insisting on a more literal rather than “dynamic” translation, one that would hew closer to a word-for-word rendering of the Latin rather than more ordinary speech. For Benedict’s supporters, this was a triumph of classical language and poetry; for his critics, the new translation sacrificed intelligibility to an effort to recover some old-fashioned ideal that in reality never existed.

The most obvious sign of Benedict’s liturgical propensities, and a source of some of the greatest internal dissension under his papacy, was his decision in July 2007 to allow the old Latin Mass—often known as the Tridentine Rite, after the 16th-century Council of Trent—to be celebrated anywhere in the world, whether the local bishop liked it or not. Moreover, the decision was yet another source of friction with the Jewish community because when Benedict rein-

1978



Cardinal Ratzinger takes part in the conclaves that elect Pope John Paul I and Pope John Paul II. (In photo: Cardinals get a salute from the Swiss Guard in the conclave area on Aug. 25, 1978. Cardinal Laureen Rugambwa of Dar-es-Salaam and Cardinal Ratzinger are in the foreground.)

1981-2005

On Nov. 25, 1981, Ratzinger is appointed prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith by Pope John Paul II, a position he holds for 24 years. He earns a reputation as a doctrinal conservative with a particular focus on the dangers of relativism, syncretism and religious indifference. Liberation theologians come under particular scrutiny, with the C.D.F. issuing public criticisms of liberation theology in 1984 and 1986.

1986-92

Ratzinger presides over the drafting committee that composes the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

stituted the Latin Mass, he also restored the older Good Friday prayers whose noxious language about Jews and whose pleas for their conversion had often been an incitement to anti-Jewish violence in past centuries. (The pope later modified the prayers somewhat.)

Benedict took this extraordinary step as a way of appealing to the hard-line, right-wing schismatic group called the Lefebvrists (after their late leader, the rebel Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre). The Lefebvrists rejected the Second Vatican Council and its reforms and continued to use the old Latin Mass and other pre-Vatican II rites. In 1988, under the direction of then-Cardinal Ratzinger, the Vatican had created a special provision to try to keep the Lefebvrists in the fold; it didn't work, but the 1988 provision did appeal to many of the so-called traditionalists and helped split the movement. As pope, Benedict wanted to do more, however, and reinstated the Latin Mass despite strong and outspoken opposition from the world's bishops and senior Vatican prelates, all of whom worried that legitimating and even privileging the Tridentine Rite could be a source of more tension and division in parishes and dioceses. This push to stress the continuity of the church's history over an

interpretation of change, or *rupture*, as the pope called it, was a central organizing principle of his papacy.

Pope Francis promulgated the apostolic letter "Traditionis Custodes" in 2021, significantly restricting the use of the traditional Latin rite and largely reversing Benedict's liturgical reform.

A Man of Theology, Not Grand Gestures

Paradoxically, Benedict's resignation in 2013 was a "Nixon to China" move, a radical departure from the most orthodox popes and theologians. The papacy had come to be seen as a divine mission unlike any other in the church, and one that ended only at death. "Christ did not come down from the cross," John Paul II would retort when it was suggested that his failing health should make him consider giving up the office.

Now Benedict had, in one simple gesture, rejected that view and reversed a centuries-long trend toward identifying the person of the pope with the office of the papacy. He was demystifying the papacy and modernizing it, acknowledging the need to adapt to the times and opening the door for his successors to find a graceful exit short of death.

1999

Ratzinger personally intervenes in the faltering dialogue with the Lutheran World Federation to hammer out the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," considered by ecumenicists to be a groundbreaking move in the quest for Christian unity.

2000

The C.D.F. releases "Dominus Iesus," which warns that religious pluralism could easily become indifferentism or relativism. The document's reference to non-Catholic denominations as "not churches in the proper sense" draws strong criticism from Protestant groups as well as ecumenical advocates.



2005

After the death of Pope John Paul II on April 2, Cardinal Ratzinger participates in the conclave to elect a successor. On April 19, he is elected pope, taking the name Benedict XVI. He chooses Benedict in honor of both Pope Benedict XV (who led the church in an effort for peace during World War I) and St. Benedict of Nursia, considered the founder of Western monasticism. (Photo: Pope Benedict XVI greets a crowd on April 19, 2005.)

He was demystifying the papacy and modernizing it, acknowledging the need to adapt to the times and opening the door for his successors to find a graceful exit short of death.

Moreover, Benedict's resignation was a bit of karma—his own failings coming back to haunt him. The “Vatileaks” scandal had begun in early 2012 and opened reams of private documents from the papal household to public scrutiny. The case continued throughout the year, revealing Benedict's palace as a place of intrigue and manipulation and dirty dealing to curry favor. It was always thus in the Vatican, of course, but the fact that the pontiff's own valet turned out to be responsible for the leaks was a severe blow to Benedict. He expected more of those around him, and they delivered much less.

He turned 85 as this was happening, and his body be-

gan to fail him as much as his close associates had. He suffered constant pain in his joints and circulatory ailments, and he had begun using a moveable platform at major liturgies, which were already being reduced in duration and frequency. The valet, Paolo Gabriele, was convicted later in 2012, and pardoned, but other troubles mounted—accusations about the Vatican's lapses on clergy sex abuse, calls for Benedict to face justice in the courts—until Benedict decided he had had enough.

Benedict would leave much undone. The effort to reinterpret the Second Vatican Council, the formative experience of his ecclesiastical career, was a work in progress. The vaunted “Year of Faith” had just begun. The outreach to the Latin-rite schismatics of the Society of St. Pius X was Benedict's personal mission and seemed destined to end with his pontificate. The Curia needed more reforming than ever; even the investigations of U.S. women religious and of various theologians were likely to go nowhere now. It was a papacy that was oddly incomplete, its leader “hidden from the world,” as he put it, in a monastery on the Vatican grounds—a shadow pope, as some feared, or an *éminence grise*, as others hoped. He would have immunity from prosecution, security from a plotting world, and peace and quiet.

Benedict's retirement was not without its controversial moments either. Despite promising to observe a public silence and to devote the rest of his life to prayer and reflec-

2005-13



During his eight-year papacy, Benedict releases three encyclicals: “*Deus Caritas Est*” (“God Is Love”) in 2005, focusing on God's love and its role in our lives; “*Spe Salvi*” (“Saved in Hope”) in 2007, on the importance for Christians to believe their lives will not end in death; and “*Caritas in Veritate*” (“Charity in Truth”) in 2009, which tackles the problems of global development. He also begins the first drafts of “*Lumen Fidei*” (“The Light of Faith”), which is finished and signed by Pope Francis in 2013. (Photo: Pope Benedict XVI at his desk in the papal residence at Castel Gandolfo in 2010.)

2005

Within weeks of Benedict XVI's election, Thomas Reese, S.J., resigns his position as editor in chief of **America** at the insistence of the C.D.F.



2006

During a lecture at the University of Regensburg on Sept. 16, Pope Benedict remarks on the irrationality of religion-driven wars. His remarks, perceived by many as antagonistic toward Islam, lead to assassination threats against the pope. This incident notwithstanding, Benedict gives interfaith dialogue with Islam a greater emphasis than previous popes. (In photo: Pope Benedict XVI and Mustafa Cagrici, the grand mufti of Istanbul, pray in the Blue Mosque in Istanbul in 2006.)

2007

Returning to its criticism of liberation theology, the C.D.F. releases a notification criticizing Jon Sobrino, S.J., for his christological and ecclesiological views.

tion, in March 2016 he agreed to an interview with a Belgian theologian that focused on divine mercy. Pope Francis had declared 2016 a jubilee year of mercy.

A book-length interview with the German journalist Peter Seewald was published in November 2016. Pope Benedict used the opportunity to defend his papacy against criticism over his handling of the sexual abuse crisis. And in April 2019 he released an article blaming the crisis partly on the breakdown of sexual mores experienced during the 1960s, a hypothesis that had the effect of deflecting Pope Francis' emphasis on the abuse of power and clericalism as the prime drivers of the problem of the clerical abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.

Benedict was who he was to the end. He would study his theology and write, just as he had written throughout his time in office: three encyclicals completed (one left unfinished), a trilogy of popular, not magisterial, books on the historical Jesus, a ream of homilies and reflections. Not an ex-pope—there can be no such thing—just a theologian, a priest. As Benedict put it: “I am the person who happens to have been chosen—the cardinals are also to blame for that—and I do what I can.” And he did what he could do, and as the person he had always been.

2008



In his first visit to the United States, from April 15 to April 20, the pope travels to Washington, D.C., and New York City. He is received by President George W. Bush at the White House, where he stresses his concerns relating to the Iraq War and the dignity of undocumented immigrants in the United States. He also publicly addresses the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. (In photo: Laura Bush and President George W. Bush look on as Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi kisses Pope Benedict XVI's ring on the South Lawn of the White House on April 16, 2008.)

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For more coverage of Pope Benedict XVI's life and legacy, go to americamagazine.org and to our video channel at youtube.com/americamag. For the latest news from Rome, listen to the America podcast “Inside the Vatican” at americamagazine.org/voices/inside-vatican.

2013



On Feb. 11, Pope Benedict XVI shocks the world by announcing his resignation, the first pope to do so since Gregory XII in 1415, citing his advanced age and health concerns. He makes it clear he will not retain the title of cardinal or be eligible for any office of the Curia in retirement. He spends the remaining years of his life largely out of public view and passes away in Rome on Dec. 31, 2022. (In photo: Retired Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis exchange greetings at a consistory at the Vatican in 2015.)



THE COMFORT OF PHILOSOPHY

By Rachel Lu

What the church can give to the world in a time of anxiety and doubt

Boethius, a sixth-century Roman statesman, was in the prime of his life when his political career was brought to a sudden and ignominious end. Running afoul of corrupt politicians, he was falsely accused of plotting against the king, Theodoric, whose favor he had long enjoyed. Boethius fell, literally overnight, from a life of learned leisure into Theodoric's dungeons. He was executed, but not before he had penned a work that would reverberate across the centuries. *The Consolation of Philosophy* was one of the most widely read books of the Middle Ages, a multiple-century bestseller. It cemented Boethi-

us's own legacy and taught medieval Europe the value of the discipline that he loved.

The book opens with the hapless Boethius sitting in his cell, lamenting the terrible injustices of fate. He is joined there by a beautiful woman, clothed in a rich but somewhat tattered dress, who identifies herself as Lady Philosophy, the personification of the pursuit of wisdom. She chides him for his self-pity and engages him in an extended discussion of free will, the vicissitudes of fate and the workings of divine providence. By the end of the discourse, the character Boethius has gained a greater sense of perspective on his situation. The debate reminds him of the limits of human reason and helps him to trust God's providence once again. Lady Philosophy ministers to Boethius by meeting him where he is, using his God-given intellect to lead him to a place where he can relinquish his resentment and fear and find peace.

We would be fortunate to have such accompaniment today. We need that peace, desperately. Americans are as lonely, anxious and isolated as we have ever been. In material terms we are, in general, richly blessed; but socially and



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spiritually we are impoverished. Our nation is dangerously polarized politically, and we have diminishing trust in our compatriots and our government. The pervasive feeling of social disintegration makes the future feel grim.

Boethius would have related. Born into an aristocratic family in the final years of the Roman Empire, he well understood how human potential could be blighted by corruption and social dissolution. He realized, too, that he was living on the verge of widespread civilizational collapse, and accordingly much of his life was dedicated to a sustained effort to mitigate the damage by preserving great works of philosophy.

Boethius did more than any other person to translate and comment on the works of Plato and Aristotle; it was his gift to a distant future that no one could yet glimpse. Boethius's final hours are that much more poignant because we know that we are seeing the end, not of one man only, but of an entire culture. Nevertheless, the *Consolation* is not a work of despair. Lady Philosophy's comfort is accentuated for the modern reader by the knowledge that Boethius's dearest hope would be realized in centuries to come. Europe would rediscover the great thinkers of antiquity, with

his own scholarly work serving as a crucial bridge between the ancient and medieval eras.

But can ancient philosophy be the tonic that we need today? Some skepticism is forgivable. In our own day, we face gripping questions about social justice, identity and privilege, democracy and representation, and the desecration of the natural world. It is perhaps hard to imagine finding answers to questions like these in dusty academic tomes. Most Catholics are probably aware that their faith has a longstanding philosophical tradition, but the benefits of this tradition for the daily lives of the average Catholic may not be obvious.

What if it happened, though, that this rich tradition did contain, if not ready-made answers for modern problems, then at least a space within which answers could be fruitfully cultivated? What if it were not too late to elevate our communities and universities into vibrant centers of Catholic intellectual and cultural life, reminiscent of their medieval forerunners? What if this philosophic tradition is, in fact, the gift the world most needs from the church in this time of anxiety and doubt?



Can ancient philosophy be the tonic that we need today?

Some skepticism is forgivable.

A Home for Scholarship

Universities, in a form we would currently recognize, have existed since the Middle Ages, and they were, to a large extent, built by Catholic philosophers. This may seem today like a bit of trivia, but the footprints of medieval thinkers are still visible. At a modern university graduation, doctoral regalia still typically include a dark-blue tam, marking the color of philosophy. We still call our highest degree earners “doctors of philosophy,” even if they studied ornithology or hotel administration.

These vestiges of an older world should remind us how philosophy once created the university, even as it shaped and defined the church. Philosophical knowledge is more than just an abstraction. But for the medievals’ robust belief in the power of truth, and the capacity of human reason to uncover it, the university could never have been born. European Christianity could have developed in a more fundamentalist way, falling under the control of authoritarian patriarchs and corrupt politicians like the ones who executed Boethius. Fortunately, faith and reason converged in medieval Paris in a way that proved transformative, not just for France and Catholicism, but ultimately for the entire world.

The fact that this happened in Paris would have been quite startling to Boethius and his contemporaries. When Bologna founded the world’s first great law school in 1088, that was more explicable. Italy was still a hub of high culture, and it made sense to examine the foundations of law in the heart of the old empire. Britain had already produced some leading intellectuals, like St. Bede and St. Anselm.

France, by contrast, was quite far from the ancient world’s great centers of learning; and in the 10th century, the Franks were widely seen as crude and culturally backward.

Nevertheless, by the end of the 10th century, it was northern France that served as a magnet for intellectually curious men from across Europe. The cathedral schools became the gathering point for learned men and eager students looking to follow the path laid down by Boethius centuries before. They studied logic and great philosophical texts inherited from antiquity, and they worked to apply these skills and insights to the questions of their own day. By the 13th century, the University of Paris was recognized throughout Europe as the pre-eminent institution for the study of philosophy, theology and the arts. Medieval Paris was to philosophy what 15th-century Florence was to art or 19th-century Russia to literature.

