

America

THE JESUIT REVIEW OF FAITH AND CULTURE

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Ancient and New

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Alternative facts and the coming constitutional crisis

Casual observers of our friends across the pond like to say that the British don't have a constitution. That's not quite right. They do have one, but unlike their American cousins, theirs isn't spelled out in a single document. Instead, the British constitution is an amalgam of domestic and international law, precedent and tradition, the product of 1,000 years of history.

While the United States does have a single document called "The Constitution," with an uppercase T and C, the American system also presumes non-constitutional values and customs that are just as vital, if not more vital to the health of our democracy. The British philosopher Edmund Burke, who was widely read by our well-read founders, tells us why: "Custom is to be regarded with great deference, especially if it be a universal custom," he wrote, "for there is some general principle operating to produce customs that is a more sure guide than our theories."

The American founders believed that the principles that should govern a nation are rooted in customs that are themselves rooted in objective realities. As John Courtney Murray, S.J. once observed, the founding declaration, "We hold these truths," necessarily implies that objective truths exist and that such truths embody "a natural law that makes known to all of us the structure of the moral universe" and binds us "in a common obedience."

Yet how many Americans still believe that? The more common view seems to be that truth is more like

something I create rather than something that we inherit or discover. Has this relativism, long operative in other realms of American life, now entered our politics in a dramatic, new way? Is the new post-factual politics simply one part of a larger cultural shift, one we made long ago? It is a relatively short walk from "there are no objective truths" to "there are no objective facts." Have we taken those steps? If so, then the free press that our constitution presumes and requires is seriously threatened.

The founders knew, as Thomas Jefferson wrote, that "a despotic government always [keeps] a kind of standing army of news writers who, without any regard to truth or to what should be like truth...put into the papers whatever might serve the ministers." Jefferson believed that the pursuit of truth, especially those empirical facts that are the first instance of truth and the foundation of good journalism, is the surest guard against tyranny, so much so that he once said that if he had to choose between newspapers without a government, or a government without newspapers, he preferred the former.

Yet many Americans now find such sentiments quaint or naïve. In our contemporary politics, facts are not stubborn but elastic things: You have your facts, I have my "alternative facts," statements not subject to painstaking empirical verification, but simple ideological confirmation. That is itself troubling. Ideologies are little more

than questions that answer themselves. The bigger worry, however, is that this world of "alternative facts" seriously undermines the ability of the press to do its constitutional job. When that happens, we're one step closer to a government without newspapers.

Where does this end? Some think, as David Brooks recently wrote in *The New York Times*, that "we are seeing the rise of fascism, a new authoritarian age." But, he adds, "that gets things exactly backward. The real fear in the Trump era should be that everything will become disorganized, chaotic, degenerate, clownish and incompetent."

Mr. Brooks is right. We more likely face destabilizing, constitutional confusion, than brute authoritarianism. But I suspect that's not simply the result of the last election. The seeds of the post-factual crisis were planted long ago, amid a greater confusion about the truths we hold, a situation that politicians skillfully manipulated but we the people created.

Matt Malone, S.J., editor in chief;
Twitter: @americaeditor.



Donald Trump is sworn in as 45th President of the United States

Photo: Scott Olson

Cover Photo: iStockphoto /Artisteer

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MARK COLERIDGE

Social media can revolutionize the church, but only if we use it correctly.

How would you rate your experience of parish-based religious education?

We received a wide range of responses to our request to **America** readers to rate their experiences of parish-based religious education. Some, like Maria Barrera of Brooklyn, N.Y., described religious education as a “wholesome” time for her children that positively affected how her family practiced the faith, thanks to the hard work of her parish and her children’s Catholic school. Many catechists also noted that their work provided welcome challenges to their own faith. One catechist from California explained, “Helping families has helped me think outside the box with ways to creatively connect with God in my own life.” Other readers, largely students or parents who did not have access to Catholic schools alongside their parishes, described their experience in opposite terms. Madeline LeBlanc from Sunshine, La., went so far as to say that her religious edu-

cation “frustrated” rather than fostered her faith. Several other readers commented that their faith had “survived” religious education.

The majority of responses, however, described parish-based religious education as having little to no impact on their Catholic faith and practice. Matt Browne, a young seminarian from Long Island, N.Y., wrote, “Most of my formation as a Catholic Christian did not occur during C.C.D., which I attended for eight years of my life.” Elizabeth Pfantz of Appleton, Wis., had a similar experience. “C.C.D. has had a neutral impact on my faith,” she said. Ms. Pfantz, alongside many other readers, called for families and parish educators to work together to improve religious education: “We need to better engage students so that they are encouraged to live their faith outside of the classroom.”

GRADE BY TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT

Catechists rated religious education more highly than parents and students.

	Grade
■ Catechists	B
■ Parents	D
■ Students	D
Overall	C

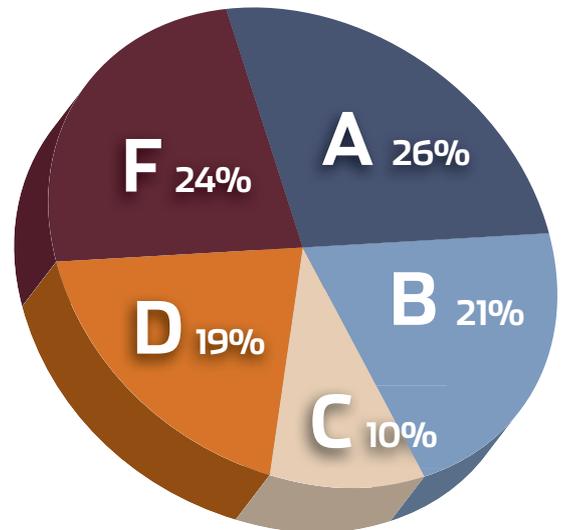
WHO IS MOST RESPONSIBLE?

Most readers rated parishes as most responsible for the quality of religious education, with students rated as least responsible.



OVERALL GRADE

The average grade for parish-based religious education was a C.



These results are based on reader responses to a poll promoted on Facebook, Twitter and in our email newsletter. These grades were calculated from a survey where readers were given four options to rate how satisfactory their experience of religious education was.

The Catechetical Safety Net

Re “It’s Time to Fix the ‘Sunday School’ Culture” (Our Take, 1/23): Thank you, editors of **America**, for giving voice to this all-too-prevalent problem. Having been involved in catechesis for more than 30 years, I’ve seen a dramatic change in the level of engagement on the part of parents. At the same time, I can’t put all the blame for this on parents themselves. They have a difficult job, and while the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* rightly considers parents to be “the principal and first educators,” the fact remains that it takes a community to raise a child; and very often, it was that community that assisted with catechesis. Prior to World War II, communities were much more close-knit. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and neighbors all banded together to make sure kids went to Mass and learned the faith while parents spent time working and maintaining the household. Furthermore, the economic model for Catholic schools was such that it was not nearly the burden for parents that it is today.

If we are going to change this paradigm, we must find ways to rebuild the catechetical safety net and engage parents with their children in their journey of faith. We must rebuild community and engage everyone in the process, and engage them at a level where they can be spiritually and intellectually challenged. Religious education has been a babysitting service for far too long.

John McGlynn

Online Comment

Live Our Faith

We need to re-examine the desired outcome of religious education. Informing students about the facts of our faith is a necessary but not sufficient condition for transmitting our faith. Religious education must encompass every aspect of what we do as individuals, as family (defined as the people with whom we are living) and as church. It is a lifelong process to grow in our faith and to live our faith. We must clearly demonstrate the benefits of living our faith here and now.

Michael Conk

Online Comment

Better Training

The headline says “fix”; the article implies “discard.” I teach a well-attended third-grade Sunday school class, but I largely ignore the provided curriculum, which is simplistic, trivial and beneath the intelligence, education and

curiosity level of my very average third graders. We badly need modern innovative curricula and better training and support for teachers.

Adrienne Keller

Online Comment

Blessed Gift

Re “Grace Enough,” by Brendan Busse, S.J. (1/23): Thank you, Father Busse, for sharing your blessed gift of writing in such a fine interview with Andrew Garfield. I now look forward to seeing the movie with renewed enthusiasm after reading about Mr. Garfield’s experience with the Spiritual Exercises. Thanks to James Martin, S.J., for his ministry in guiding Mr. Garfield, considering his many other important responsibilities. We are fortunate to have such brothers in our church community.

(Rev.) Tom Ivory

Online Comment

Timely and Revealing

How welcome your new **America** is, and how timely and revealing is “Beyond the Wall,” by Ashley McKinless (1/23). As the threat of walls resound from the new president, the author reminds us of Pope Francis’ reference to walls: “All walls collapse—all of them.” Like Ms. McKinless, I have seen Guatemalans (and Salvadorans) feel the “push” of poverty, unemployment, corruption—and now even the effects of global warming—force them off their farms, into the cities and beyond to the United States. And El Norte lures people with jobs, hope and a sense of freedom, among many other “pull” factors. Thanks for highlighting this reality in your first issue of the new **America**.

(Rev.) James E. Flynn

Masonic Homes, Ky.

Heat of Crisis

Thank you for including Cokie Roberts’s fine article, “Bourbon and Branch Won’t Do It” (1/23). Congress needs to take a deep breath and listen to its female membership. Once they inject this respect and cooperation into decision-making, bipartisan success will rise.

Brian Flanagan

St. James, N.C.

Clarification: The photograph included with the review of *Black Elk: The Life of an American Visionary* in the Jan. 23 issue was Ben Black Elk, the son of Nicholas Black Elk, the subject of the book under review.

President Trump's dangerous nationalism

During his brief inaugural address, President Donald J. Trump called for a new patriotism to “lift our sights and heal our divisions.” In the wake of the most divisive presidential campaign of the modern era, this was a welcome message. But the new president also demonstrated why he is an imperfect messenger. Using strident language reminiscent of his combative campaign rhetoric, Mr. Trump described an America characterized by widespread crime and poverty, decaying infrastructure, shuttered factories and failing public schools.