The Age of Systematizers

The University of Paris was thoroughly cosmopolitan, in the sense that it drew men from all across Europe and forced them to subordinate their more particular loyalties and attachments to a larger project. This was not easy. The scholars at Paris had their own cultural and ethnic prejudices, as humans are apt to do, and these created tensions and occasionally even led to outbreaks of physical violence. Nevertheless, it was widely understood that the work of the university could not be entrusted to a single national or ethnic group.

European civilization was hurtling into a new era, and intellectual labor was needed to pave the way for a humane, prosperous Christian society. From a modern-day vantage point, it might seem that the intellectual circles of this era were homogeneous and culturally closed, but that would itself be a narrow-minded view. It is true, of course, that Europe at the time was largely agrarian and Catholic, and that the universities were mostly boys’ clubs. But this was also a time of political turbulence and rapid cultural change, and the momentum at the University of Paris was moving people away from more provincial attachments and toward universal truths that are the common heritage of all human beings.

This was the age of great systematizers. The overarching project of the era was to synthesize every aspect of Christian faith into a single picture, which could then be harmonized with everything else that was known, or even that *could* be known. The Scholastics of this period believed that all truth could be unified, and they planned to show it. They understood that this picture would need to combine substance and lucidity with broad-minded flexibility. They wanted a philosophy that could endure across



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“Boethius takes counsel of Dame Philosophy,” an illustration from a 15th-century edition of *The Consolation of Philosophy*

generations, but that endurance would be possible only if their theories could incorporate new information as the human race continued to explore and discover. Accordingly, their thought tended to move in wide arcs, creating a framework but leaving ample space for details to be filled in later. Practical questions were sometimes addressed, but the system as a whole was designed to have an openness that would encourage further pursuit of knowledge instead of shunning it.

To anyone who has gone through a modern doctoral program, the medieval method of training philosophers is simultaneously charming and astonishing in its ambition. Here at least, medieval universities stood in marked contrast to our own. A modern graduate student, even in the humanities, will spend years taking deep dives into a narrow and well-defined subject, with the goal of producing

some original research. In place of the modern dissertation, medieval graduate students would write full commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, which is a broad-ranging work covering virtually everything of interest to a Christian scholar: God, creation, death, judgment, heaven, hell, the moral life and the sacraments. In short, the University of Paris expected every scholar to write his own “book of everything” before he could be a full-fledged “doctor,” a scholar qualified to teach. It was a system that truly captured the spirit of the age. The Parisian intellectuals were determined to create a universally applicable philosophical view that could stand the test of time.

Did they aim too high? Was their zeal for consistency ultimately exposed as mere hubris, just the futile obsession of little minds? No human endeavor is perfect, and one can find mistakes within Scholastic writings, as for in-



It could be that Catholic philosophy was made for such a moment as this.

stance in their faulty understanding of human embryology. Some texts would seem fanciful and irrelevant to us, like St. Bonaventure's extended discussions of angelology. We might be disturbed by the occasional moral judgment, as when St. Thomas Aquinas condones the execution of heretics.

Still, when we consider that we are looking back across a gulf of several centuries, it is remarkable how well Scholasticism still holds together. Most of it still seems thoroughly sane and applicable to modern questions. Neither modern science nor modern political developments have shown the Scholastics' worldview to be fundamentally implausible. But their resolve was tested many times, especially with the rapid rediscovery of new Aristotelian texts in the 13th century. Preserved in many monasteries and openly discussed in Islamic intellectual circles by thinkers like Al-Farabi and Al-Ghazali, Aristotle's texts eventually moved into the Parisian circles and became the subject of furious debate. As a pagan with many profound insights but no access to Christian revelation, Aristotle pushed to the fore hard questions about the limits of philosophy and the relationship between faith and reason. Some religious authorities moved to suppress the study of Aristotle, fearing that philosophy would discredit or overwhelm the Christian faith. In the end, the Parisian thinkers (especially St. Thomas Aquinas) successfully synthesized Aristotle with the Church Fathers, drawing in many other Greek and Islamic insights along the way.

In the end, for all their false starts and personal failings, the intellectuals in Paris achieved a spectacular fusion of faith and philosophy. In so doing, they opened the way to a Europe that was able to embrace human reason, exploring truth in all its many facets without rejecting God. If Lady

Philosophy had been clairvoyant as well as wise, she might have given Boethius even more powerful comfort. Without him, medieval Europe might never have embraced philosophy to the extent that it did. Without philosophy, Christianity might never have escaped the trap of fundamentalism. His life may have been short, but he certainly did not live in vain.

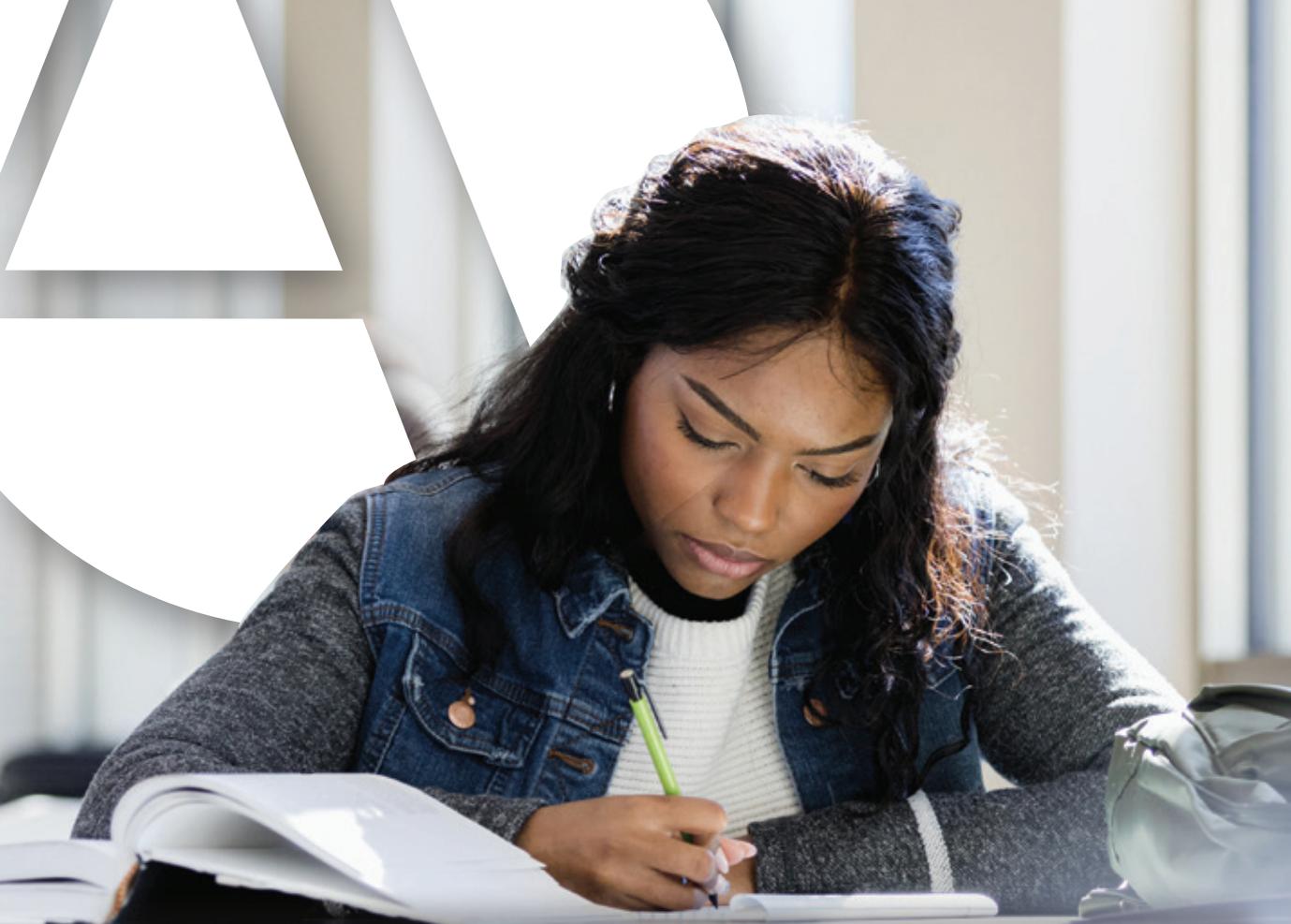
Joining Faith and Reason

In a fallen world, the victory of human reason is never complete. Fundamentalism will return periodically, as will political corruption, doubt, prejudice and many distortions of the faith. Even Scholasticism, for all its admirable features, has the potential to lead people astray. It can be reduced to a dry and formalist system, indifferent to lived realities and blind to the questions that trouble people's hearts.

Over the past seven centuries, Catholics have many times had to renew their commitment to seeking new truths and harmonizing all knowledge with the repository of faith. Again and again, lived experience has revealed places where older assumptions were imprecise, prejudiced or just wrong. Difficult and painful questions may arise, but Catholics can tackle these with the fearless audacity of the Scholastics, because we understand that faith and reason support and nourish one another. That joining of faith and reason is the legacy of Catholic philosophers, and it has always been foundational to Catholic education, reflected in Catholic universities and in the *Ratio Studiorum* that has shaped the Jesuit schools, which have had a particularly strong impact in the United States, from colonial times through the present day.

It might seem that that legacy has diminished in relevance, now that we live in a world with billions of people, scores of different faiths and a greater recognition of the array of cultures, races, languages and perspectives in our societies. Then again, it could be that Catholic philosophy was *made* for such a moment as this. At its best, it is both precise and flexible, well-defined and expansive, practical and transcendent. It drinks in new information, digests it and adapts the larger picture to reflect the truth more accurately. Because it is rooted both in logic and in natural observation, it can engage interlocutors from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives. The Scholastics sought to rise above provincial attachments and articulate truths that were common to all human beings. That project seems as relevant now as at any time in history.

At the primary and secondary levels, a number of Catholic schools have been revitalized through the introduction of classical curricula. The rapidly growing classical schooling



During the 2021-22 school year, Catholic school enrollment across the United States increased by 3.8 percent, according to the National Catholic Educational Association. The organization also noted that this is “the first increase in two decades and the largest recorded increase by NCEA.” For supporters of Catholic education, these numbers are one of many reasons to hope that Catholic schools still have a vibrant future.

Catholic schools and universities have been a steadfast presence during the difficult years of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even in the midst of a changing world, their identity remains constant and motivated by a faithfulness to Christ. Catholic schools and Catholic universities exist at the intersection of faith and the world. They are not places that exist to shield students from reality, nor are they places where students deal only with secular concerns. They help students process their experience through the lens of faith with the hope that their work in the world will reflect that.

And when we celebrate Catholic schools and universities we also honor the thousands of faculty members and staff who work endlessly on behalf of their students, as well as the parents who scrimp and save and support the schools in endless ways. (Want to buy some wrapping paper?) And, of course, we celebrate the students who embrace the mission—and remind us of it. And who one day, God willing, will be the ones to continue it.

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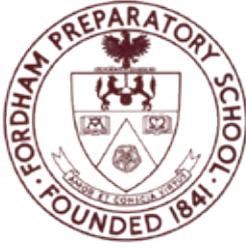


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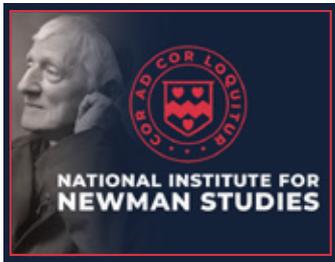
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National Institute for Newman Studies
 (412) 681-4375 • newmanstudies.org/2023-spring-symposium
 office@newmanstudies.org

The Early Modern Roots of Newman's Religious World
 – March 10th and 11th 2023.

Keynote Speaker: R. Trent Pomplun / University of Notre Dame.
Speakers: Geertjan Zuidwegt / Katholieke Universiteit Leuven; Elissa Cutter / Georgian Court University; Shaun Blanchard / National Institute for Newman Studies.

This symposium will be held both in person and via Zoom internet. Registration prior to the symposium is required.



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movement channels the spirit of the medieval synthesizers in myriad ways. It connects students to a longstanding intellectual tradition and seeks universal truths that are the common heritage of all humanity. It prioritizes breadth over specialized knowledge and robustly affirms the power of reason. The growing demand for classical schools speaks to a widely felt need for sources of wisdom that can cut across the political polarization, mutual mistrust and social fragmentation that are so defining of our age. In an anxious world, it offers a beacon of hope. Perhaps we can, after all, find ways to reason together.

Might philosophy departments offer a similar service at the university level? Imagine if Catholic universities were once again seen as a light to the nations, replete with wisdom and prepared to help synthesize the many diverse truths that humans have uncovered across the centuries. We have many resources for this, even beyond the rich tradition of Scholastic thought. We have the contemporary tradition of Christian personalism, explored by thinkers like Dietrich von Hildebrand and St. John Paul II. We have Catholic social teaching, which deliberately applies insights from antiquity to more modern social problems. We have the neo-Thomist tradition, initiated in 1879 when Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical “Aeterni Patris,” calling on Catholics to recover the great insights of medieval thinkers. These are just a few of many resources that Catholics can use, proving once again that the surest path to truth is not the one that shuns or buries unfamiliar perspectives but rather the one that synthesizes insights from a wide range of sources.

Of course, different people will be inclined to apply the insights of Catholic tradition to different questions, with some focusing on social issues, others on everyday spirituality and still others on questions in geopolitics, the environmental sciences or bioethics. But all of these questions can be approached with greater zeal and confidence when we understand ourselves to be part of a larger effort that transcends the limitations of our own place and time.

In the depths of his despair, Boethius was comforted by Lady Philosophy and her balm of truth. This was a consolation that no earthly tyrant could take from him, and it is still available to us today. Our Lord offered a similar promise. Though the nations may rage, and the violent plunder, the truth will finally set us free.

Rachel Lu is a freelance writer and associate editor at *Law & Liberty*. She lives in St. Paul, Minn.

CROSSING THE JORDAN

By Brooke Stanish

I was 19 when I let no manna meet my lips—
though it shattered down from heaven,
I couldn't eat it. 30 pounds less & sliding
by the minute like those pieces of bread from
God's brow. how many calories are in a crumb
from His hands? too many & then I won't fit
into my life anymore, my tiny purple dress with
little flowers like golden bundles of wheat
the Israelites lugged in cradles on their backs—
the dress my little sister wore in the 6th grade.
what is weight? gravitational pull, value, self.
I was a number flickering at my toes—
the waters of the Jordan licking the feet of the
wanderers before the crossing, but there's an earth
to live before the crossing. I looped a belt across
my waist sometimes to make sure I hadn't grown.
maybe a small Israelite girl did the same thing
with a rope, wondering in the desert—always
thinking that God was a size she had to fit into.
maybe one day, someone unwound that rope
from her waist, her neck & set her spinning.
maybe she woke up, a piece of manna in her bony fist
that she swallowed in one breath, the waters
recoiled & she realized, as if in dreaming,
she crossed the Jordan with someone else's feet.