It was a simplistic, almost apocalyptic portrait, one that contains elements of truth but belies the realities of low unemployment, booming markets and falling crime rates. Yet in describing this “American carnage” in the way that he did, Mr. Trump set himself up to point the blame and name his enemy: the political and economic “establishment” that has “protected itself but not the citizens of our country.”

Far from an instrument of healing, the president's address amounted to a declaration of war on globalization and the elites who reap most of its rewards. Mr. Trump's first line of attack is old-fashioned nationalism: “It's going to be America first,” he said, promising “the forgotten men and women of our country” that “every decision” he makes “will benefit American workers and American families.”

This promise echoes the isolationist “America First” rhetoric of the 1930s and 1940s. It is facile and misleading at best. The politics of

policy-making, especially in a highly polarized environment, is often a zero-sum game in which some people benefit and some do not. At worst “America First” is a serious threat to the international solidarity that lasting peace and justice require. Our brothers and sisters live not only within our borders but across the world.

Nationalism is not a new force in American politics. From the start, the national narrative has included an element of American exceptionalism, the belief that the United States has a vital, unique role to play in world history. Yet that mythic hubris takes the form of a false messianism in Mr. Trump's vision. “At the bedrock of our politics,” he said, “will be a total allegiance to the United States of America, and through our loyalty to our country, we will rediscover our loyalty to each other.”

Patriotic Christians of every political persuasion should see this blind nationalism for the idolatry it is. Students of 20th-century history should see it for the clear danger it is, especially for those whom nationalism inevitably leaves behind. “Greatness for our nation,” Bishop Robert McElroy writes in this issue of **America**, is not an idol, “a possession or power but an ever-challenging aspiration of the heart and soul.”

The ultimate instrument of our unity is the patient grace of God, not the greatness of the nation state. We render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, but it is in God we trust.

Birth rate craters as housing costs rise

The birth rate in California is at its lowest ever, the state's department of finance reported in December, at 12.4 births a year for every 1,000 people. One suspected reason is the shortage of affordable housing for young adults who may have the wish, if not the finances, to start a family. “It's just been harder to get things in place before having kids,” the demographer Dowell Myers told *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Birth rates are falling and housing costs are rising across the United States, and though the two trends have not been linked conclusively, it is clearly more difficult to raise children in a nurturing environment without housing security. That is one reason Catholic Charities USA decided last fall to make affordable housing one of its top priorities through 2022; it also devoted an issue of its quarterly magazine to the topic. There are other ways to encourage family formation, including guaranteed parental leave and child care assistance as well as tax incentives. Family-friendly policies help to explain why France has one of the highest birth rates in Europe. But these policies alone will not make up for the soaring costs of rent and first-time homeownership.

One reason for the affordable-housing shortage is that homes have become so expensive for developers to build. As a recent report by the Urban Institute pointed out, “In many places, the rent the poorest families can pay is too little to cover the costs of operating an apartment building, even if developers could build that building

for free.” The United States should consider innovative policies—including housing vouchers for low-income families and subsidies for the developers of affordable housing—to help provide the economic security needed for healthy family formation.

The U.S. bishops take a stand for health care

By following through on their promise to repeal “Obamacare” immediately, Republican lawmakers and the new Trump administration are engaging in reckless political theater. The Affordable Care Act is not without its flaws, and the U.S. bishops were right to resist threats to religious liberty posed by the law. But Obamacare has expanded health care to millions of people, and the church should be equally vocal in its defense of the principle of universal health care. On Jan. 18 Bishop Frank J. Dewane, of Venice, Fla., sent a letter calling on members of Congress to consider the millions of people who will be hurt if key provisions of the law are dismantled without a simultaneous replacement. Reform efforts must focus not only on controlling costs and protecting religious freedom but extending coverage to the poor—for whom, Bishop Dewane writes, “the introduction of great uncertainty at this time would prove particularly devastating.”

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What Catholics owe their Muslim brothers and sisters

Imagine you are sitting at Mass. During the sign of peace, you wave to your friend across the crowded sanctuary and shake hands with the fidgety kids in the row behind you. Suddenly, the congregation breaks out in gasps. Amid the confusion, you learn there is someone outside shooting at the building with a firearm.

Imagine, too, that this is not an isolated incident. Across the country, many churches have been vandalized in anti-Catholic attacks. You have also heard about harassment, assaults and even murders of your fellow Catholics. All the while, political candidates have won elections by proposing to ban Catholics from the country, and the news is filled with overwhelmingly negative coverage of your religion. In the back of your mind is the knowledge that the government and police are keeping a special eye on your community, not just at airports but in churches and restaurants owned by your relatives.

For Muslims in the United States, these scenarios are not hypotheticals; it is their reality. In 2015, hate crimes against Muslims jumped 67 percent from the previous year, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, reaching a post-Sept. 11 high, and the number of anti-Muslim physical assaults was on par with 2001. I know people whose mosques have been burned down, whose children have been bullied at school and who have been harassed on the street because they wear a headscarf. In our political discourse, Muslims are a convenient scapegoat. They and their religion are cast as the source of terrorism and

a threat to American values. So it is no surprise that Muslims have been profiled by law enforcement and that many Americans approve of discriminatory policies.

It should not be difficult for Catholics to acknowledge the reality of Islamophobia and its impact on our fellow Americans. In previous generations, Catholic immigrants were considered a threat to American values—foreigners and papists who wanted to impose religious law on the United States. Many Catholics seem to have forgotten (or have never learned) this history. According to research conducted by the Bridge Initiative, where I work, three in 10 American Catholics admit to having negative views of Muslims. Only 14 percent say they have favorable views of the group. Other polls have found that a majority of Catholics believe Islamic values are at odds with American values; almost half of white Catholics agree with banning Muslim immigrants from the United States.

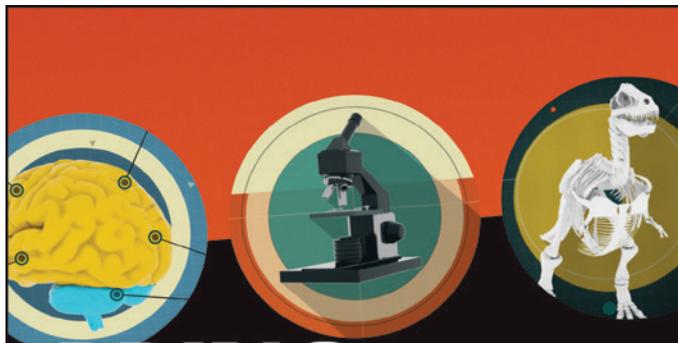
Catholics must critically examine their own prejudices and stereotypes of Muslims. Pope Francis has called on us to not generalize about Muslims, to avoid conflating Islam with terrorism and to stop spreading misinformation. We must have the courage to charitably confront Islamophobia in our communities, in our Catholic institutions and in ourselves.

Our faith also compels us to reach out to Muslims in love and hospitality. Simply striking up a conversation with a Muslim colleague, neighbor, classmate or parent at your child's school can go a long way. Invite them to get

coffee or organize a play date with your kids. If there are not any Muslims in your immediate circles, work with your pastor and parish leaders to extend an invitation to a Muslim guest speaker from a nearby mosque or university. Parishes making a public statement of solidarity, whether on a sign outside the church or an online forum, can be a meaningful first step.

The most important thing is to let the Muslim community know you want to be supportive; then, ask them how you can help, whether by hosting a dinner at your church, holding an educational event or organizing a joint community service opportunity. The best ally you can be is the one your new Muslim friends need you to be.

Jordan Denari Duffner, a research fellow at Georgetown University's Bridge Initiative, which studies Islamophobia, is a former Fulbright scholar in Amman, Jordan. She is writing a book on Muslim-Christian dialogue for Liturgical Press. Twitter: @jordandenari.



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DEATH PENALTY'S DECLINE CONTINUES

By Kevin Clarke



Focus turns to stopping execution of mentally ill defendants in 2017

A remorseless Dylann Roof, convicted of murdering nine people in a Charleston, S.C., church in 2015, became on Jan. 10 the first person sentenced to death for a federal hate crime. Two days later Texas prison authorities carried out the nation's first execution of 2017, when Christopher Wilkins, 48, died by lethal injection at the Texas state penitentiary at Huntsville.

As the year in U.S. executions begins—19 were scheduled at press time—opponents of the death penalty were encouraged by good news at the end of 2016. A year-end analysis by the Death Penalty Information Center found that the use of the death penalty fell to historic contemporary lows across the United States, with 20 inmates executed in 2016. This is the lowest number since 1991, when 14 inmates were executed.

In every other year since 1992, at least 28 people have been executed in the United States. And according to D.P.I.C., “states imposed the fewest death sentences...since states began re-enacting death penalty statutes in 1973.”

Diann Rust-Tierney, executive director of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, said the numbers reported by D.P.I.C. were “consistent with what we’ve been seeing—steady momentum away from the death penalty, an increasing number of people opposing it and a declining

number who are expressing support for it.”

She added, “We are moving in the direction of the rest of the world” on the death penalty.

The United States is one of 57 nations—China, Pakistan, Iran, India and Saudi Arabia among them—that have not abolished or otherwise declined to make use of capital punishment.

Karen Clifton, executive director of the Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Death Penalty, called the reduced number of executions in 2016 “a clear sign that the death penalty is coming to an end” in the United States.

“This trend is thanks in part to the continued efforts of Catholics across the country who advocate for the dignity of all life,” she said.

According to the Pew Research Center, just five states—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Missouri and Texas—accounted for all U.S. executions in 2016. That represents the fewest states to carry out executions in any year since 1983.