Brooke Stanish has had work published in *Time of Singing*, *The Windhover*, *The Rectangle* and other journals. Her writing has also been published in the *University of Edinburgh's The Student* and the *Capitol Standard*.



Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI, greets Pope John Paul II during a 2004 ceremony at the Vatican.

CNS photo/Catholic Press Photo

A GRAND PERFORMANCE

How Joseph Ratzinger influenced the course of Vatican II and beyond

By Tracey Rowland

The late Cardinal Joachim Meisner, archbishop of Cologne, once described Joseph Ratzinger as the “Mozart of theology.” Others have suggested that the composers Carl Maria von Weber or Anton Bruckner might be a better comparison. Both are emblematic of Austro-German romanticism.

Ratzinger was interested in the relationship between love and truth, affectivity as well as objectivity, the significance of history for personal formation, the historical character of revelation, and the role of beauty in evangelization. History, beauty and love and the relation of all three to the formation of the human person are core Romantic movement interests and, in the style of Bruckner, Ratzinger wove together his analyses of these relationships in strongly polyphonic essays using rich, harmonic

language. He managed to bring to the fore these neglected elements in Catholic thought without jettisoning what had come to be regarded as the classical elements. In this sense Ratzinger was the theological analogue of a musical synthesis of Mozart and von Weber or Bruckner, if such a thing were possible. For those who wanted the romantic element without the classical he was considered a dangerous reactionary, and for those who wanted the classical without the romantic he was seen as a dangerous liberal.

Augustinian at Heart

The generations ahead will form their own judgments based on the volumes of his published works, which include over 60 books and magisterial documents spanning his quarter-century partnership with Pope

John Paul II as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and his own almost-eight-year papacy. They will no doubt regard him as one of the six most significant Catholic theologians of the 20th century, along with Karl Rahner, S.J., Yves Congar, O.P., the Rev. Romano Guardini, Henri de Lubac, S.J., and the Rev. Hans Urs von Balthasar. The first two were fellow theological experts at the Second Vatican Council, with whom he had positive collaborations (though he later distanced himself from those aspects of Rahner's anthropology that derived from elements in German idealist philosophy and, unlike Congar, he resigned from the editorial board of the theological journal *Concilium* as it veered away, in his view, from official magisterial teaching in the 1970s). The latter three were all, in different contexts, his intellectual heroes. De Lubac was also a fellow expert at the council. Ratzinger once wrote that it was impossible for him to say how much he owed to de Lubac and von Balthasar.

In searching for a short statement that might encapsulate the vast range of Ratzinger's polyphonic contributions, I came across the following passage in *Memory in Augustine's Theological Anthropology* (2012), by Paige E. Hochschild:

God moves the intellect and will through the knowledge that comes through the memory. The universal, for Augustine, can be perceived only through the particular. This must, therefore, happen through history, through the visible, sensible works of Christ, through the practice of the virtues, the love of one's neighbor, the life of the church, its sacraments, and above all its scripture. From these experiences, a person has an intimation of what the happiness of the *caelum caeli* consists in.

One can easily substitute the name Ratzinger for Augustine in this passage and have a summary statement of Ratzinger's theological vision. In his own words, Ratzinger was "a decided Augustinian" and, like Augustine, he believed that God could be perceived only in the particular. He wrote in *Principles of Catholic Theology* (1982):

Man finds his center of gravity, not inside, but outside himself. The place to which he is anchored is not, as it were, within himself, but without. This explains that remnant that remains always to be explained, the fragmentary character of all his efforts to comprehend the unity of history and being. Ultimately, the tension between ontology and

history has its foundation in the tension within human nature itself, which must go out of itself in order to find itself; it has its foundation in the mystery of God, which is freedom and which, therefore, calls each individual by a name that is known to no other. Thus, the whole is communicated to him in the particular.

God in History

In the same work Ratzinger described the problem of "coming to an understanding of the mediation of history within the realm of ontology" as nothing less than the "fundamental crisis of our age."

Post-Tridentine scholasticism had prided itself on its rejection of what was perceived to be a Protestant fixation on history. But in an intellectual landscape highly influenced by German Romanticism and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, the Catholic engagement with history could not be left unattended without the church's scholars losing all intellectual credibility. It was the Munich circle of scholars who were at the forefront of the engagement, following the lead of the 19th-century Tübingen theologians and working on trajectories similar to those of John Henry Newman. It was within this milieu that the young Joseph Ratzinger came to the attention of Cardinal Josef Frings of Cologne, who invited him to attend Vatican II as his theological expert.

The document of the council that carries the strongest evidence of Ratzinger's involvement is the "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation." In this document the Suarezian account of revelation as something fundamentally propositional—"a clutch-purse of doctrines," as it is sometimes described—was set aside in favor of a historical account that presents Christ himself as the revelation of God the Father to humanity. Following Romano Guardini, Ratzinger argued, "Revelation does not reveal something, nor does it reveal various kinds of things, but in the man Jesus, in the man who is God, we are able to understand the whole nature of man." In Ratzinger's best-selling work *Introduction to Christianity* (1968), which was translated into 17 languages, he explained the idea in these terms:

Christian belief is not merely concerned, as one might at first suspect from all the talk of belief or faith, with the eternal, which as the "entirely Other" would remain completely outside the human world and time; on the contrary, it is much more concerned with God in history, with God as man. By thus seeming to bridge the gulf between eternal and

Ratzinger had an interest in the way God relates to the human person through individual moments in history.

temporal, between visible and invisible, by making us meet God as a man, the eternal as the temporal, as one of us, it understands itself as revelation.

Given Ratzinger's interest in the way God relates to the human person through individual moments in history, it is no surprise that two of his favorite theological topics were the theological virtues (faith, hope and love) and eucharistic theology. The theological virtues are central to the human person's development and friendship with God; and it is through the reception of the sacraments, in particular the Eucharist, that one grows in this friendship.

This friendship does not involve the absorption of the individual into God but rather to the transformation of difference into the higher union of love. The path to this higher union involves conversion and purification and as such takes the shape of the cross.

Included in his analysis of the theological virtues (which owes much to the work of Josef Pieper, the Thomist philosopher who fatefully introduced him to Cardinal Wojtyła) is an account of the way in which the virtues have undergone mutations within modern and postmodern culture. People still believe things, hope for things and love things, but in ways that are highly problematic. There is more faith in science than in Christ, more hope for material prosperity than for eternal life, and widespread confusion about how to relate *eros* with *agape*. There is also confusion about how to relate faith to reason. Here it is significant that when Ratzinger spoke of "reason" he did not mean the same thing as Immanuel Kant. His understanding of this relationship was Augustinian, not post-Kantian, and explains his aversion to some schools of preconiliar Thomism. Philosophy should not be the pure reason of Kant or René Descartes but should accept the contribution of divine revelation and thus partner with theology in seeking to analyze the fruits of revelation. This makes a significant



Joseph Ratzinger, right, newly nominated archbishop of Munich and Freising, with Bishop Ernst Tewes in front of the cathedral in Freising in March 1977.

difference to Christian epistemology.

It is sometimes said that the United States did not have a 19th century. The Romantic philosophy so pervasive in continental (especially German) thought in that century did not make the Atlantic crossing. Perhaps that is why it is still possible to find American Catholics who find it difficult to understand why anyone would say that the most serious theological crisis of the 20th century was coming to an understanding of the mediation of history in the realm of ontology. For those who do get the point that Catholic scholarship has little or no credibility without this and that the new evangelization depends upon the church's scholars getting this right, the theological works of Joseph Ratzinger will continue to offer insights into fragments of the problem.

Joseph Ratzinger's life was one long heroic intellectual performance, engaging his whole heart—a theo-drama with all the pathos of a Bayreuth festival. In Ratzinger's case, however, Bavarian Catholic piety triumphed over whatever it is in the German spirit that remains nostalgic for pagan heroics.

Tracey Rowland holds the St. John Paul II Chair of Theology at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle, Australia.



For more coverage of Pope Benedict XVI's life and legacy, go to americamagazine.org and to our video channel at [youtube.com/americamag](https://www.youtube.com/americamag). For the latest news from Rome, listen to the America podcast "Inside the Vatican" at americamagazine.org/voices/inside-vatican.

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Meghan Clark (far left) and Stan Chu Ilo (kneeling, front middle) meet with the women of La Mujer Obrera in El Paso, Tex.

Courtesy of Dylan Corbett, executive director, Hope Border Institute

AT THE EXISTENTIAL PERIPHERIES

A report from a new global theology project

By Meghan Clark

In a speech to his fellow cardinals before the conclave that elected him pope, Jorge Mario Bergoglio implored, “The church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the *existential peripheries*: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents and of all misery.” In one of his most famous phrases as pope, he called for the church to be “as a field hospital after battle.”

Welcoming people isn’t just about “keeping the doors open,” he urged. We need to “be a church that finds new roads, that is able to step out of itself and go to those who do not attend Mass, to those who have quit, or are indifferent” because “we need to proclaim the Gospel on every street corner.”

At the United Nations in 2015, Francis issued a further challenge: In seeking to address poverty and injustice, we must remember our goal is enabling persons to become “dignified agents of their own destiny,” not just numbers on a spreadsheet. In emphasizing both dignity and agency, Francis continually reminds us that going to the *existential*

peripheries is about building communities of mutuality and justice. It is not that those who are marginalized need our help, as if we are coming to save them. We promote and protect the dignity of those who are excluded by recognizing their own agency and ability to participate or contribute to the wider community.

If this vision of going out to the peripheries began to make some anxious, Francis gently reminded us that “to go out of ourselves and join others is healthy for us.” The invitation and imperative to go out to the peripheries and embrace a wider vision of marginalization and exclusion captured by the phrase *existential peripheries* is woven throughout this pope’s teaching and ministry. In 2021, Pope Francis specifically called for moral theologians to do theology from and with those on the peripheries, for “It is necessary for knowledge to become practice through listening to and receiving the least, the frail and those regarded as rejects by society.”

Responding to this urgent call from Pope Francis, and the more recent call to embody a more synodal church, in 2021 the Vatican launched a unique global theology proj-

ect. Doing Theology from the Existential Peripheries is a research project of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Six regional working groups, consisting of teams of theologians and collaborators, carried out listening exercises with a mixture of individuals and groups on the existential peripheries of power in society and in the church.

As assistant coordinator for the North American Working Group, I was privileged to serve on a team of 10 theologians and consultants seeking to listen to our neighbors' stories. We were sent out as theologians to lift up the experience of faith, joy, pain and injustice by those living on the margins. While our work was not comprehensive nor meant to capture everyone, it was important to me that we seek out those whom Pope Francis' own ministry has sought to spotlight.

Navigating this was simple in the New York City area, where I drove to meet with people in Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx and New Jersey. Most listening sessions lasted a couple of hours, and some involved sharing meals or worship. With colleagues in New York, Chicago, Toronto and San Diego, the group sought to identify who would conduct listening sessions with different groups experiencing marginalization in the church or society.

In North America, moreover, it was important to have listening sessions in the U.S.-Mexico border region. Thanks to the simultaneous translation and logistical coordination of Dylan Corbett and HOPE Border Institute, I was also able to conduct listening sessions with the regional coordinator Stan Chu Ilo in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. And though the locations differed, all four places I visited revealed a deep faith experience of accompaniment by God on the part of those we interviewed.

Rejecting Throwaway Culture

"No one is useless and no one is expendable," Francis wrote in "Fratelli Tutti," and thus we must find "ways to include those on the peripheries of life. For they have another way of looking at things; they see aspects of reality that are invisible to the centers of power where weighty decisions are made." I heard echoes of the pope's words in El Paso when we met with Carlos, a Catholic farmworker organizer, who explained, "What migration represents today is an act of resistance of people who refuse to disappear, refuse to be what Pope Francis calls the disposable created by this system."

In his TED talk in 2017, the Holy Father said that "we can only build the future by standing together, including ev-

eryone." This deep commitment to community undergirds his call to go to the existential peripheries to listen, learn and build up the common good. In "Fratelli Tutti," he uses the parable of the good Samaritan to imagine what this can look like. For Francis, "The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbors, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good" (No. 67).

In El Paso, I visited the kind of inclusive communities of which the pope dreams with women from La Mujer Obrera, an independent organization "dedicated to creating communities defined by women." Their community began as a solidarity movement among garment workers in 1981 and today facilitates advocacy and social enterprises. As we shared lunch and listened, the women described their mission as "creating a community against destruction." They lamented that they "do not know how you can be a person of faith and not care about protecting children and the environment."

Josefa, a recycler in Brooklyn, witnesses to building up a similar kind of community every day. As an example of active resistance to the throwaway culture, she shared, "We recyclers...we help to clean up the planet a little bit," because "if we did not exist, who would collect the garbage from the streets?" The recyclers at Sure We Can elected Josefa to represent them to the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers organizing to get recognition from the International Labour Organization.

In New York and around the world, waste pickers and recyclers experience exclusion, derision and pity from those around them. Yet Josefa lives and works with dignity at a job that contributes to the common good. As Francis noted in "Querida Amazonia," "Dialogue must not only favor the preferential option on behalf of the poor, the marginalized and the excluded, but also respect them as having a leading role to play." At the peripheries one does not simply find poverty or deprivation; one finds persons with dignity who are gathering up the rejected and fighting to make the world better for everyone.

A Culture of Faith Rooted in Forgiveness

An immigrant from Mexico to New York, Josefa is a woman of deep faith but does not feel like she has a place in the parishes around her. "God never discriminated against anyone...never pushed aside anyone who wanted to follow him," she said when we met at Sure We Can. "And so I say, why would one do that if God does not?" In conversation



WE PROMOTE AND PROTECT THE DIGNITY OF THOSE WHO ARE EXCLUDED BY RECOGNIZING THEIR ABILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

with the theologian John Gonzales and me, she talked about the woman who dumped a bucket of water on her from the roof as she collected cans. Josefa prays for that woman, she said. “To the people who have marginalized us, I tell [God] to forgive them because they do not know what they are doing.”

As a woman of faith, I learned a lot about the spiritual depths of forgiveness from those I interviewed. A Latina single mother, teacher and member in a Catholic charismatic community who works with young people as a parish educator, Ana described a personal encounter with God in which she said, “God wanted me healed and to see myself as what I was meant to be—a child of God with restored dignity, coherent in word, action, thought and being.” Speaking after dinner in her home, Ana noted that the locus of exclusion and inclusion is sometimes one’s own faith, family and community. “The simplicity of embracing the other with any needs the other has tends to be forgotten,” she noted.

Throughout my interviews, though I met those who felt abandoned by their fellow Christians or excluded by the Catholic Church, I encountered no one who felt abandoned by God. “When you have faith, anything is possible,” noted a young migrant mother from Guatemala. In Ciudad Juárez, I met migrant women from many places who all euphemistically referred to “difficulties” when mentioning the ubiquitous violence experienced on their journeys. And yet I heard some version of the same assertion several times: “God hasn’t abandoned us because we are here.”