The D.P.I.C. reports that the 2016 numbers nationally depict “the geographic isolation of the death penalty and its disproportionate overuse by a handful of jurisdictions.” The number of state and federal jurisdictions imposing death sentences fell by more than half—“from 60 counties and the federal government in 2012, to only 27 counties this year.” That hyper-concentration begins to feel a lot like the “capricious and arbitrary” problem that led the Supreme Court to strike down the death penalty in 1972’s *Furman v. Georgia* decision.



But 2016 was not without setbacks for opponents of the death penalty. November referendums in a handful of states approved or restored the use of the death penalty; for example, a proposal to end the use of the death penalty in California was turned back by voters. Those same voters approved another measure to expedite capital punishment in California.

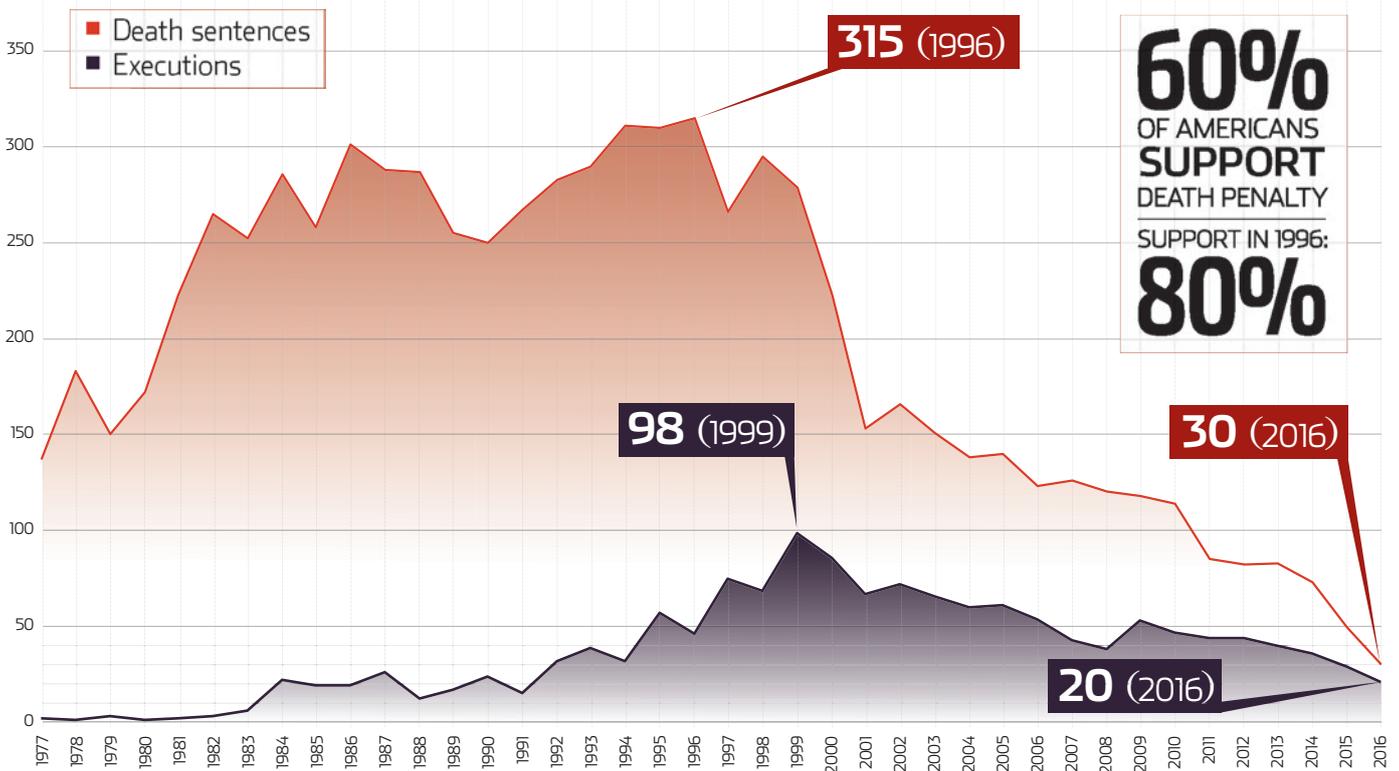
According to Ms. Clifton, at least 12 of the 20 people executed and 11 of those sentenced to death in 2016 showed evidence of serious mental health problems. She points out

that the U.S. Supreme Court has banned the execution of juveniles and people with intellectual disabilities because they have a reduced understanding of the consequences of their actions, “yet those affected by severe mental illness can still be executed.”

Looking ahead to 2017, Ms. Clifton said that the Catholic Mobilizing Network will focus on pressing for the prohibition of the execution of people with mental illness.

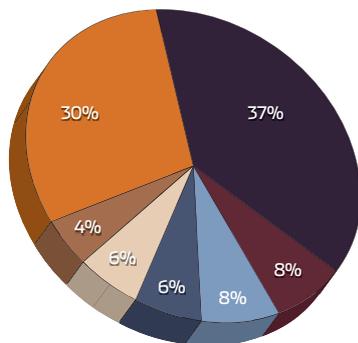
Kevin Clarke, chief correspondent. Twitter: @clarkeatamerica.

A TRENDLINE AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY



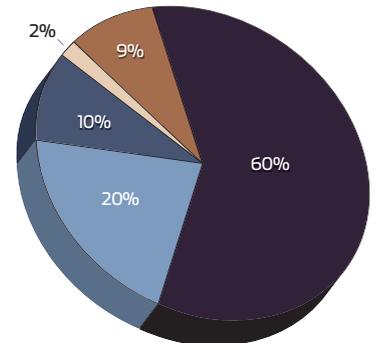
TOTAL U.S. EXECUTIONS 1977-2016

State	%	Total
Texas	37%	538
Other	30%	433
Oklahoma	8%	112
Virginia	8%	111
Florida	6%	92
Missouri	6%	87
Georgia	5%	69



KNOWN EXECUTIONS WORLDWIDE IN 2015

Nation	%	Total*
Iran	60%	977
Pakistan	20%	320
Saudi Arabia	10%	158
Other	9%	151
United States	2%	28
Total		1634



*Amnesty International worldwide total does not include China, believed to have carried out thousands of executions in secret, or North Korea. Other sources: Death Penalty Information Center, Gallup (polling through October 2016).



President Xi Jinping of China speaks in the House of Parliament in Bern, Switzerland, on Jan. 15.

Rule of Law and 'Western' Notions Worry Beijing

Photo: Peter Kraunzer/Pool Photo via AP

The Chinese Communist Party's hostility toward Western liberal ideologies was laid bare in a recent speech by China's top judge during which he urged cadres to reject "erroneous" Western notions such as "constitutional democracy," separation of powers and judicial independence.

State media reported on Jan. 14 that Chief Justice Zhou Qiang told court officials across the country that they "must have a clear stance and dare to show the sword."

"We must never fall into the trap of erroneous Western thinking and judicial independence," he said. Rhetoric that negates the leadership of the Communist Party or vilifies the "socialist rule of law and judiciary with Chinese characteristics" must be "struggled against," he said. People who use the internet to endanger national security, spread rumors and incite protests must be punished, he added.

Professor Jerome Cohen, a China law expert at New York University, wrote on his blog that Mr. Zhou's statement "is the most enormous ideological setback for decades of halting, uneven progress toward the creation of a professional, impartial judiciary."

In a separate address to law enforcement officials, Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed the primacy of "regime security." Taken together the two statements indicate that the party is placing its own interests over the rule of law, and its ongoing crackdown on dissent may intensify, lawyers and human rights advocates say.

Just two days before Mr. Zhou's speech, Mr. Xi told court officials and security officials that they must "heighten their sense of crisis and political alertness" to face all kinds of risks ahead of the 19th party congress, the most important political reshuffling event for the Communist Party that will take place later this year.

"The message from Zhou and Xi to police, prosecutors

and courts is that they can brazenly crack down on people who pose a threat to the regime," said Beijing-based rights lawyer Yu Wensheng, who has handled many sensitive political cases and been tortured in police detention. "To them, the security of their regime is the most fundamental issue. Rule of law is just a slogan for deceiving people," he said. "For the sake of the regime and the establishment's security, they are willing to do anything."

Since he came to power in late 2012, Mr. Xi has overseen the most severe crackdown on dissent since the Tiananmen pro-democracy movement was crushed in 1989. Hundreds of rights advocates, lawyers, liberal scholars and N.G.O. workers have been detained or arrested for their criticism of the government or work that the government saw as "subversive."

The veteran journalist Ching Cheong, who was jailed for three years in mainland China, said the leadership wanted to send a message that "there is no justice in the judiciary and everything is about the party's interests." He said the statements suggest the regime's insecurity, describing them as "the Communist Party's reaction to its own vulnerabilities."

Analysts say this does not bode well for China's human rights situation.

According to William Nee, a China researcher at Amnesty International, "Human rights lawyers...will face increased threats, intimidation, potential sanctions and disbarment, potential criminal punishments and even violence if they speak out publicly for their clients or engage in any sort of collective initiatives."

Verna Yu is *America's Hong Kong correspondent*.



As Trump Era Begins, Church Leaders Defend Health Care, Immigration, Worker Rights

Catholic bishops in the United States urged a pause in efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act until Congress can ensure that the millions of Americans who rely on “Obamacare” for health insurance can be guaranteed coverage.

In a letter to Congress on Jan. 18, Bishop Frank J. Dewane, head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ committee on domestic justice, wrote that while the group originally opposed the A.C.A. because it “expanded the role of the federal government in funding and facilitating abortion,” it nonetheless recognizes “that the law has brought about important gains in coverage and those gains should be protected.”

A little more than a week before the statement, Catholic leaders had gathered in Washington to express support for the rights of workers, the poor and immigrants, expressing concerns that some proposed policy changes under the Trump administration could wreak havoc on the economy, the environment and health care policy.

“The church must work in the coming months with unions, workers, the elderly and the poor to counter the growing imperialism of market mechanisms within American public life,” Bishop Robert McElroy of the Diocese of San Diego told an audience on Jan. 10 at The Catholic University of America.

Carol Keehan, D.C., president and chief operating officer of the Catholic Health Association and a key early supporter of the A.C.A., called health care “a basic human right.” She urged “a united voice” from Catholic leaders to say it is “intolerable” for the tens of millions of Americans who receive health insurance

through Obamacare to risk losing their coverage.

The speakers were on hand at a conference called “Erroneous Autonomy: The Dignity of Work,” sponsored by the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies at The Catholic University of America and the A.F.L.-C.I.O.

Cardinal Seán O’Malley of Boston talked about the negative effects of a globalization unmoored from ethical boundaries. While global economic agreements can produce great wealth and lift people out of poverty, he said, fixing the accompanying wage stagnation remains “a human and moral imperative.”

The cardinal, an advisor to Pope Francis, noted that Catholic support for a just wage “is never determined only by factors of supply and demand” but by deeper truths about human dignity. “Catholic teaching about the option for the poor,” he continued, “places us in support of initiatives to raise the minimum wage.”

Bishop McElroy said markets can “serve the common good in society by their creation of wealth, the enhancement of freedom and their service to distributive justice.”

But he said they also have the potential to be “especially destructive when they become surrogates for political choices which diminish support for the elderly, the poor and the marginalized or when they undermine the rights of workers.”

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



People at a rally in New York in July 2016 celebrate the passage of a statewide rise in the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2018.

Learning on the Margins

The final month of 2016 was a chance for new beginnings for refugees and displaced persons in Iraq eager to learn. Jesuit Worldwide Learning, a collaboration of universities, organizations and companies to provide higher education to people living on the margins, officially opened three learning centers in Iraq on Dec. 12, in Khanke and Domiz camps and at the Catholic University of Erbil.

A partner to J.W.L., Jesuit Refugee Service has made continuing education for refugees a priority because it gives them “the tools not only to contribute to their new communities, but also to rebuild their old ones.”

According to J.R.S., the fundamental right to education is often lost to refugees, who face a variety of barriers to education, from overcrowding in schools to xenophobia in host communities. Among refugee children globally, only 36 percent go to secondary school and less than 1 percent have the opportunity to pursue higher education.

Jesuit Worldwide Learning empowers students to become active in their communities. Instead of taking students away from friends and family to attend school, the education is brought to the communities, said Peter Balleis, S.J., J.W.L.’s executive president.

“A lot of wars now are about education,” he said, and resistance to groups like Boko Haram and the Taliban. “The places where there is a knowledge hole, where there’s no internet, the places where education is low, conflicts are high.

“We’re not going to stable places. We’re going to where [education] is needed.”

Wyatt Massey, *O’Hare Fellow*. Twitter: @News4Mass.

Khanke Camp in Iraq is one of the newest locations of Jesuit Worldwide Learning’s satellite campuses.

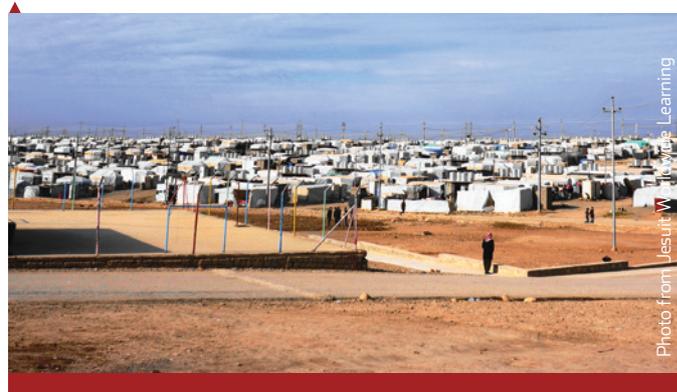


Photo from Jesuit Worldwide Learning

The Soul of Our Nation

A powerful nationalism surges through our country. It points to the feelings of dispossession that have been abroad in our land. It hints of past betrayal. It calls forth sentiments of heartfelt patriotism rooted in the historic legacy of the American experiment in freedom and democracy. It signals a nostalgia for the past and searches for renewed greatness in our nation.

As a new administration and Congress begin, the merger of populism and nationalism at work in the cultural and political currents of the United States compels us to explore deeply the nature of both nationalism and patriotism and to evaluate them in the light of our identity as disciples of Jesus Christ.

A close-up, high-angle photograph of the American flag. The top portion shows the blue field with white stars, while the bottom portion shows the red and white stripes. The flag is draped over a dark, textured surface, possibly a table or desk. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the fabric and the stitching.

Will the United States be defined by unity or exclusion?

By Robert W. McElroy

In Catholic social teaching, the love of country is a virtue. *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* states clearly that “the principle of solidarity requires that men and women of our day cultivate a greater awareness that they are debtors of the society of which they have become a part.” And in his moving message to the people of Poland entitled “My Beloved Countrymen,” Pope John Paul II spoke of true patriotism amid the cauldron of oppression and upheaval: “Love of our motherland unites us and must unite us above all the differences. It has nothing in common with narrow nationalism or chauvinism. It is the right of the human heart. It is the measure of human nobility.”

But if love of country is a virtue and a moral obligation, the nationalistic impulse itself has no moral identity. It can signal the most virtuous patriotism that integrates the love of country into the spectrum of moral obligations that accrue to our humanity, or it can be rooted in pride, isolationism and discrimination.

There are three questions the United States must wrestle with in the coming months in order to insure that the nationalist impulse so prominent in our society today produces a substantive patriotism that is morally sound and unitive for our country.

Who Are “We the People”?

The first of these questions is: Who are “the people” in the United States? Populist movements in American history, and in this most recent election cycle, have raised important and substantial claims of injustice against oppression by elites in economic, political, juridical and cultural life. They have brought to the fore the need for democratic reforms that have empowered the citizenry of the United States in enormously beneficial ways. But populist nationalism has frequently targeted specific marginalized groups in American society—the Irish, blacks, Southern Europeans, Jews, immigrants and the poor. As a consequence, populist nationalism has often been exclusionary and nativist, carrying with it claims that “the people” are really only some of the people who live within the United States.

The recent election campaign was deeply marred by exclusionary rhetoric and proposals that have driven deep wedges into our culture and raised the specter of imposing exclusionary government policies that target specific groups on the margins of our society. It is essential that this nativist element of the nationalist current in our culture, which does not represent a majority of Americans in either political party, be purged from the national debate in the coming months.



An anti-war protester is led from the Senate Judiciary Committee room during the second day of confirmation hearings on the nomination of Senator Jeff Sessions as U.S. attorney general on Jan. 11, 2017.

In its place, the church teaches, must be the principle of solidarity, which “highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples toward an ever more committed unity.” The well-being of our nation cannot be advanced by a search for unity rooted in exclusion. Rather we must seek to heal the cultural divide that is so detrimental to our country’s future by fostering a deep spirit of inclusion and put behind us the ideological and partisan tribalism that has brought us to this continuing national impasse on the most basic issues facing our nation. The Catholic sense of solidarity has been so absent in our nation during the past decade that we have lost our way. The first step to recovery is to rediscover the bonds that tie us all together as a people and to accentuate them in our society, culture and politics.

“Who are the people” in the United States? All of us.

Where Lies America’s Greatness?

The second question that America must confront is: What does greatness mean for the United States? Does this greatness revolve principally around questions of power,



Electoral college tellers count ballots at the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg, Pa., on Dec. 19, 2016.

wealth and success? Or is the greatness we seek founded in the order of justice, freedom, truth and solidarity? In short, is it a material greatness or a greatness of the soul?

The question of American exceptionalism has long been a source of contention in historical and political debate. And this exceptionalism has been characterized in many different ways. But at this moment in our nation's history the most important idea of exceptionalism that we might claim flows from the reality that we as a nation of immigrants are not tied together by connections of blood, but rather by the set of aspirations our founders set forth in 1776 and that they both succeeded in attaining and failed to attain. Thus patriotism for us as Americans is an aspiration renewed in every age by understanding the noble elements of our nation's birth and the defects of its original vision. Our patriotism is not a foundation for pride but an ever-deepening challenge to ennoble our culture, society and government. As Pope Francis reminded us in his address to Congress, America's greatness lies in the freedom proclaimed by Abraham Lincoln, the justice lived out by Dorothy Day, the poignant dream of racial equality articulated by Martin Luther King Jr. and the spiritual richness of Thomas Merton.

Such a greatness seeks to challenge every injustice in our midst—the reality that young black men fear for their security when facing law enforcement, the sense of dispossession felt by young white men without a college educa-

tion the specter of deportation for mothers and fathers and Dreamers and children in the millions, the fear that police face every day trying to protect society, discrimination against Muslims and the economic devastation of family life in the coal country of our nation.

In the coming months there will be efforts from every part of the political spectrum to curtail this expansive vision of American greatness, to reduce it to something parochial, materialistic, divisive or superficial. But fidelity to the dreams and the failures of our founders, and, even more important, to the dignity of the human person and the common good demanded by our Catholic faith, must not allow us to ignore the fundamental reality that greatness for our nation is not a possession or power but an ever-challenging aspiration of the heart and soul.

Nationalism and the International Common Good

The final question our country must answer in relation to the nationalism coursing through our culture is whether that nationalism conceives itself as rooted in the interests of the United States alone, or whether it is connected on a fundamental level with our obligations to the whole of humanity. In surveying the effects of globalization on the world, Pope Benedict lamented, “as society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbors but does not make us brothers.” What are the central bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood that the empirical reality of globalization thrusts upon the people of every nation as members of the human family?