A Church Without Exclusion

Whether migrants trying to get to the United States to apply for asylum, women in marginalized communities, families

affected by gang violence, or L.G.B.T. Catholics, all the persons I met were actively resisting systems of exclusion. Their strength came from an absolute conviction that God accompanies them on their journeys—even when others do not. “I see God putting good people in our path,” said a migrant woman from Ciudad Juárez.

In “Fratelli Tutti,” Francis proclaims, “we want to be a church that serves, that leaves home and goes forth...in order to accompany life, to sustain hope...to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation” (No. 276). This requires learning to accompany as God accompanies, without exclusion.

This also includes those excluded by the church itself, such as L.G.B.T. Catholics. The existential peripheries are within the church itself as well as in society. Christine is a transgender Catholic whose faith centers around the sacraments and a deep commitment to the dignity of all persons, from the unborn and the elderly to our brothers and sisters in the L.G.B.T. community. We met in a conference room at a parish with an active L.G.B.T. community in New Jersey. “All that we ask,” said Christine, “is that we are included in our faith, in our parish communities and active in those communities just like everyone else.” Sometimes going out to the existential peripheries is simply going over to the next pew.

Focusing on the lived experience and faith of people living on the margins of power is not radical or unique. Pastoral and practical theologians, like our team member and fellow theologian Jennifer Owens-Jofré, have long engaged in this work. The methodological approach also has a long history in Latin America. However, what is unique and important about this project is the way in which it was globalized and systematized with the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development.

From my perspective, this project, and the call from Pope Francis to go out to the peripheries, is not about giving voice to the voiceless. It is about recognizing, in prayerful humility, that our brothers and sisters on the existential peripheries are already speaking, witnessing to God in a world of injustice.

Can we quiet ourselves long enough to hear their stories? And once we do, can we become the welcoming and inclusive church required to accompany our neighbors as God accompanies them?

Meghan Clark is an associate professor of moral theology at St. John’s University in New York.



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**PHOTO: NEW YORK
WORLD'S FAIR, 1965**

By Elizabeth Martin Solsburg

We were so small,
standing by the silver globe
out in Queens,
both of us glazed with rain
and a little dazed
by the thick press of people
and the polyphony of voices
drumming against our brains.
We have just seen the Pietà,
flown in specially from Rome—
seven years before a crazed
man wielding a hammer
ensured it would never
leave an acrylic cage again.

I remember the marble
lit against blue velvet,
the gleam of light on stone,
the mother cradling her son—
her eyes seeing only him,
his seeing nothing at all.
The art didn't impress us
as much as the sidewalk
moving us along
like something
from Tomorrowland,
its processional pace
ensuring we could not linger long
in that glowing, speechless grief.

Elizabeth Martin Solsburg's poetry has appeared in *The American Scholar*, *The Northern Appalachia Review*, *The Avalon Review* and elsewhere. She is a graduate of the University of Michigan.

Father Ed Dowling's Dark Night

How the spiritual sponsor of A.A.'s Bill W. began his ministry

By Dawn Eden Goldstein

When 21-year-old Edward Dowling entered Florissant—or St. Stanislaus Seminary, as the Jesuits' novitiate in Missouri was officially named—on Sept. 23, 1919, he hoped to find the peace of mind that would come from the certain knowledge of whether or not he was called to the Jesuit priesthood. But what he actually found was quite different.

Crossing the threshold of Florissant's venerable Rock Building marked the start of the greatest spiritual crisis the young man known to friends as “Puggy” would ever experience. The next two years would see him spiral downward to a point when, just prior to professing his first vows, he felt utterly bereft. In the very place where he had hoped to find his path to heaven, he descended instead into a personal hell.

Yet in years to come, as Ed Dowling, S.J., immersed himself in ministry to alcoholics, he would refer to his time in the novitiate as “the most important months of my life.” For it was there that he had his own personal experience of what his future friend Bill Wilson would call “deflation at depth...a cornerstone principle of A.A. [Alcoholics Anonymous].” From then on, for as long as he lived, the memory of that experience would ground the deep sense of empathy that empowered his ministry to alcoholics, drug addicts, spouses in troubled marriages, people with anxiety disorders, the incarcerated and anyone with a problem. More than anything else—even more than the crippling arthritis that would calcify his spine—that memory would enable him to speak with authority about how God awaits us in the depths of our suffering.

Not My Will, but God's

A week after Puggy entered Florissant, he saw someone using his prized silk shirt—the one he had worn upon his arrival—to polish wooden floors. The image would remain with him, viscerally impressing upon him that, as a member of the Society of Jesus, his life was no longer his own. Whatever qualities he possessed in the outside world that



Edward Dowling, S.J., third row, far left, at St. Stanislaus Seminary, Florissant, Mo., on June 7, 1921.

made him stand out among his peers—be they his athletic prowess, his journalistic talents, his debating skills or his gift for friendship—none could define him anymore. His duty now was to submit his personality—and indeed his whole self—in all humility to God under the judgment of his superiors, so that the Jesuits' formation process might transform him into the priest he hoped he was called to be.

Almost certainly unbeknownst to Puggy, at the same time that his Jesuit formators were helping him learn to become small, the Society of Jesus was telling the world it had reeled in a major catch. On Sept. 27, the very day he was clothed in his novice cassock, the Missouri Province's press office sent an item to Catholic newswires about the Society's accomplished new recruit. Dozens of newspapers throughout the world picked up the story: “Edward P. Dowling, Jr., former member of the [St. Louis] Globe-Democrat staff, has entered the Jesuit novitiate at Florissant, Mo., to study for the priesthood.” The story also noted Puggy's achievements as “an athlete of some local prominence.”

Indeed, the onetime reporter had left behind an exciting life in the world for the austere life of a Jesuit-in-training, and no one was more cognizant of the contrast between his old and new living situations than Puggy himself. For starters, he had to forsake his nickname for the duration of the novitiate. He could no longer be called Puggy, nor even Eddie or Edward. Until he reached the juniorate level of formation, he was to be addressed under a Latin title: *Carissime* (“Beloved”) Dowling. To an Irish populist like Dowling, the aristocratic-sounding honorific was embarrassing.



Florissant's juniorate:

I came here pretty nearly convinced that I would not stay for a few weeks. In a sense I came to satisfy myself that I did not belong here. Even to this day, I have not a trunk here, as for nearly two years I still could not bring myself to believe that I belonged here.

Reinforcing his sense of being out of place were the many opportunities the novitiate gave him to discover his faults. Like every novice, he was assigned an “admonition partner”—a fellow novice who would meet with him briefly once a week to advise him on how to correct his behavior so he might better follow the rules. One admonition partner passed him a note that included the following:

1. Walking

Don't rest your chin upon your breast.
Keep erect and keep your eyes lowered.

2. Eating

Don't play with anything on table.
See what you can do for others. Be alert.
Don't eat anything that has fallen from your lips, especially if it has fallen on your cassock.

3. Dress

Be more careful about your hair. Rearrange your underwear so that it is not visible, especially over your trousers. This is inexcusable.

Dowling evidently placed great value in the admonitions he received, for he preserved them for the rest of his life.

An Unstained Holiness

Why did Dowling find it so hard to believe he belonged at Florissant? From his correspondence and personal papers, this much at least is clear: Dowling envisioned the Jesuit priest as possessing an unstained holiness that was, humanly speaking, all but impossible to attain. Just prior to entering the novitiate, he wrote to his friend Tony Harig, “The end of every Jeb's thought is a high one, the highest possible, or our belief is a sham.” He could maintain such an elevated view of the “Jeb,” or Jesuit, mind as long as he felt he was merely trying out the Jesuit vocation. However, once he began to realize God truly was calling him to be a priest of the Society of Jesus, he was faced with a crisis of faith.

Even as Carissime Dowling's title placed a layer of unwanted formality between him and his fellow novices, the unforgiving schedule at Florissant—and the plethora of rules that governed it—militated against his having anything resembling a normal social life. All his life, his greatest pleasure had been the warm companionship of his friends. But at Florissant, he and his fellow novices had to maintain silence, save for two hour-long recreation periods each day. And even those recreation periods could not be taken entirely as free time; they were subdivided into smaller periods when novices had specific tasks to fulfill.

Dowling also had to keep “modesty of the eyes,” which had a wide meaning in the Jesuit understanding. It encompassed not only avoiding looking at women (not that there were any to see at Florissant) but also avoiding making eye contact with men if possible. As if that weren't constricting enough, the Society's rules barred physical contact of any kind between novices. They could not even shake hands or pat one another on the back. For a man as gregarious as Dowling, it must have felt isolating to be surrounded by “brothers” and yet forbidden from making friends.

Even so, the greatest challenge Dowling faced in the novitiate arose not from external rules but rather from his own internal fears. When he considered his fellow novices, he assumed they were confident in the knowledge that they were called by God to belong to the Society of Jesus. But he himself felt no such security. In February 1922, five months after his novitiate ended with his profession of vows, he wrote to his sister Mary from his new quarters in



Father Dowling opened up to the possibility that God was not truly absent but rather was patiently awaiting his ‘yes.’

The things he had enjoyed in the world—reporting for a newspaper, playing baseball, tracking the minutiae of local and national politics, and hanging out with friends in all-night diners—none of these were sinful in themselves, but they were incompatible with the Jesuit priesthood. If he were truly called to the Society of Jesus, he would have to sacrifice his hopes of being able to do those and a thousand other things he enjoyed. Yet here he was in the novitiate, longing for the things he left behind. How, then, could he truly be called to the Jesuit priesthood if “the end of every Job’s thought” was “a high one, the highest possible”? Under the limits of his own logic, he was forced to confront the possibility that Catholic belief was “a sham.”

Dowling refrained from revealing the depth of his anguish to his family at the time. But later, both in personal correspondence and in talks, he often reflected upon the years when he doubted his vocation and even faith itself. To him, it was the critical growth period of his life. In April 1944, he gave a talk at an Alcoholics Anonymous gathering in which he likened the interior conflict he endured during the novitiate to that of alcoholics who struggled with the notion of surrendering to their Higher Power:

But here, tonight, [I am] discussing a problem to which I am not entirely alien. Up to about the age of twenty-one, my spirituality, my religion, my faith was a comfortable, unchallenged nursery habit. And then, over a course of some twenty-four months—the most important months of my life—I saw that faith, that religion, drift away. It began to make demands. And when it ceased to be comfortable and comforting to big, important I—when it ceased to “yes” my body and my soul—I found I moved away from it. I am not utterly unacquainted with atheism. I know and respect agnosticism, and I have been a bed-fellow of spiritual confusion—not merely the honest, sincere kind but the self-kidding kind.

Only his novice master, William Mitchell, S.J., was privy to the extent of his sufferings. Dowling later described to his sister Mary how a gentle word from Father Mitchell provided him with the beginnings of the hope that he was seeking:

One night, things came to a crisis and the Spiritual Father told me I would have to stop going to the sacraments unless I could throw off the ideas I had. I told him it was hopeless and he let the whole thing hinge on my answer to one question: “Do you believe in God?” I told him that I could not actually say that I did, but I was afraid to say that “I actually did not believe.” In other words, I doubted the existence of God, but I wasn’t ready to say that “I was sure there was no God.” The priest told me to keep praying and, in view of my nervous and confused condition, that my answer was satisfactory.

Gradually Dowling opened up to the possibility that God was not truly absent but rather was patiently awaiting his “yes.” In this way, his journey to a mature faith began through what theologians call the *via negativa*—that is, the negative path. He had to develop the wisdom to recognize the dark places where his own mind and will had excluded God, and gain the humility to ask God to illuminate them.

Dowling would carry his experience of the *via negativa* into his work with A.A. One of the first pieces of spiritual guidance he gave Bill Wilson the night they met in November 1940 was, “If you can name it, it’s not God.” The same sentiment would underpin Dowling’s address at the 1955 Alcoholics Anonymous International Convention, when, commenting on A.A.’s use of the phrase “we agnostics,” he said:

There is a negative approach from agnosticism. This was the approach of Peter the Apostle when he said, “Lord, to whom shall we go?”... I don’t think we should despise the negative. I have a feeling that if I ever find myself in Heaven, it will be by backing away from Hell.

Dawn Eden Goldstein is the author of several books, including Father Ed: The Story of Bill W.’s Spiritual Sponsor (Orbis Books, 2022), from which she has adapted this article with the publisher’s permission.

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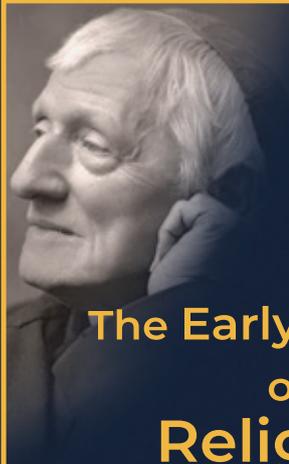
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‘THE MANTRA “MEN FOR OTHERS” INSPIRED ME’

Gonzaga High School graduate Caleb Williams wins the 2022 Heisman Trophy

In March 2021, high school football quarterback Caleb Williams was asked by Sports Illustrated about his accomplishments as he prepared to graduate from Gonzaga College High School in Washington, D.C. The five-star recruit could have named any number of achievements. Sports Illustrated had listed him as the No. 1 recruiting prospect in the nation; he had led his team to an epic, nail-biting championship win in his sophomore year; he won countless awards from names like Gatorade and The Washington Post.

But when he said what brought him the most pride, none of the accolades figured into his answer.

“My most accomplished thing here is building a brotherhood with those guys,” Mr. Williams said of his teammates. “[It’s] the brotherhood we’ve had, that we’ve built here. How tight we’ve become.”

Less than two years later, after he became the 2022 Heisman Trophy winner and broke the University of Southern California record for rushing yards by a quarterback in a single season, Mr. Williams reaffirmed the impact that his high school team and its coaching staff had on him.

“Coach, you may not know this, but the Gonzaga mantra that you drilled into us, ‘Men for others,’ has helped inspire me,” he said in his Heisman acceptance speech. “So thank you, coach; thank you, Gonzaga.”

Whether one cheers for Caleb Williams on the field or cheers against him (and as a proud graduate of the University of Notre Dame, I fall into the latter camp), it is clear that Jesuit education shaped the quarterback at least as much as he shaped Gonzaga’s football program.

Randy Trivers, the head football coach at Gonzaga, said in an interview with **America** that Mr. Williams represents the pairing of physical talent with mental and spiritual maturity that he tries to cultivate on his team.

“Caleb is supremely talented athletically, but what makes him really elite is everything that he is in mind and



heart and spirit,” Coach Trivers said.

Coach Trivers started at Gonzaga College High School in 2014. He played football at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., from which he graduated in 1995. He said that in coming back to a Jesuit school, he was reminded how far the Jesuit identity can go in helping shape a sports program.

“When you think of Jesuit education, you think of serving, the idea that in the teaching and coaching profession you’re trying to do your best to serve others,” he said. “It works real well when you consider what you’re trying to do with a football program.”

Coach Trivers began a tradition during the 12-game season of picking an inspiring word from a list he formed; each word was a slogan for a particular game and became the team’s focus for that game. They selected the word “trust” for their championship game against DeMatha High School in 2018.

In that game, the Gonzaga Eagles were losing 20-0 at the end of the first quarter. The first time they took the lead was with 39 seconds left in the game, but a returned kick by their opponent had Gonzaga down by three with only seconds left and no timeouts. Mr. Williams, then a sophomore, threw a 56-yard “Hail Mary” pass toward the end zone in desperation—appropriate for a game in which the inspirational word was “trust.” The leap-of-faith pass was snagged by receiver John Marshall. Gonzaga won the championship, 46-43.

Clips from the epic ending circulated on social media, including the speech that Coach Trivers gave his team after the victory.

“Trust is built on faith and love,” he said. “We play for the love of each other, the love of the game, the love of Gonzaga.”

Coach Trivers told **America** that Mr. Williams inspired his teammates during that game with his drive and determination to keep the fight going.

“Caleb as a quarterback, it’s a great position in terms [of the way] you’re really influencing others and people are really looking to you,” he said.

Teammates echoed the idea that Mr. Williams influenced them while at Gonzaga.

“His personality would just uplift you. He made sure you knew he had faith in you, and that would help you make plays you didn’t think could be made,” former teammate Nate Kurisky told *The Athletic*.

Mr. Williams has sought to keep up that leadership off the field. He has spoken frequently about his experience being bullied as a young kid, which prompted him to set up the Caleb Cares Foundation. The charity and its partners, which have included Coca-Cola and the Los Angeles Unified School District, focus on youth outreach and after-school programs.

Both Mr. Williams and Coach Trivers have credited Gonzaga’s Jesuit identity with propelling that mission forward.

At times Mr. Williams has drawn heat from players and commentators, especially as his profile has grown over this season. He was criticized for painting expletives on his nails before big games, including showdowns against Notre Dame and Utah.

“That’s not a great representation of him or the school,” said Kirk Herbstreit, a commentator for ESPN. “He can paint whatever he wants. ‘Fight On’ [a U.S.C. cheer], maybe, would work. But I don’t know about these.”

Mr. Williams has said that the nail-painting tradition began in middle school (without the expletives) with his mom, and that he was bullied for it. During his Oct. 8 game against Washington State, he instead painted the Suicide & Crisis Hotline phone number, 988.

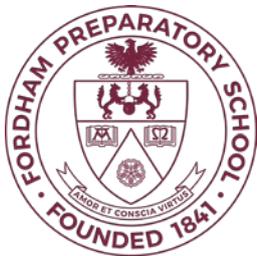
This season did not end the way Mr. Williams had hoped: A loss to Utah kept U.S.C. out of the College Football Playoffs, and the team suffered a tough loss to Tulane University in the Cotton Bowl game.

Coach Trivers spoke about “a drive to prepare to be great” that he saw during Mr. Williams’s time at Gonzaga, an attribute that he thinks will continue to serve the sophomore quarterback in years to come.

And if the 2018 championship taught him anything, it’s not to give up on Caleb Williams when things look rough.

“If there’s time on the clock, whether on the field or in life, there’s a chance,” Coach Trivers said.

—
Christopher Parker is a Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., fellow at America.



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The Outsized Religious Vision of James Hampton

By Camillia Donaheew

When we think of religious art, we typically conjure up images from the Renaissance—awe-inspiring basilicas with figures almost leaping out of the ceilings, colorful stained glass windows, icons with halos of silver and gold. And while we might imagine Michelangelo painstakingly mixing the perfect colors when we think of art inspired by God, we probably don't picture a solitary man meticulously sifting through trash.

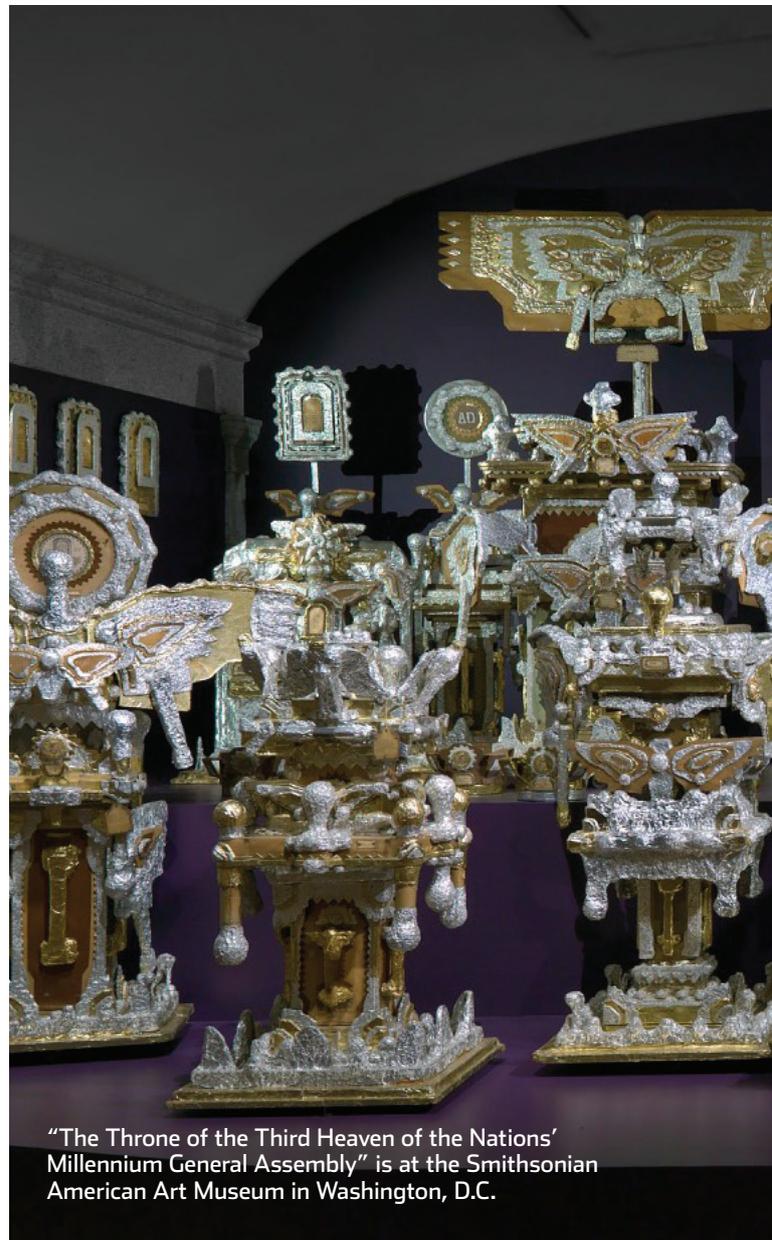
But this is how the outsider artist James Hampton created what is known today as “The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations’ General Assembly.” Art critic Robert Hughes wrote that “it may well be the finest work of visionary religious art produced by an American.”

An outsider artist is just what it sounds like, someone whose finger is far from the pulse of the art world. They have no formal training, many times living in solitude and working menial jobs, and they dedicate a majority of their lives to working on their art. It is unfortunately very common for them to go unnoticed until their death, if at all.

Like many other outsider artists, the story of James Hampton and his “Throne” starts at his death. It was 1964 in Washington, D.C., and a landlord was tasked with emptying a carriage house Hampton had been renting from him for the last 14 years. The landlord had no idea what was being stored there, but Hampton had once told him, “That’s my life. I’ll finish it before I die.”

When the landlord opened the large wooden door, he was taken aback by what he saw. The space was filled with approximately 180 pieces consisting of altars, pulpits, crowns, plaques and a seven-foot-tall winged throne, all silver and gold reflecting the light of the bare light bulbs. Closer inspection revealed it was not precious metals catching the light but aluminum foil.

The landlord knew this was someone’s life’s work. “You can’t just destroy something a man devoted himself to for



“The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations’ Millennium General Assembly” is at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

14 years,” he told a reporter. He reached out to Hampton’s sister, but she had no interest in it. So he decided to reach out to the art world. The acting director of the Smithsonian, Harry Lowe, said the first time he visited Hampton’s work space “it was like opening Tut’s tomb,” and “they didn’t know what it was, or what to call it, but they knew it was something special.”

A Reclusive Life

James Hampton lived such a reclusive life that we know very little about him. The son of a traveling Baptist minister, he was born in Elloree, S.C., in 1909. At the age of 19, he moved with his older brother to Washington, D.C. At the age of 22 he began to have religious visions, perhaps the result of schizophrenia. “This is true,” Hampton wrote of



Smithsonian American Art Museum

his first vision, “that the great Moses, the giver of the 10th commandment, appeared in Washington, D.C., April 11, 1931.” It was clear to Hampton that these visions were giving him a task, not as an artist but as a prophet. In 1942, he was drafted into the army. He served in a segregated unit that repaired airstrips. Critics believe he constructed his first piece while stationed in Guam in 1945, a small one-by-two-foot altar. That year, he was honorably discharged and returned to Washington, where he found work as a night janitor.

He continued to have visions: “It is true that on October 2, 1946, the great Virgin Mary and the Star of Bethlehem appeared over the nation’s capital,” he wrote. Hampton spent decades working on the “Throne,” giving himself the title “Director of Special Projects for the State of Eter-

nity.” Hampton would work evenings, getting off close to midnight, then would go directly to the carriage house to work on his art piece late into the night. He created it using the only material he had readily available to him, essentially trash and discarded items that he found throughout his workday and during his walks around the city.

Some outsider artists use trash as a medium to make a statement about how wasteful or disposable our society is. This was not, as far we know, Hampton’s intention; he appears to have chosen this medium out of necessity. Being a man of humble means, he had to use whatever he could get his hands on: things like cardboard, burned-out light bulbs, wheels taken off broken office furniture, foil from cigarette packs and candy. Some things he did purchase for the “Throne”: a secondhand table and dresser, construction



Like many other outsider artists, the story of James Hampton starts at his death.

paper and a lot of aluminum foil. Almost every part of the work is covered in foil.

Although Hampton's creation is often referred to as simply the "Throne," it has approximately 180 components. They include 10 crowns, 15 to 20 plaques, winged stands, an altar table, a plaque holder that has been described as "looking suspiciously like a tissue box" and cardboard tags that document his visions throughout the years. He kept a chalkboard for notes. Written on it, among other things, was "The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations' Millennium General Assembly" and the phrase "where there is no vision the people perish."

Perhaps the most mysterious piece is *The Book of the 7 Dispensation by St. James*, a 150-page book handwritten by Hampton in an indecipherable language now known in art circles as Hamptonese. Linguists and historians have tried to decode it for decades, to no avail. Some believe it is a code, variations of Gullah or African, or the written equivalent of speaking in tongues. Despite continued attempts to crack it, it has remained impenetrable.

Hampton's "Throne" represents three parts of the Bible. The left side represents the Old Testament, the right side the New Testament. The sides mirror each other; each piece has a corresponding one on the opposite side. In the center is the throne itself, representing the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation. Hampton built it as a bench for Christ to judge us from during the second coming. Although I do not believe it was his intention, it seems oddly fitting and profound for Jesus to judge us while seated on the trash we have polluted the earth with. Even though the

Book of Revelation and the second coming are easily the most terrifying part of the Bible, Hampton reassures us with two familiar words hovering above the throne: "FEAR NOT."

Hampton's work was a perfect counterbalance for his time and place. He was an African American janitor living in Washington, D.C., during the peak of the civil rights movement. Washington is at its core a monument created by white men to celebrate the power held by white men. And they achieve this by using building materials that can stand the test of time. Hampton, as far as society was concerned, was powerless, yet he spent decades of his life creating a monument to something bigger and more powerful than humanity. And he did this using a temporary material. In fact, the "Throne" is so delicate that it has to be repaired almost every time it is loaned out. It is poetic that he used such a disposable material, considering the throne's intended purpose. The Book of Revelation tells us that we live in a temporary world, a world made for ending.

Why does this matter? What do the visions (some would say delusions) of a janitor who died almost 60 years ago have to do with any of us today? I have found that James Hampton has taught and inspired me a lot since I stumbled upon his story one day on YouTube during the Covid-19 lockdown. Maybe the lesson of his life is that you don't need power or wealth or education to create something great; that you don't need people's approval to do what you love. It seems to me that Hampton is a true reflection of the Jesuit motto "for the greater glory of God": He dedicated decades to living his life this way.

Hampton teaches us an easier lesson, too, a lesson about not always taking things at face value. Maybe the people and things we find dull or ordinary or beneath us can have a much greater value than we ever thought. Hampton teaches us to find God in all things around us, even in the things we toss aside.

"The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations' Millennium General Assembly" is housed in the Galleries for Folk and Self-Taught Art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. The galleries are temporarily closed but are scheduled to reopen to the public in early 2023.

Camillia Donahew writes from Savannah, Ga.

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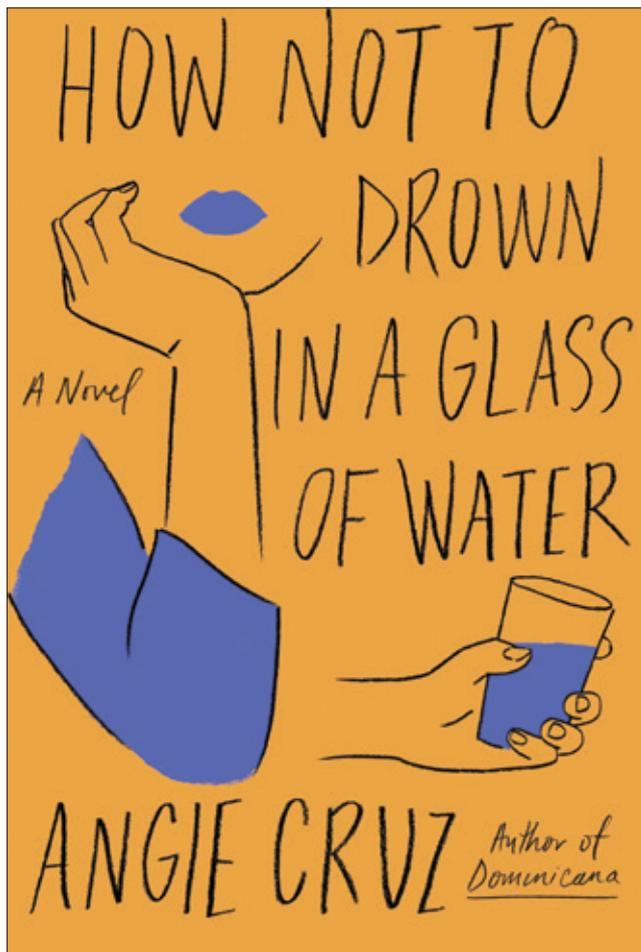
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WOMEN OF LAUGHTER AND RESILIENCE



Flatiron Books / 208p \$27.99

Michelle Gallen's remarkable second novel, *Factory Girls*, begins in 1994 in a small Northern Irish town. Eighteen-year-old Maeve Murray applies for a job at a shirt factory while she waits for exam results that will determine whether she'll be able to follow her dream of leaving her war-torn hometown to attend college in London. Another novel, Angie Cruz's winning fourth book, *How Not to Drown in a Glass of Water*, opens on 56-year-old narrator Cara Romero, a Dominican immigrant to New York City who lost the lamp factory job she held for 25 years in the 2008 recession, as she starts attending sessions with a career counselor as part of the senior workforce program.