The starting point for identifying the demands of the international common good lies in the pivotal affirmations of our faith that God is the father of the entire human family, that creation is a gift to every man and woman, that the stewardship of our planet belongs by right to all and that war is a massive failure of the entire human family.

Three Key Issue Areas

These teachings point to the obligation of every nation to integrate its policies and the pursuit of its national interests with the good of humanity as a whole, becoming, in the words of Pope Francis, “a community that sacrifices particular interests in order to share in justice and peace, its goods, its interests, its social life.” Parochial nationalism utterly rejects such an integration. Thus a central question



“If love of country is a virtue and a moral obligation, the nationalistic impulse itself has no moral identity.””

for our nation, and especially for the Catholic community, is whether our nation's actions in three key issue areas of foreign policy will be dictated by American self-interest alone or by American interest seen in the context of the international common good.

The first of these issue areas is the global economy. Speaking to the United Nations, Pope Francis was clear in describing the current economic realities of our world that all nations must sacrifice to change: “In effect, a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity leads both to the misuse of available natural resources and to the exclusion of the weak and the disadvantaged. Economic and social exclusion is a complete denial of human fraternity and a grave offense against human rights...” In the vision of economic life that the pope has so powerfully presented to the world, grotesque levels of inequality, unemployment, dire poverty and malnutrition constitute the wholesale violation of core elements of an authentic substantive global common good. They are compounded by the instrumentalization of the human person through globalized markets in human trafficking, the sexual exploitation of children, slave labor and the drug and weapons trades.

The second area of challenge between nationalism and Catholic social teaching centers on the global environment. In “Laudato Si” Pope Francis sounds a fire bell to the world about the environmental crisis looming for our

world in climate change, the deterioration of biodiversity and the loss of farmlands and water for the poorest peoples of the world. The pope is clear that the only pathway forward lies in international cooperation designed to confront the destructive trajectories that have been inflicted upon our common home by human choice. “An interdependent world not only makes us more conscious of the negative effects of certain lifestyles and models of production and consumption that affect us all; more important, it motivates us to ensure that solutions are proposed from a global perspective, and not simply to defend the interests of a few countries. Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan.”

The third major area of Catholic social teaching that conflicts with nationalism concerns the responsibility of all peoples for the refugees in the world. It was this responsibility that brought Pope Francis to the island of Lampedusa in the earliest days of his pontificate to remember in prayer those hundreds of refugees who had drowned seeking freedom from oppression and suffering. Recalling the story of Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis, Francis declared: “God asks each one of us: Where is the blood of your brother that cries out to me?... Today no one in the world feels responsible for this; we have lost the sense of fraternal responsibility.” In a world that is confronting the largest refugee crisis in more than six decades, the nationalism surging



CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano, handout

Pope Francis addresses a joint meeting of Congress at the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Sept. 24, 2015.

through the United States categorically denies just that sense of responsibility for refugees that Francis underscores. This is what passes for nationalism in a country that has historically distinguished itself as being a haven for refugees.

The Task Ahead

The Catholic vote was pivotal in the 2016 election. Now the Catholic community must be pivotal in bringing the vision of the church's social teaching into the dialogue that will unfold in the coming months. That dialogue is immensely enriched by the new acceptance within the presidency and the Congress of the right to life for the unborn. It must also be enriched by a rearticulation of what patriotism means for the citizens of our nation: a patriotism that recognizes that every member of our society constitutes equally "the people," a patriotism that sees greatness not in power or wealth but as a moral and spiritual aspiration founded in justice, freedom and solidarity; and a patriotism that advances America's aims in the world in a manner that enhances the dignity and integral human development of all peoples.

Most Rev. Robert W. McElroy is bishop of San Diego, Calif.

The Call of Politics

*From Pope Francis' address
to Congress, Sept. 24, 2015*

We are asked to summon the courage and the intelligence to resolve today's many geopolitical and economic crises. Even in the developed world, the effects of unjust structures and actions are all too apparent. Our efforts must aim at restoring hope, righting wrongs, maintaining commitments, and thus promoting the well-being of individuals and of peoples. We must move forward together, as one, in a renewed spirit of fraternity and solidarity, cooperating generously for the common good.

The challenges facing us today call for a renewal of that spirit of cooperation, which has accomplished so much good throughout the history of the United States. The complexity, the gravity and the urgency of these challenges demand that we pool our resources and talents, and resolve to support one another, with respect for our differences and our convictions of conscience.

In this land, the various religious denominations have greatly contributed to building and strengthening society. It is important that today, as in the past, the voice of faith continue to be heard, for it is a voice of fraternity and love, which tries to bring out the best in each person and in each society. Such cooperation is a powerful resource in the battle to eliminate new global forms of slavery, born of grave injustices which can be overcome only through new policies and new forms of social consensus.

Politics is, instead, an expression of our compelling need to live as one, in order to build as one the greatest common good: that of a community which sacrifices particular interests in order to share, in justice and peace, its goods, its interests, its social life. I do not underestimate the difficulty that this involves, but I encourage you in this effort....

We must resolve now to live as nobly and as justly as possible, as we educate new generations not to turn their back on our "neighbors" and everything around us. Building a nation calls us to recognize that we must constantly relate to others, rejecting a mindset of hostility in order to adopt one of reciprocal subsidiarity, in a constant effort to do our best. I am confident that we can do this.



Vows of Friendship

By Eve Tushnet

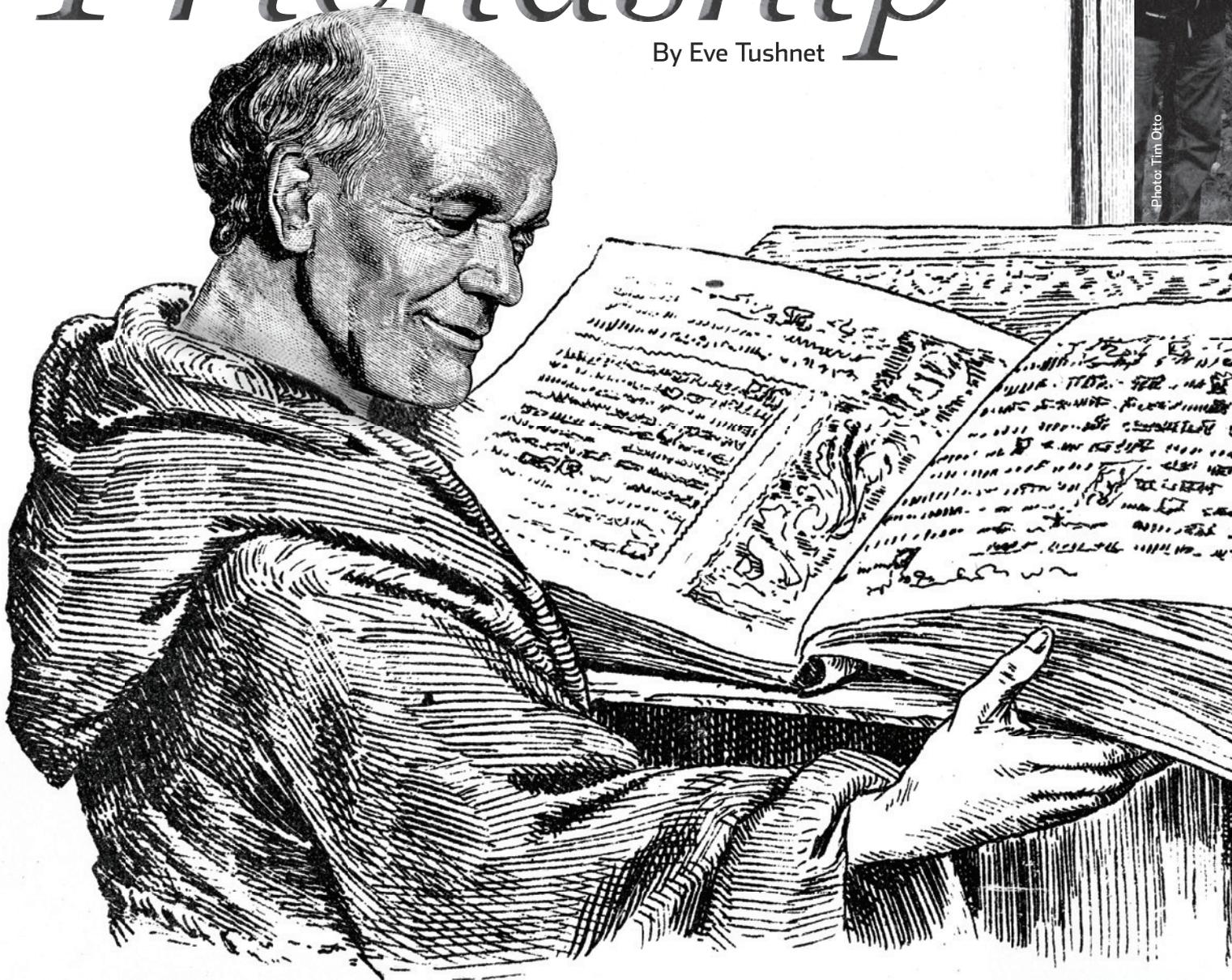


Photo: Tim Otto



*How ancient traditions
have inspired modern-day
Christians to forge new
bonds of commitment*



Tim Otto found the Church of the Sojourners in San Francisco almost by accident. When he was a lonely little kid, one of their members, an artist, tried to teach him to paint. (“I was an utter failure,” he remembers.) When he grew up, he began to see in Sojourners, a Christian intentional community, a form of discipleship and an “art of love” that he admired and needed.

Sojourners is part of a movement sometimes called “the new monasticism,” which Mr. Otto describes as “trying to take the model of the monastics and live it as laypeople.” Members of these movements live communally, often in poor areas, bringing together people from different walks of life in service to God. Mr. Otto cites the Benedictine vows of “conversion, stability and obedience” as a major inspiration—and the covenant Sojourners members profess emphasizes obedience to a degree that is startling in a hyper-individualistic culture. Conversion, Mr. Otto explains, comes through “disciplines like daily morning prayer, simplicity, worship and study and service.”