Both women are smart, tough, hilarious survivors. When Maeve is given an "equal opportunities form" at the factory, she ticks boxes indicating the opposite of who she is: "Male," "Black," "Jewish," and "Lesbian," knowing the form is one "paramilitaries often battered office workers to get ahold of." Meanwhile, when Cara is given an employ-

ment form that asks if she has ever committed a criminal offense, she answers, "Well...it depends." Both women also depend on their moxie to hide a molten core of pain derived from devastating personal losses.

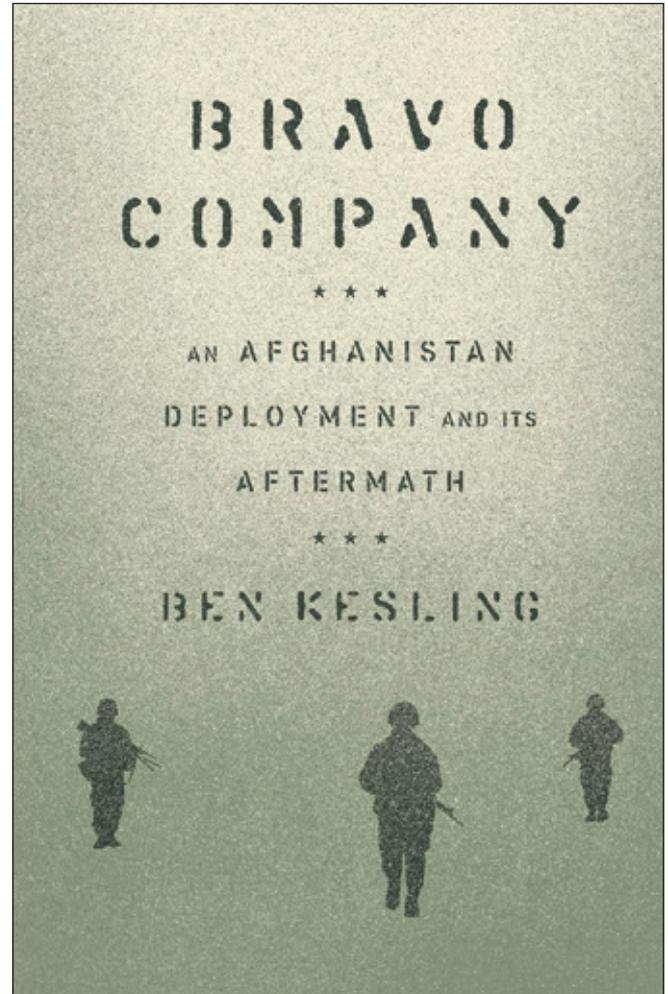
When Maeve interviews with the flashy English factory owner Andy Strawbridge, who is rumored to take advantage of his female employees, Strawbridge asks why he should hire her if she plans to leave town soon. Her response: "I'd say your labour doesn't come much cheaper than teenage girls still living with their mummies." Strawbridge hires Maeve, along with her best friends Caroline Jackson and Aoife O'Neill, giving her enough income to move into an apartment with Caroline and out of her parents' home, which has stifled her with sadness since her sister's death.

The girls have grown up in a Catholic community in Northern Ireland, enduring a childhood of paramilitary bombings that happen so regularly Maeve has a routine down: "Maeve'd learned early on to sit still after an explosion. She liked listening to her ears ring while her mam or dad scrambled to the phone box to call Granny Murray before the lines were cut by the Brits." With media mostly reflecting British viewpoints, one of the main sources of accurate information for Catholics is the priest's announcements after Mass—"last-minute announcements were usually something interesting or useful, like a sudden death or a bomb alert."

The shirt factory receives financial incentives for mixing Catholics and Protestants in its workforce, bringing the teenagers in contact with the sort of people they'd never before encountered, except through the occasional "cross-community experience." Clever Aoife doesn't actually need to work, as she lives "in a fancy house with loving parents who could afford stuff like piano lessons, eating in fancy restaurants, holidays abroad, and patience," and she expects to head to Cambridge after her exam results are in. Maeve, meanwhile, sees college as a path out of generational poverty. "There wasn't a single shopkeeper, publican, priest, nun, teacher or doctor in Maeve's family," Gallen writes, "and looking at the cut of her brothers, there wasn't much hope of one in the future. They couldn't afford to buy their council house. Nobody as poor as Maeve could afford to have notions about herself. Which was why she treasured them."

Factory Girls spans less than three months, but Maeve grows up rapidly during this period, as she becomes a crack shirt presser, nurtures a crush on Aoife's brother and spends more time in the company of "Proddies." Maeve

WAR, UP CLOSE



Harry N. Abrams / 368p \$30

As Fernando grows up, Cara realizes he is gay, a word she cannot bring herself to say. “I was afraid that he was like that, soft,” she explains. “I wanted him to have an easy life. Simple. So I fight extra to make sure he’s strong.” She responded to his inclinations with ultimatums and on at least one occasion, violence. But after she drives Fernando away through trying to bend him straight, she realizes all she has lost in enforcing the unforgiving norms of the culture she was raised in. “I learned the difficult way that you have to be gentle with your children, or you can lose them forever.”

As funny as Cara’s monologues are—filled with pauses for lipstick application, assertions of exceptional powers (such as the ability to smell cancer and diabetes) and honest, inadvertently rude statements (“What age do you have? Thirty-five? Forty? Wait, I didn’t mean to offend. Of course, you look like a teenager.”)—they read like an extended confession for the times when she was not kind. Cara learns that habits and attitudes that enabled her to survive are maladaptive for her happiness. In the end, in this generous and lively book, Cara is forgiven and redeemed.

These warm, wise novels suggest that rigidly following cultural norms can kill you, if these norms dictate that a mother must harshly try to change her son to the point of driving him away, or that a person must keep quiet about traumas that demand to be shouted about. At the same time, *Factory Girls* and *How Not to Drown in a Glass of Water* demonstrate that laughter, friendship and loyalty can save you.

Jenny Shank’s story collection *Mixed Company* won the *Colorado Book Award* and the *George Garrett Fiction Prize*, and her novel *The Ringer* won the *High Plains Book Award*. She teaches in the *Mile High M.F.A.* program at *Regis University* in Denver.

After the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan in August 2021, and even more so since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the longest war in U.S. history has faded from popular consciousness. Even while the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan played out over 20 years, it was a war that operated in the background of American life. While many people may know somebody who served in the war, few had the experience of being deployed and even fewer of experiencing combat.

For most Americans, the war was an abstraction, something they knew a little about but not a topic they could speak intelligently about. And for Gen Z, the attacks of Sept. 11 and the ensuing wars are already historical events that may or may not have drawn their interest. It is this threat of being forgotten that has caused many writers to attempt to preserve some small piece of those 20 years in print. One of the latest attempts is Ben Kesling’s *Bravo Company*, a book

that tells the story of a U.S. Army infantry company before, during and after a difficult deployment to Afghanistan in 2009.

Kesling, a Marine veteran of both Afghanistan and Iraq, was inspired to write the book while writing a piece for *The Wall Street Journal* about a gathering of veterans from *Bravo Company*, 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, a distinguished unit known for producing the finest paratroopers in the world. The unit had suffered three deaths and several severe injuries during its time in Afghanistan. Many of the soldiers from the 2009 deployment suffered from traumatic brain injuries and P.T.S.D. along with other injuries. Kesling felt that he owed it to these soldiers to tell their story in a frank and unvarnished way—conveying the triumphs, horrors and pain that remained hidden from most Americans.

In large part, Kesling accomplishes his goal; the breadth and scale of the book are impressive. In just over 300 pages, Kesling fits in accounts from officers, N.C.O.s and enlisted men, as well as a few spouses, parents and medical professionals who dealt with the aftermath of Bravo Company's deployment. He spends time explaining the geopolitical realities of the war and how those realities exerted influence down to the battalion and company level.

For those unacquainted with the politics of the Army or with military deployments, the information provides a context for understanding the strategic forces at play for commanders and enlisted men alike. Kesling's description does not take sides. It does not praise nor judge political decisions but is instead an objective assessment of the situation.

The text can be graphic at times, describing in detail the effects of improvised explosive devices on young soldiers. Kesling does not seek to spare his readers from any of the bloody details; instead, he sometimes harps upon them, perhaps to drive home the point that what the men of Bravo Company faced was truly horrible. He explains at length what happens after a soldier triggers an I.E.D.—from the reaction of the soldiers on the ground to the arrival of a medevac helicopter to the long-term effects of the explosion. On occasion I wondered if Kesling was trying to shock his readers into paying closer attention.

Kesling's most impressive feat in the book is describing the world and outlook of the U.S. Army soldier. Having served as an officer in an infantry company, I found myself agreeing with his account of the experience of soldiers before, during and after a deployment. While my experience was not anywhere near as trying as that of Bravo Company, I nonetheless was able to identify threads that tied my ex-

perience to theirs.

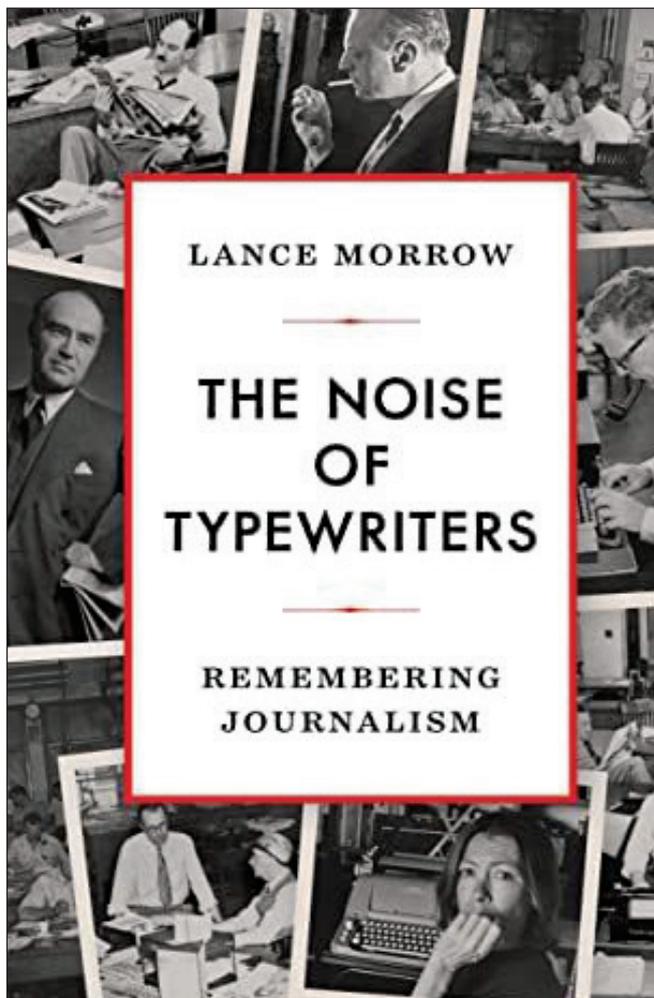
Throughout the book, Kesling alternates between two different voices, that of a Northwestern University-educated journalist and that of a foul-mouthed soldier, which at times can be hard to read. (To be fair, Kesling has experience at being both.) At one moment the book offers the perspective of a private in Bravo Company, almost inhabiting the person Kesling is describing. The author's own experiences as a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan give him access to the language of soldiers and Marines—he depicts the desire to be in combat, the shock of friends injured by I.E.D.s, the disconnect with people back home—but the language can be jarring at times, because the next sentence is that of an erudite and well-read observer. There were times when I liked the story but disliked the writing.

Kesling captures the personalities that are often found in an infantry unit: the young soldier eager to fight, the hardened veterans who both love and hate their jobs, the young officers struggling to deal with the immense responsibility placed on their shoulders. He describes well the inability of those same soldiers to convey their experiences to the people back home and the stigma that mental and physical injury can carry. The third part of the book, simply titled "After," is the most touching; it humanizes many of the soldiers who in earlier pages came off as harsh.

Bravo Company's primary strength is that it provides a window into a world most Americans know little about or wish did not exist. Many veterans struggle to put into words their experience and let those around them know about the difficulties encountered during those long 20 years in Afghanistan. Kesling's text could be of great help to those who seek to better understand the experience of veterans and will serve as a historical record of one company during a difficult year in a war that often escaped national attention.

Sean Hagerty, S.J., is a priest who lives and works in New York. Before entering the Jesuits he served as an artillery officer in Iraq in 2008-09.

A VANISHING WORLD



Encounter Books / 200p \$27.99

I remember listening to a radio interview with William F. Buckley Jr. some years back. The interviewer brought up Lance Morrow's name in one way or another, and Buckley mentioned in his response that Morrow was the finest essayist in the country. It was a judgment beyond dispute. Morrow's essays and stories in *Time* magazine were exemplary. (His work continues today in *City Journal* and *The Wall Street Journal*.) With exceptionally articulate prose and a cultivated mind, Morrow works through problems, questions and issues in his essays with rigor and insight.

Over the years, Morrow has also published noteworthy books, including, among others, memoirs (*The Chief: A Memoir of Fathers and Sons* and *Heart: A Memoir*) and history (*The Best Year of Their Lives: Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon in 1948*). With this new book, *The Noise of Typewriters: Remembering Journalism*, memoir and history come

together in an appealing combination.

Eschewing a sustained narrative in favor of a penetrating series of essay-length vignettes and portraits, Morrow states his aim in this short book in modest terms: "I want to discuss a few representative men and women and to offer a few scenes to give the flavor of the time." And yet the result is an absorbing depiction far richer than a mere flavoring. What Morrow adroitly evokes, in fewer than 200 pages, is an entire era of American journalism.

The familiar eloquence of Morrow's reflections and musings is in healthy supply:

The present teems with error and myth and deliberate lies, which are our daily bread—our consolation, entertainment, our script and our self-conception, our identities, the stories we tell ourselves. The present may be harder to grasp than the past, for the past at least offers the perspectives of experience, an awareness of what consequences followed from what actions in the past. The Atlantis of my youth—the America of the twentieth century—is easier to grasp than the twenty-first century of my old age, when machines grow more and more precise in their grasp of the universe and human brains become more and more confused—and, paradoxically, more parochial, more hysterical.