Members make real sacrifices to stay with the community, even turning down higher-paying jobs that would require them to move away. They share finances to a great extent and limit their personal spending, creating equality even when some members make large salaries and others are not able to work. But Mr. Otto notes that “the deepest integration of rich and poor” comes because so many people drawn to this way of life are going through severe struggles: with addiction, with mental health, with loneliness or confusion. “We’re all rich and poor in certain ways, so [we] share whatever we have.”

Mr. Otto, who is now a co-pastor at Sojourners and the author of *Inhabiting the Church: Biblical Wisdom for a New Monasticism*, suggests that married, parenting and single people benefit from living together. “Both sides are tempted to romanticize the other,” he said. “Married couples think, ‘Oh, when I was single I had so much freedom, and it was so nice to just make my own decisions.’ But then they see the single people who really have a deep longing for marriage, and that’s kind of a reality check.”

He added that for single people, seeing married life up close can be a revelation. “My sister is married with three kids and lives in suburbia, and I feel for her,” he commented. “She has so little support and her life ends up being so insanely busy. If she were more connected and had committed single people in her life, or even more robust relationships with other families, then some of that would be alleviated and life would be more human.”

Despite the challenges of marriage, it remains a haven for love and care—and, to many, it seems like the only haven. A passage in Justice Anthony Kennedy’s majority opinion in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which in 2014 made same-sex marriage the law of the land, offers one look at why this might be so:

Marriage responds to the universal fear that a lonely person might call out only to find no one there. It offers the hope of companionship and understanding and assurance that while both still live there will be someone to care for the other....

No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were.

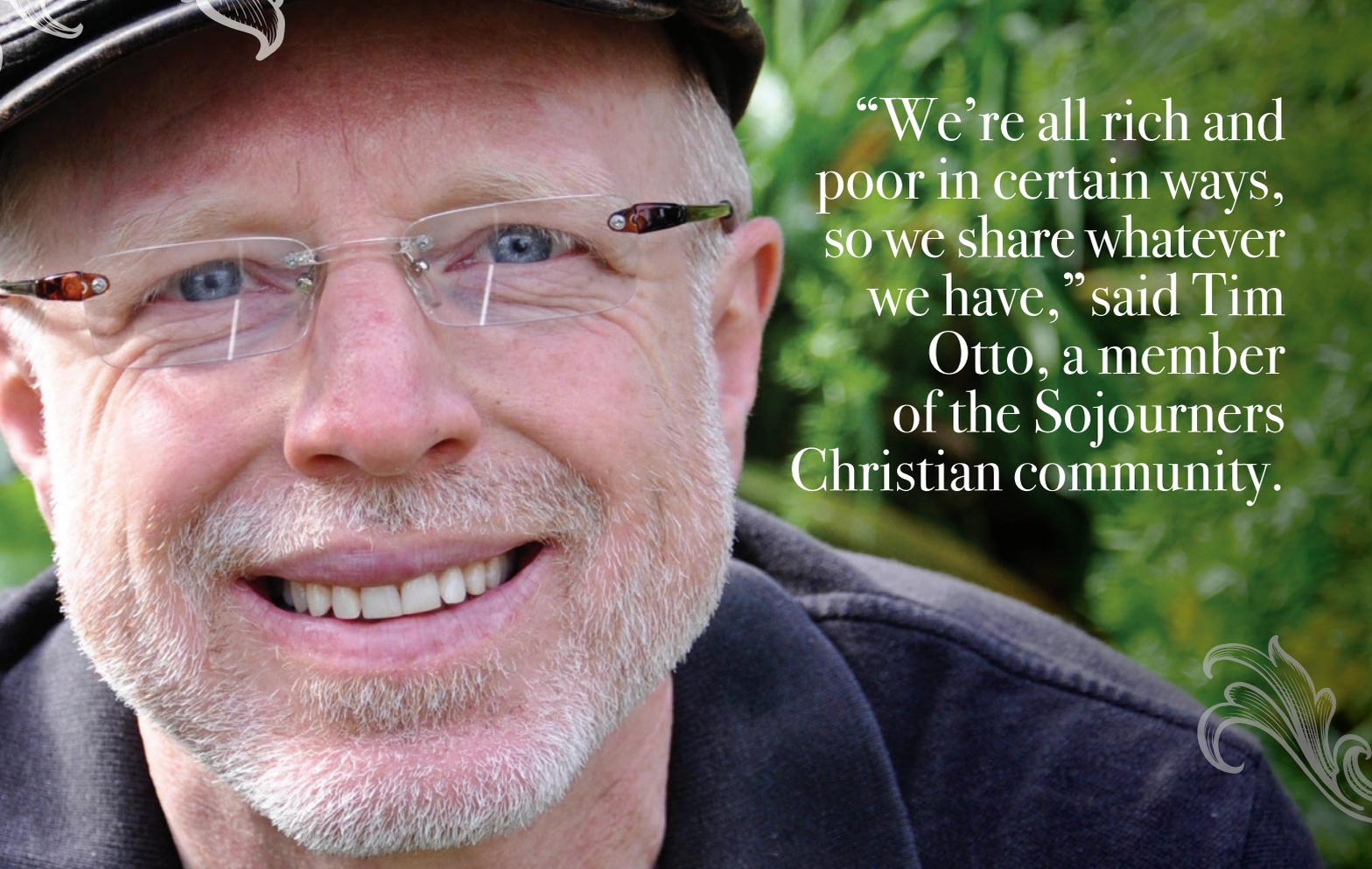
These words resonated with many people. Couples have even used Justice Kennedy’s words in their wedding vows.

On the day the *Obergefell* decision was handed down, I happened to see a short Pixar film about a lonesome, cartoon volcano who sings every day about how he longs for “someone to *lava*.” He is surrounded by happy, coupled gulls, turtles and fish, but he has no mate of his own. In despair he sinks to the bottom of the sea—before he is rescued by a lady volcano who can love and be loved by him.

Obergefell violates the traditional Christian sexual ethic—we have all heard this. But perhaps Pixar’s “Lava” does too. Whatever the other merits of either, the Supreme Court decision and the cartoon highlight the popular belief that marriage is the only form of truly committed love between adults and therefore the universal human calling and sole alternative to desolate loneliness. Yet this worldview lacks two elements that any fully Christian sexual ethic must contain.



Photo courtesy of Tim Otto



“We’re all rich and poor in certain ways, so we share whatever we have,” said Tim Otto, a member of the Sojourners Christian community.

The first of these haunting absences is the honor given to celibacy. Virginity and vowed celibacy, the making of one’s body a secret garden for God, have been honored states in the church since Jesus himself died a virgin. Solitude—the absence of human union—can free us for a profounder union with God. Lack of family obligations can free us to serve an entire community. In a fully Christian vision (though an admittedly less marketable one), that volcano might have sung his canticles to his Lord and rejoiced.

But also absent from the view of marriage as the singularly worthy adult relationship are the nonmarital familial bonds between adults. What we might call the Christian ecosystem relies on monastics (think of how much great Christian literature takes place in the shadow of the monastery, from *Kristin Lavransdatter* to *Brideshead Revisited*) and also on kinship bonds of friendship and godparenthood. This has been true from the moment Jesus on the cross gave Mary into the care of John, the beloved disciple. Jesus’ devoted friendship with John made him a part of the Holy Family, so to speak. Yet today marriage is the only way to make another adult your kin—in the eyes of the state, your parents, your employer or even your church.

A society in which marriage is the only way for adults

to pledge lasting love and care to one another is a society in which marriages themselves are weaker. It is a society in which parents have less help, children fewer havens. It is a society in which many adults feel themselves isolated, drifting and useless. It can also be especially challenging environment for single people hoping to marry eventually, or for individuals who remain unmarried, including gay and lesbian Christians trying to live out church teaching on sexuality. The Sojourners intentional community is one example of people working to find new solutions and new connections. In the margins of our society, Christians are trying to renew old forms of love and forge new ones, exploring what alternative forms kinship can offer our churches, what obstacles they face and what they need in order to flourish.

Covenant Friendship

Friendships sealed by covenant have an ancient, complex history. King David made just such a covenant with Jonathan, using familiar rituals like exchanging armor. For most of Christian history pairs of friends would pledge to care for each other and each other’s families. The bonds forged in this way varied widely across time and culture and were sometimes solely practical. Two men might have

their households share a common purse and a common table. But often these friendships were based in genuine love and had spiritual consequences that might persist even after death. Alan Bray's historical study *The Friend* found friends pledging to care for one another's children and to have Masses said for the soul of the friend who dies first. Friends might be buried together or take vows of friendship on the church steps before going inside to exchange the Kiss of Peace and receive the Eucharist together. Friendship's bonds were so deep and binding that ballads and stories depicted the violent clash between obligations to friend and to spouse.

Wesley Hill's book *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian* includes the story of having an Anglican minister bless his friendship with a married couple. Unlike ancient covenant friendships and medieval "wedded brotherhood," which impose obligations lasting even after death, this blessing acknowledged that the friends might part.

Mr. Hill, who is in his 30s, said, "The formal blessing we received made the friendship feel like more of a given. In Dana Spiotta's novel, *Innocents and Others*, the narrator says, 'Unlike a marriage, a friendship could be twisted and one-sided and make no sense at all, but if it had years and years behind it, the friendship could not be discarded.' I think that idea of friendship being non-discardable is what the blessing says to me."

Adrian and Mel Smith, the couple, both in their 30s, who had their friendship blessed with Mr. Hill, notes that they are all still unsure what level of commitment the arrangement requires, especially since they may end up living and working in different cities. This uncertainty is understandable, as the trio has few modern models to follow. Although covenant friendship is one of the most historically and scripturally grounded forms of nonmarital kinship, it may be the least traveled path today. But the story of Mel, Aidan and Hill suggests that the bonds of friendship can create wider familial and communal ties across generations.

Godparenting

When I spoke with the three friends at their home near Pittsburgh, I was surprised that the relationship they wanted to talk about most was not their blessed friendship, but godparenting, since Mr. Hill had recently become the godfather of the Smiths' firstborn. "The significance of godparenthood for us is that that's something that the church recognizes, it's sacramentally recog-

nized," Aidan said. "There's a greater significance to that. Of course Wes is our friend, but we're also looking for further ways to bind us together."

Mr. Hill added that becoming a godparent "doesn't solve the question of long-term living situations," but acknowledges it means that "we will always be connected," whatever the future holds. "For me as a single guy [the friendship] still raises the question of, 'What does my day-to-day life look like?' I'd like to keep living with them, and I'd like to share a life with people," he says, but he also wants "Aidan and Mel to feel like they have the freedom to follow their calling."

Godparenting may be one of the alternative forms of kinship that is most often underestimated, but as Mel, Aidan and Hill pointed out, it can be among the most powerful. I first noticed the practical side of godparenting in my volunteer work at a crisis pregnancy center. Now and then a client would talk about her deep relationship with her godmother, or her obligations to support and help her god-sister (someone with whom she shared a godparent). God-sisters can be a kind of spiritual cousin: When you need them, it is all hands on deck.

Claire Gilligan, godmother to two children, said: "My godparents growing up were close friends of my parents. They had a daughter one year older than me, and my parents were her godparents and her parents were *my* godparents." (*The Friend* notes how common this arrangement once was during the middle and early modern ages for interweaving families.) Ms. Gilligan, 30, says it is "akin to being an aunt or uncle. I have extra responsibilities to these kids; as much as I love my friends' other children, these are the ones I have the reason to take the time and spend the money for."

Beyond the parties and the presents, though, there is an undeniable spiritual bond. At her godson's baptism in the Melkite Church, "The whole thing was [about] two hours long," Ms. Gilligan, who lives in New York, said. "I held him for the first third of the whole service, including when he was baptized. Father dunked him in the baptismal water and put him directly into my arms.... Then mom took him away and fed him, and the godfather held him for the last third, including for his Communion."

Photo: Lisa Beth Anderson



Wesley Hill's friendship with a married couple was blessed by an Anglican minister. The blessing "made the friendship feel like more of a given," he said.

These physical transfers of the child between parents and godparents helped her see this as a "spiritual family." But bonds made by faith may not last if the faith does not last. One of the godfathers of Ms. Gilligan's godchildren "fell away from his faith," she said, leaving her feeling "almost like a single parent."

Celibate Partnership

For some men and women, whose closest relationships do not follow their churches' model for marriage, celibate partnership offers a solution. Most celibate partnerships I know of are between two men or two women who share financial and familial obligations, support each other emotionally and view one another as family. All the people I know in this way of life identify as part of the L.G.B.T. community, and several—though definitely not all—of the partnerships started as a sexually active gay relationship.

And yet under the surface, celibate partnerships are deeply countercultural and widely varied. Partners draw freely on other kinds of relationship as models. Jimmy (not his real name), 55, notes that he will refer to his partner of 13 years as his "partner" sometimes, other times his "friend," but both terms can be misinterpreted.

"It's a very special friendship," he said, "a deep and

committed friendship." His love for his partner is "romantic"—and it is deeply practical. "We support each other's families. We also own things in common. We have wills that leave our property to each other. We have medical power of attorney," he said. He told me the story of the rings he and his partner wear, and described hearing a talk on marriage at his men's fellowship and thinking, "I can use this in my relationship." But he also notes that he seeks always to relate to his partner out of *agape* rather than *eros*.

Jimmy did not plan any of this: "We didn't have any rules. Everything sort of fell into place—it just seemed natural." There was no formal moment or vow of commitment, and he said that unlike with a marriage, "If we grew into different people and it no longer made sense to live together, we'd stop." But he quickly clarified, "That hasn't happened and we don't expect it to." (He noted that they have interwoven their finances and extended families to a degree that would make parting difficult.) I asked if he had any experiences—at his Catholic parish in Hong Kong, at work, with the families—where being in an unusual kind of relationship was difficult for him, and he said, "I can't think of anything, really."

"I'm happier than I've ever been," he said. And then quietly and emotionally added, "Very happy."



“A society in which marriage is the only way for adults to pledge lasting love and care to one another is a society in which marriages themselves are weaker.”

Mark (not his real name), 47, has had a harder experience with celibate partnership, which illustrates some of the difficulties of trying to live a new, almost-unknown form of love. His partnership broke up, after he had moved to South Carolina and switched jobs in order for them to stay together, in part because he and his partner had different understandings of the relationship. Disputes over how they should describe themselves to others—*Are we a couple, are we partners?*—were the outward sign of deeper divisions.

They had started with some romantic feelings for each other, which Mark's partner was especially uncomfortable about. At first they were praying together regularly. Mark noted wryly, “Towards the end, it eventually fell away, which is probably part of the reason why everything went to hell!”

Mark also mentioned that he is working on “not being so concerned about what other people think.” The pressure to keep others from thinking he was part of a gay couple was one of the things that drove the two apart. His partner's family “didn't want to entertain the idea” of their son living with a man he loved, even if it was not a sexual relationship; his own family was “more open to [it as a] crazy thing that you're doing, but okay.”

Mark still sees celibate partnership and covenanted friendship as good ways of life. Like many celibate partners, he looks to religious orders for inspiration. While still in his relationship, he and

his partner had discussed creating a small community, but it never happened. He said, “One of the things about these kinds of relationships is that while there may not be physical intimacy, it's learning to lower your psychological and emotional guards with a person. In a certain sense it's having that emotional, psychological nakedness with a person that you may not be able to have with everybody else.” On a deeper level, he said that he and his partner should have engaged in “some kind of ministry, something that's outward-focusing.” Directing their attentions to others could help their relationship from becoming “navel-gazing, for lack of a better word.”

In medieval England friends who had made covenants with each other were sometimes referred to as “wedded brothers,” drawing on two incompatible forms of kinship in order to suggest something of the depth of their bond. In a similar way, celibate partners often use both marriage and monasticism as guides for a way of life as intense and challenging as both of those better-known vocations.

Intentional Community

That monastic inspiration continues to attract individuals to the Sojourners community. Zoe Mullery, 56, formally made her covenant with Sojourners in 1998. She found the community through a friend of the family. One of the most “beautiful” things about community life, she said, is also one of the hardest. “Whoever comes,

whoever's in that church, that's who God is giving you to love," she said. "Being in community has redefined the way I think about friendship, because it's not about finding these soulmate kind of friends. It's really about investing deeply in the people who you end up having in your household."

When one of their founding members was suddenly dying of leukemia, the community was able to be at his hospital bedside around the clock. They sang together by the hospital bed. They built his casket and made a quilt from some of his clothes donated by his widow. "People were crying and telling stories, making food," Ms. Mullery said. "There was this sense of, 'We know what to do. We know how to be together and how to honor him.'" The community also made it possible for Ms. Mullery to adopt a daughter after about a year of intense discussion. "I just can't imagine raising a kid outside of this kind of tight-knit supportive community," she said.

Within the Catholic world there are many communities, like the Catholic Worker, that live and work and share their everyday together. But there are also groups that do not live in community but still share deep bonds. One young Catholic in the United Kingdom described finding this sense of belonging in her neocatechumenal community: "We don't have promises or vows, but...my parents have known many of the people in their community for nearly 30 years and they really are like extended family to us," Phoebe Lim, 19, said. They are people with whom she can share everything, "without judgment from them, only love and support and offers of prayer and advice." Her community has supported her through her own struggles as well as those of her family.

She echoes Tim Otto: "It is quite like being in a family in a sense, mainly because you can't just avoid people if you really don't like them." Community, she says, is "supposed to help you to see that there are some people you just really can't stand, but in trying to deepen your faith and trust more in Christ you can learn to deal with and love them anyway."

• • •

Robert Louis Stevenson once called marriage "at its lowest...a sort of friendship recognized by the police." The police (or human resources, or the hospital, or your mom) may not recognize your relationship with your Alcoholics Anonymous sponsor, or the veteran with whom you served, even though these relationships continue to save your life. Many people find that their closest kinship bonds go unrec-

ognized when it comes to health insurance or caretaking. This is a place where parishes could do so much good simply by noticing "alternative" kinship bonds and supporting them: praying with and bringing food to a bereaved friend or someone caring for a disabled partner, for example.

As with marriage, these alternative bonds come with many challenges and questions. Bonds are more fragile in a society with high geographical and religious mobility. Who will go with you when you move? Some of these forms of love lack formal commitments; this can make it hard to be clear about exactly which obligations a person is taking on. That fuzziness allows friendship to flower naturally. But it can also lead to serious pain when one person thinks you are a devoted friend and you think you are an acquaintance. Vows are a way of assenting to one life and accepting that you will never have another, different life—so you can stop obsessing about it.

Several people I spoke with emphasized that they had not had any expectations for their way of life—or they had to lose the expectations they did have. They did not feel that they had successfully achieved friendship, partnership, community membership. These were things they received through luck or Providence. Love did not solve their problems; it was as likely to sharpen their loneliness as to relieve it. As Zoe Mullery said, "You'd think [community] would deal with your loneliness better—and it doesn't." They are grateful, not satisfied.