This sort of writing is the reason that Morrow is in that exceedingly small club of journalists worth rereading. One looks in vain online these days for anything even close to this kind of prose. This is not the language of the ephemera of the internet.

In his discussions of "a few representative men and women," Morrow displays a novelist's ability to present character. Whether commenting on H. L. Mencken ("He taught middle-class Americans to dissociate themselves from—to repudiate—their origins"), John Hersey (his "act of contrition [in his book *Hiroshima*] seems, on reflection, to be morally incomplete and even a little bit fatuous"), Otto Friedrich ("He was ferociously productive. His shoes were sometimes worn down at the heels. He had a professorial air of self-neglect (his teeth needed cleaning)—and yet, great pride, almost arrogance."), or a number of others, Morrow writes with a balanced appreciation for and criticism of the significant—and sometimes significantly flawed—work of each. His aesthetic judgments can also refresh: For instance, Morrow notes that he "detested Allen Ginsberg's work."

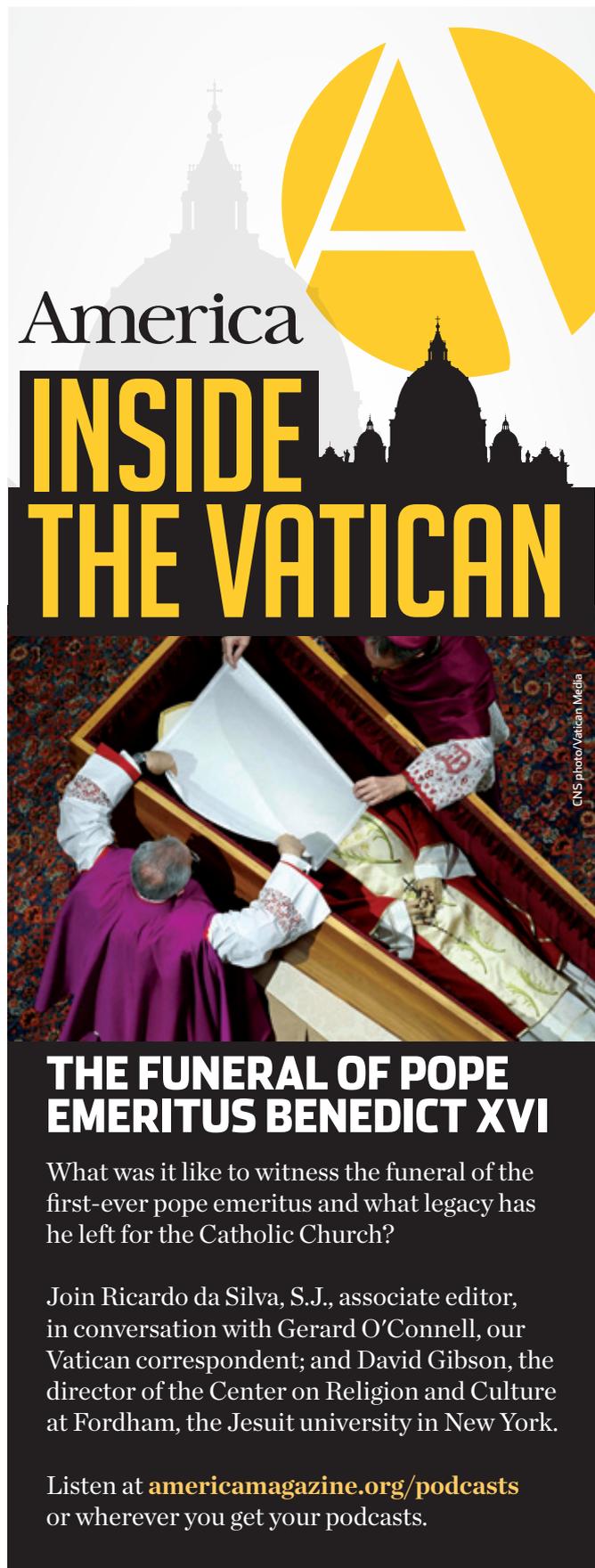
But the figure who predominates in *The Noise of Typewriters* is Henry Luce, the estimable founder of the Time empire and the man who shaped the American mind at the highest levels for decades. (At one time, an early copy of each issue of Time was taken every week by motorcycle courier directly to the White House.)

Though, as Morrow says, “He is largely forgotten now,” he identifies Luce as “the most important journalist of the twentieth century.” Morrow places him perfectly in context: “Luce was the old America, the twentieth-century version—the America before the very different America we have now. He expressed—and his magazines manifested—the dominant, middle-class American civilization from, let us say, the stock market crash in 1929 to the fall of Saigon in 1975.”

Morrow is at his finest in discussing this truly towering figure of American journalism and all its complexity; he writes, for example, that Luce “bristled with energy, an electric aura—a radiation of power that had in it, as power does, an organizing core of narcissism. A sardonic intelligence.” This depiction of “the Henry Ford of magazines” is a worthwhile act of cultural memory.

It is undoubtedly true that to younger readers, Morrow’s book on the era of magazine journalism and some of its ablest practitioners will be largely unintelligible, so radically transformed is the media today by the evanescence of the internet. But for those who remember the once-enormous influence of magazines, *The Noise of Typewriters* is a concise and riveting portrait, animated at all points by the highest intelligence, of that vanished world.

Gregory J. Sullivan is a lawyer in New Jersey and a part-time lecturer in the department of politics at Princeton University.



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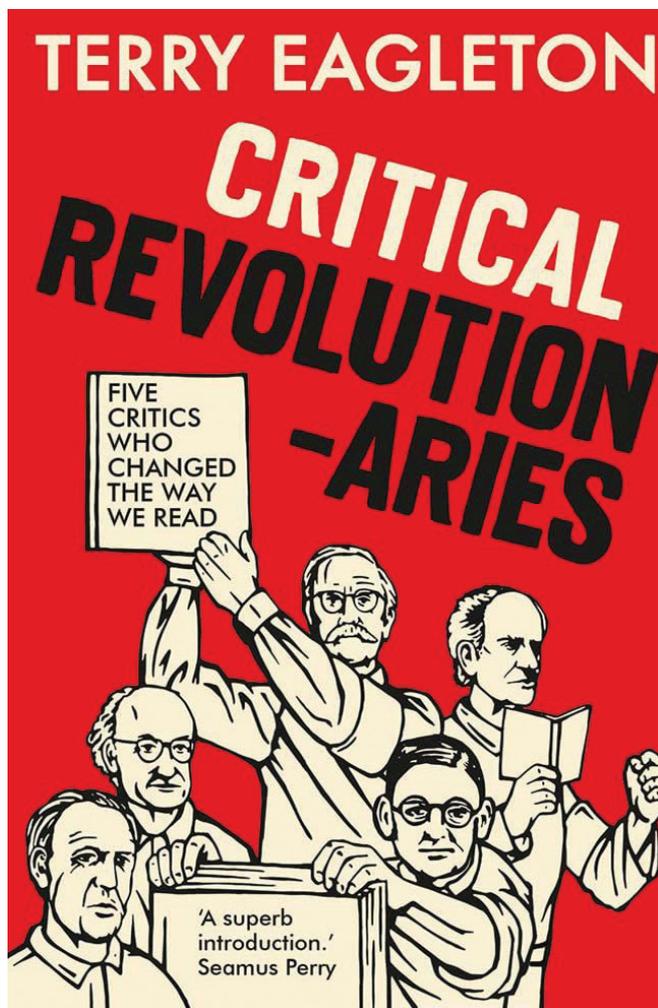
THE FUNERAL OF POPE EMERITUS BENEDICT XVI

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CNS photo/Vatican Media



Yale University Press / 323p \$28

The prolific Terry Eagleton has become one of Britain's most respected public intellectuals, whose writing incorporates Marxist and Catholic perspectives. He has written over 40 books on religion, philosophy and culture, as well as literary theory and literary and social criticism.

His latest, *The Critical Revolutionaries: Five Critics Who Changed the Way We Read*, focuses on T. S. Eliot and four critics associated with Cambridge University: I. A. Richards, William Empson, F. R. Leavis and Raymond Williams, all of whom revolutionized literary study and foreshadowed the New Criticism movement that became widespread in mid-century American universities. At Cambridge, these four made English studies a center of "reaction to what seemed the impoverishment of both life and language." Eagleton deals with their ideas in his typically engaging and perceptive way.

"Literary discourse," Eagleton says, came to offer them an alternative to the "purely instrumental ends to which a crass, technological society had harnessed" human interactions and where "language, persons, values, and relationships could be treated as ends in themselves." This meant that literary critics acquired the "responsibilities of the priest, prophet or politician," and that unpacking a metaphor became an exercise of social responsibility.

Eagleton is perhaps especially comfortable in discussing these five scholars because he attended Cambridge University and either had listened to them in the lecture hall or otherwise met them (except for Eliot, though he knew people who were directly acquainted with Eliot).

Eagleton's Marxist views put him at odds with the reactionary Eliot, yet he observes that despite his conservatism, Eliot nonetheless "rejects capitalism's greed, selfish individualism and pursuit of material interests." Nor does Eliot's elitism "exclude a concern for the common people," and his views are hardly those of the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom today.

He posits Eliot as "an unstable compound of bourgeois stuffiness and literary saboteur, moving between genteel Mayfair and bohemian Soho." As Eagleton says, for Eliot "the business of criticism is to evaluate various nuances of feeling, whether 'decadent' or sentimentalist, ebullient or enervated, sardonic or sublime," since his "interest is not so much what a poem says...as with the 'structure of emotions' it embodies."

Whatever his famously conservative views, Eliot's version of social criticism is very much his own: He was as much a critic of the social orthodoxies of his day as George Orwell, except that "his critique is launched from the right rather than the left."

Eliot is known for his commitment to tradition, yet "his attitude toward tradition is not all that traditional." For him, tradition works backward as well as forward, so that "when a new piece of writing enters the literary canon, it retrospectively changes the relations between previous works, allowing us to view them in a new light." Eagleton sees this as an attempt to reclaim the author's avant-garde literary practice "for a conservative poetics."

As for Eliot's anti-Romantic insistence that the poem should extinguish any self-expression, Eagleton finds that it renders the poet too passive, a "receptacle...like a catalyst in a chemical experiment." He sees a political rea-



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son behind this. Eliot, he says, finds this impersonality to be an antidote to the fantasy of a potentially “boundless self...a daydream typical of the United States.”

I. A. Richards has perhaps had an even more direct influence on U.S. literary studies than Eliot. He disrupted the dilettantish approach to literature prevalent at Cambridge—“literary gossip, good taste, and elegant *belles lettres*, not disciplined critical intelligence.” Of Eagleton’s five subjects, Richards is the lone theorist, and his work consists of “the most systematic defence of poetry to be found in the English language.” His materialism and (supposedly) scientific approach to poetry put him at odds with his peers; he thought literary criticism ought to be “a branch of the science of psychology.”

For Richards, “great poetry represents the finest, most delicate and efficient organization of impulses available to humanity,” rendering poetry not didactic, but a kind of mental hygiene. Getting that benefit requires educational skill in the close reading of poems, something he felt students lacked. In *Practical Criticism* (1929), Richards presented a series of unidentified poems and student responses to them, revealing the students’ inability to make significant critical responses, then went on to show how it might be done.

More support for close reading came with William Empson’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, which came out one year later, “one of the greatest critical works ever to appear in English.” Empson showed how ambiguity can provide richness in compression of language for maximum effect. Examples that Eagleton points to include Hopkins’s “The Windhover” and an extraordinary reading of Herbert’s “The Sacrifice,” in which Christ’s saying, “Man stole the fruit, but I must climb the tree,” is ambiguous; the tree is both the cross and the tree onto which Jesus replaces the apple plucked by Eve.

Empson elucidates such multiple paradoxes as: Christ “is scapegoat and tragic hero; loved because hated.” As Eagleton observes, “This...is far more theologically perceptive stuff than the image of God as Stalin”—Empson’s usual view. His awareness, says Eagleton, of “the limits of the human situation” as “the most fundamental aspect of literary art” gives his “humanism...a tragic inflection.” Eagleton admires his “liberal rationalist habit of deflating and demystifying portentous nonsense,” something at which Eagleton himself has been adept.

F. R. Leavis, another advocate of close reading, is perhaps best known for his study of the novel in *The Great*

Tradition, from 1948, a study that bristles with pronouncements promoting and demoting various works, according to his view that fiction should be what “makes for life.” As Eagleton points out, Leavis avoids explanation of his choices because for him, life is the enemy of definition. Literature makes us feel more intensely alive, according to Leavis, though Eagleton comments that “if we feel at our most alive only when reading *Middlemarch* or *The Rainbow* [two of Leavis’s favorites], we must be in pretty poor shape.”

In his concluding chapter, Eagleton has special praise for his former Cambridge tutor and friend, Raymond Williams: “Throughout his career, Williams spoke up for hope while keenly aware of human cruelty and corruption.” Williams came to dislike close textual reading, which he saw as a way of avoiding larger issues.

Williams’s best-known book, *Culture and Society* (1958), “spoke urgently to the condition of Britain in the late 1950s.” Eagleton sees Williams as making an ambitious attempt to construct “a radical tradition of his own,” drawing on a variety of “cultural and free-floating intellectuals to challenge the social order,” from Blake and Coleridge to Orwell and Leavis.

Seeing him as “an ecologist long before the word was in general currency,” Eagleton especially admires Williams for the depth of his humanity and his idea that “[t]he growth of love and the capacity for loving...are fundamental to the development of a society...far from received positions, on the political left or anywhere else.”

Jerome Donnelly is a retired English professor from the University of Central Florida.

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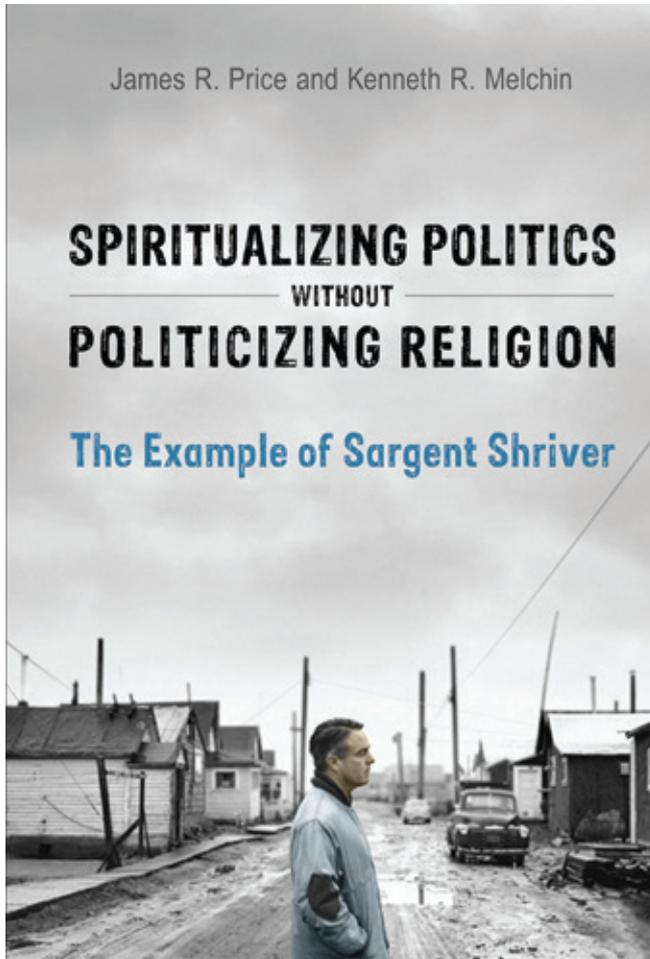


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BREAK YOUR MIRRORS!



University of Toronto Press / 200p \$45

In her 2021 book *The Great Society: A New History*, Amity Shlaes took a highly critical look at 1960s social welfare programs—including what Shlaes called the “Catholic streak” within President Lyndon Johnson’s broader War on Poverty.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Michael Harrington and Tom Hayden were all prominent domestic-policy players during the chaotic decade between the assassination of John F. Kennedy and Watergate. But the Catholic who arguably cast the longest shadow in Shlaes’s account is Sargent Shriver—Lyndon Johnson’s point man on poverty, who, in the words of the biographer Scott Stossel, “may have positively affected more people around the world than any 20th century American who was not a...major elected official or Martin Luther King.”

This compelling, substantive new book argues that we need Shriver’s “Catholic streak” now more than ever to break through what James Price and Kenneth Melchin call the “fog of the contemporary culture wars” and serve as “a

stark contrast to the contemporary political realism associated with Thomas Hobbes.”

Price is the executive director of the Sargent Shriver Peace Institute, while Melchin directs a center at St. Paul University, in Ottawa, dedicated to the influential, multidisciplinary work of the Canadian theologian Bernard Lonergan, S.J. The authors have been thinking about a book along these lines—Lonergan’s “insight” theory meets Shriverian policy and pragmatism, meets the 21st century—for nearly two decades. During that time, Shriver (husband to Eunice Kennedy, and brother-in-law to J.F.K. and Robert F. Kennedy) died at the age of 95, in 2011, the same year Stossel released his mammoth authorized biography of him.

Price and Melchin start with one of Shriver’s “most compelling ideas...that politics actually needs religion to do its work.” The authors are judicious in assigning blame for the cultural “mess we’re in,” citing “the imperious proliferation of doctrinaire religious conviction” as well as the “growing secularism of the academy and the public square.” Shriver, the authors contend, admirably “bridged the worlds of religion and politics,” a fusion that informed ambitious government projects like the Peace Corps.

“Break your mirrors!” Shriver declared at an address at Yale in May 1994. “Shatter the glass. In our society that is so self-absorbed, begin to look less at yourself and more at each other.” Even today’s most committed partisans would agree that the need for such a shift has only become more urgent.

Price and Melchin present Shriver as an exemplary consensus-builder, who “lived core values from both sides of the conservative-liberal divide.” Whether or not these opposing “sides” can—or even want to—work with each other in 2023 is a far more complex, contentious question.

Shriver was born in Maryland in 1915, the youngest of two boys raised by devout parents. It was an era infused by the social justice encyclicals “*Rerum Novarum*” (1891) and “*Quadragesimo Anno*” (1931), both of which “played an important role in Shriver’s early public life,” the authors note, adding that “one of [Shriver’s] favourite authors” was the French theologian Jacques Maritain.

By the late 1920s, Shriver’s parents had moved to New York City and become active in circles around the newly founded *Commonweal* magazine, which “advocated the separation of church and state but respected the role of religion in politics.” A series of court rulings would soon exacerbate already-extensive cultural confusion surrounding the infamous American “wall of separation” between religion and government. The authors cite these rulings as crucial to understanding Shriver’s ideas and career—though it must be added that additional context would be helpful, especially about the degree to which Catholicism inspired

anxiety and suspicion as Shriver came of age, from Al Smith's doomed 1920s presidential campaigns to Eleanor Roosevelt's public spats with Cardinal Francis Spellman.

Ultimately, the authors position Shriver as an exemplar of a Catholic tradition that “reminds us to remain wary of the fanaticisms that arise when we seek perfection in this world, through the pursuit of technology, wealth, military might, or even liberty.” Since, according to Price and Melchin, “human life is not perfectible by politics,” and “legitimate influences can and must flow from religion to politics,” Shriver's career is presented as an example of Lonergan's “insight theory” in action—“a recognition of openness and diversity that discovers a common humanity and spiritual dynamism in the interior life of all citizens.”

In other words, the more we reflect upon, so as to better understand, our own hearts and minds, the more insight we'll attain into those of others. “Through these operations we move out of ourselves into an engagement with the world,” the authors write, assisting our efforts to distinguish “between development and its opposite, decline.”

One can quibble with the occasional vague or awkward phrase in this book—such as “insight into interiority”—though not the ambition of the larger goal: to locate “a whole new way of retrieving and transposing core insights from Catholic tradition on natural law and charity.”

This is most vividly illustrated by the Peace Corps, proposed by J.F.K. as a kind of afterthought on the 1960 campaign trail and brought to vibrant life by the sweat of Shriver's brow. “[N]othing like it had ever been tried by the U.S. government,” the authors write, crediting Shriver for applying core principles from his Catholic faith in his work to establish the Peace Corps. Shriver himself believed people from all walks of life could “meet with other men and women on the common ground of service to human welfare and human dignity.” To Price and Melchin, Peace Corps workers were not mere saleswomen or salesmen. They would:

not promote political, economic, or religious doctrines. They would work with the people, not employ them. They would listen to the people, not preach to them. They would perform services as the people requested. They would live with them, eat their food, obey their laws, and share their lives.

Similarly ambitious initiatives followed, many conceptualized or steered (or both) by Shriver—Head Start, Job Corps, Volunteers in Service to America (Vista), the National Center on Poverty Law, the Special Olympics. The good intentions and vast potential benefits of these programs are obvious enough. By 2023, however, so are

many of the unintended consequences. Some of these have been targeted for decades by budget-conscious right-wingers. But an entire generation of progressive activists also now recoil at the very possibility that representatives from more powerful cultures can charitably, or neutrally, serve those with far less social capital.

For what it's worth, Shriver also inspired skepticism over 50 years ago. To the charge that his initiatives were pie-in-the-sky dreams, and “fl[ew] in the face of the so-called ‘realism’ of power politics,” Price and Melchin argue that Shriver's approach actually, and ably, reflects the necessities of “hardhead pragmatism and realistic administration.” The authors themselves are optimistic that a reconsideration of Sargent Shriver can translate Lonerganian ideas into tangible social results, “a transformative experience that shifts parties from certainty to curiosity, and from fear and aggression to openness and engagement.”

Shriver himself once said, “Politics is only as good as the hearts of its citizens.” Price and Melchin ultimately make as persuasive a case as can be made for these ideas, at least at a time when one loud faction of citizens who proudly politicize religion divides the poor into camps of barely deserving and undeserving, and prioritizes capitalist profits over Christian prophets.

Meanwhile, another loud and chic bunch divides the world between the all-powerful and utterly powerless. This bunch is nearly as skeptical of anything religious as they are of the very governments they nevertheless believe should be providing not just opportunities but guarantees.

Amid all this, Price and Melchin could not have foreseen the explosive religious battles that were part of the post-Dobbs scorched-earth war over the high court and *Roe v. Wade*. But they also never really address broader related issues, like the precipitous decline of the church's moral standing, which would certainly influence any serious consideration of some key ideas. Then again, they don't really take into account the church's tenuous social position—over the decades and centuries—as a communitarian institution, in an American culture that has made a pseudo-religion of individualism. All of this is further complicated by the fact that such conflicts—ironically enough—transcend conventional liberal-conservative solutions.

Price and Melchin convincingly offer up Shriver as one of the “great peacemakers of our age.” Now we just need to figure out what kind of peace—if any—is fitting for our age.

Tom Deignan has written about books for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The National Catholic Reporter*. He is working on a book about *Ellis Island*.

Salt, Light, and Lent

February begins with Jesus encouraging his disciples to examine themselves. He uses metaphors of salt and light to describe substances that lose their character completely if they become less than what they are supposed to be (Mt 5:13-16). Jesus holds the same to be true for discipleship. These metaphors, especially salt, are rich and polyvalent, pointing to realities as diverse as temple sacrifice and daily life.

On the fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Matthew continues to investigate the life of the blessed that he introduced the week previously in the Beatitudes. The poor in spirit, those who hunger for divine justice and those who are persecuted can be models of discipleship, since their

life situation invites them to build character and foster integrity of faith. The resilience offered to those who take on the hard teachings of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount will also be the topic of the two following Sundays.

On the last Sunday of February, the church begins its Lenten journey. The Gospel reading on that Sunday will move readers backward chronologically, returning them to Mt 4:1-11, Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, an episode that precedes the Sermon on the Mount. This movement is in contrast to the spiritual life of a true disciple, which moves forward through Lent, following a path to a deeper and authentic faith that surpasses the status quo.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), FEB. 5, 2023

Salt and Light: Where are Today's Students of Christ?

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), FEB. 12, 2023

Listening to Old Advice With New Hearing Aids

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), FEB. 19, 2023

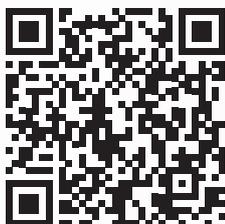
Moving Beyond What We Perceive to Be Good

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (A), FEB. 26, 2023

Introduction to Satan, Prosecuting Attorne



Victor M. Cancino, S.J., lives on the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana and is the pastor-delegate for St. Ignatius Mission. He studied Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.



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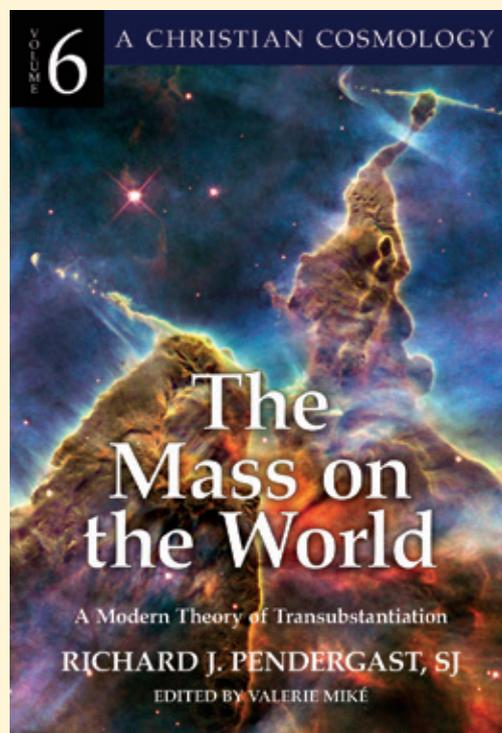
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Reasons of the Heart

The eucharistic mysticism of Benedict XVI

By Robert P. Imbelli



Riven between consolation and desolation, the young Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., “fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host” (“The Wreck of the Deutschland”). In less poetic but no less intense terms, Joseph Ratzinger understood the Eucharist to be “the mystical heart of Christianity, in which God mysteriously comes forth, time and again, from within himself and draws us into his embrace.” “The Eucharist,” he wrote in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, is “the fulfillment of the promise” made by Jesus: “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself” (Jn 12:32).

Perhaps nowhere is Pope Benedict’s eucharistic mysticism set forth so fully as in his apostolic exhortation “The Sacrament of Charity” (2007). The very first sentence reads: “The sacrament of charity, the Holy Eucharist is the gift that Jesus Christ makes of himself, thus revealing to us God’s infinite love for every man and woman.” Of course, it is the Gospels’ narrative of the life, death and new life of Jesus that vividly displays the height and breadth and length and depth of the love of Jesus. Meditation upon the Gospels’ story preceded for Ratzinger, as it did for St. Ignatius Loyola, the contemplation on God’s love that is the climax of the Spiritual Exercises. The meditative Liturgy of the Word prepares the table for the more contemplative Liturgy of the Eucharist. Scripture and sacrament, story and supper, mutually illumine each other.

Here one confronts, in our contemporary context, a challenge un-

known to St. Ignatius Loyola and the many guides to the Christian life of previous centuries: Some present-day biblical studies seem to block rather than foster access to the Jesus of Christian faith. Pope Benedict expresses this concern in the foreword to the first volume of his trilogy, *Jesus of Nazareth*. Reliance on historical-critical approaches alone has led to the spread of unwarranted skepticism concerning our knowledge of Jesus. Here Benedict voices a heartfelt lament: “Intimate friendship with Jesus, on which everything depends, is in danger of clutching at thin air.”

It may be suggestive, then, to consider Benedict’s Jesus volumes as contemporary spiritual exercises designed to render accessible once again the Jesus of the Gospels, who, as Benedict insisted, is the real Jesus. The exercise of critical reason needs to be complemented by the insights of the reasons of the heart. For, as Joseph Ratzinger wrote: “Love seeks understanding. It wishes to know even better the one whom it loves. It ‘seeks his face,’ as Augustine never tires of repeating.”

In a now-famous commencement address at Kenyon College in 2005, the late David Foster Wallace spoke of “the default setting” into which we seem naturally “hard-wired”: namely, our self as “the absolute center of the universe.” Though Wallace did not use the word, the condition he described seems strikingly similar to what the tradition terms “original sin.” In his most systematic work, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, Ratzinger

speaks of the fundamental assent of faith made at baptism: “only with difficulty can it peer out from behind the latticework of an egoism we are powerless to pull down with our own hands.” We are, indeed, the recipients of God’s mercy, Ratzinger writes, yet this does not relieve us of the need to be transformed. The privileged encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist fosters this ongoing transformation. For Jesus’ very being is to be Eucharist: loving thanksgiving to the Father, loving sacrifice for the sake of the many.

I suggest that Benedict XVI’s lasting challenge and legacy to the church he loved and served so wholeheartedly may be summed up in these words from “The Sacrament of Charity”:

The Sacrament of the Altar is always at the heart of the Church’s life: thanks to the Eucharist, the Church is reborn ever anew! The more lively the Eucharistic faith of the people of God, the deeper is its sharing in ecclesial life in steadfast commitment to the mission entrusted by Christ to his disciples.

May Benedict’s witness and teaching help enkindle anew the church’s eucharistic faith.

Rev. Robert P. Imbelli, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, is an emeritus associate professor of theology at Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Mass.



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