The God who emerges in their words is a weird and unpredictable God. It is a God who wants you to love others, to make your life a gift, but who offers no guarantees that anybody but him will take you up on the offer. This God may call you to break societal norms but give you no guidance in how to do it well. This God will use your loneliness and insecurity to drive you to love others, but then make you see that no human being—and maybe nothing in this life—can satisfy your hunger to be loved. In the battle between solitude and community, community wins—even contemplatives rejoice in and suffer the intense relationships found in a monastery. Yet it might be said that our willingness to accept and sacrifice for our community obligations must rest on the bedrock of our solitude with God.

Eve Tushnet is the author of *Gay and Catholic: Accepting My Sexuality, Finding Community, Living My Faith and Amends: A Novel*. *Twitter: @evetushnet*.



Art by Andrew Zbihlyj

“

Like every child, my daughter is a gift—but at first a hard gift to accept.”

the grace of God’s presence, make it possible for new life and love to grow out of the destruction human beings wreak. My sense of solidarity with other sinners, and my trust in divine grace, guided me to renew my marriage and to seek some kind of relationship with the baby’s mother, whose complicated feelings about her future I could only imagine. And it motivated me to protect and care for the baby who, unlike the adults in her life, had done no wrong. I knew Jesus Christ had loved and welcomed children and continues to call and empower his disciples to do the same. That night, I responded to the fraction anthem by praying—and starting to trust—that by God’s mercy, with God’s help, I could love my husband’s daughter as my own.

My family history deepened my resolve that this child should not suffer for adults’ mistakes. My own mother had left her first husband after a short, unhappy marriage, when she was pregnant with me, her only child. He was never heard from again, and I never met him. When I was 5, my mother married a man who claimed me as his own. From their example, I knew adults could choose to form a family under less than ideal circumstances. And from my parents’ struggles with anxiety and the depression that eventually led to my mother’s suicide, I knew that despite their good intentions, adults’ troubles could unfairly burden their children.

My husband and I had material advantages over my parents: We were older than my mother was when she precipitously ended her first marriage, and we enjoyed better health and a level of middle-class economic security my family had never reached. Just as vital were our emotional and spiritual resources: our love and respect for each other, shaken but intact; family and a wide community of friends; and my faith, for which my agnostic husband and I both gained a new appreciation in this crisis.

As I prayed, help arrived in the form of a fraction anthem that popped into my head and ran through it virtually all night: “Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.... Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.... Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us your peace.” I had sung those words in hundreds of Eucharists and they had never failed to move me. But that sleepless, tormented night, they struck an even deeper chord in my soul.

I knew I was one of the sinners so beloved by the Lamb of God that he had lived, submitted to an excruciating death and risen again for our sakes. Like my remorseful husband, like the baby’s mother, like every person past the age of reason, I had through malice, negligence or weakness done things to harm my relationships with God and other people. And I believed the forgiveness God offers all penitents, and

“ *I have made sure our daughter knows God loves her and everyone.*”

Until then, I had thought of Christian faith largely as a set of practices: liturgy, prayer, Bible study and the sharing of my time, energy and resources with anyone in need. I had not conceived of these practices as a training program preparing me for the most formidable challenge of my adult life. But they had indeed trained me, both to rely on God and to seek to live in ways that reflected God’s compassionate, creative love.

So I moved forward doing both. As my husband and I waited for the baby’s arrival, we worked to change the patterns, for which we were both responsible, and release the grudges, which we both held, that had allowed us to drift apart and endangered our marriage. Like other expectant parents, we rewrote our budget and revised our wills. We wrote letters to our family and friends and to my parish, informing them of the child on her way, and were overwhelmed by their love and support. My ministry offered challenging and amusing moments: the bittersweet joy of blessing a young, pregnant couple; the wide-eyed gaze of my congregation as I preached on the prodigal son, forgiveness and reconciliation. I prayed every day for the baby, which was easy, and her mother, which was harder—and more necessary. Presiding at the Eucharist brought me back weekly to the reality at the heart of our faith: that as the bread and wine are blessed, transformed, broken and then shared among Christ’s people, the grace of the sacrament allows our broken lives also to be transformed and our gifts to be shared in the name of love.

Such sharing can be painful; that is why we need to train for it. The afternoon I learned of our daughter’s birth, I wept more bitterly than I had since my mother’s death 15 years earlier. Then I thanked God for the baby’s safe arrival, asked for continued strength and that evening toasted her new life with my husband and friends.

Our daughter was a few weeks old when my husband first met her, and 3 months old when I first held her. My husband took the lead in caring for the baby when she was with us, feeding her, changing her diapers, bathing and comforting her. It was his job as her father and the surest way to forge the parent-child bond we both believe is her birthright. But I made sure she bonded with me, too, by feeding, holding and reading to her. And like every parent I know, as I did the work of love, I fell in love.

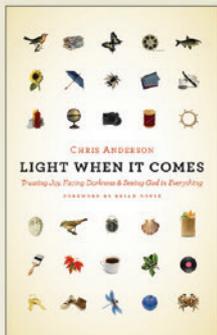
Six years later, our family life looks very different from anything we could have imagined. Our daughter lives with her mother in a city hundreds of miles from us. The time we spend with her is precious—a few days a month, a couple of weeks in summer—but far from the daily contact we long for, while her mother experiences all the intensity, positive and negative, of single parenthood. The relationship among us three adults is a work in progress, but we share one overarching desire: to help our daughter grow up feeling loved and loving others.

Which she does. When I tell her, “You’re my sweet girl,” and she replies with a smile, “You’re mine!”; when she offers her tiny hand as we walk to the playground or pool; when she leaps into her father’s arms and wraps herself around him, it is clear this child knows she is treasured.

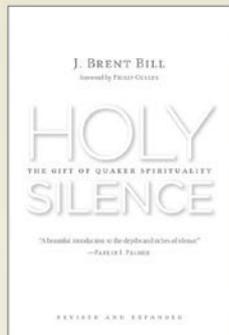
And not just by Mommy, Daddy and Rhonda. I have made sure our daughter knows God loves her and everyone. When she stays with my husband and me, an icon of Jesus welcoming the children hangs over her bed. She loves to look at it, and she knows she is among that crowd of beloved little people. When I trace a cross on her forehead before bed and whenever we say good-bye, she knows it is the sign of Jesus, God’s son, who healed and fed people and taught us how to live together. She knows that after he was killed, he was also raised up to show us love is the most powerful thing there is. When she is older, maybe she will realize her life shows that too.

Rhonda Mawhood Lee is an Episcopal priest, writer and spiritual director in North Carolina.

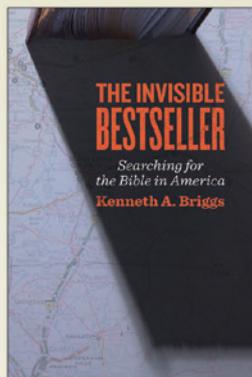
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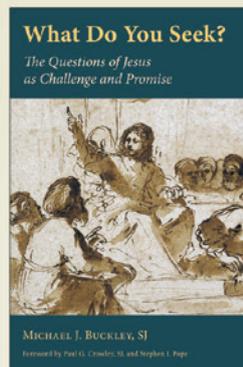
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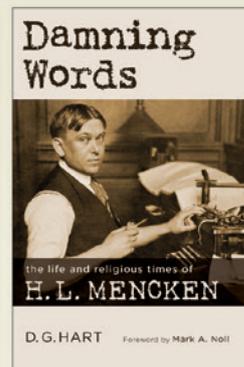
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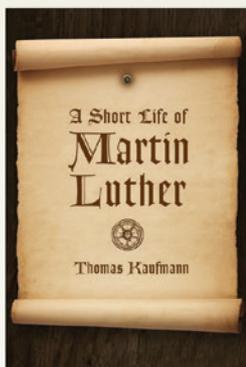
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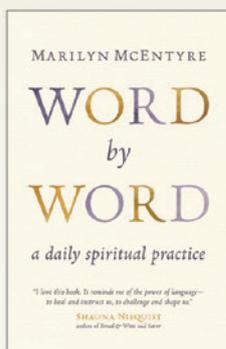
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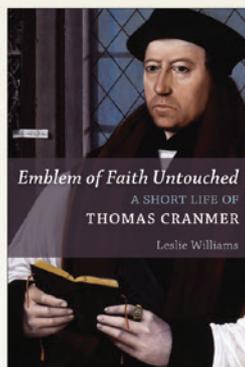
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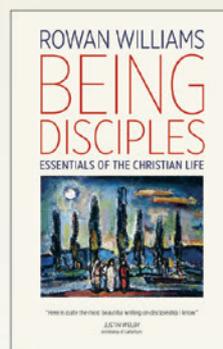
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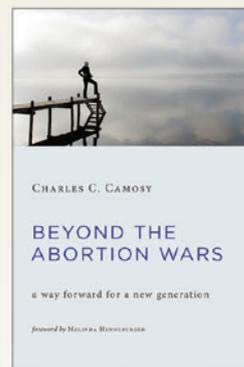
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A Re-Appreciation: The Imitation of Christ

St. Thomas More considered it one of the three books that everyone should own. After the Bible, the *Imitation of Christ* is the most widely translated and circulated book in the history of Christianity. First issued in 1418, it existed in more than 800 manuscripts before the turn of the century. Over 600 editions were published between 1500 and 1650 in many languages, including, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish, English, Chinese, Czech, Greek, Hungarian, Japanese, Ukrainian and Polish.

The author, Thomas à Kempis, born in 1380, was a German canon regular of the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes. (Canons regular live in community under a common rule and engage in a ministry of liturgy and sacraments.) He had been schooled by the Brothers of the Common Life, a community that embraced the *Devotio Moderna's* call for the apostolic renewal of the church. The movement stressed the re-appropriation of genuine pious practices, meditation and devout cultivation of the interior life.

Although written for religious, the book remained a best-seller through the centuries largely because of its simplicity. Sir Richard W. Southern, a medieval historian, called the *Imitation* “one of the few books which breaks down without an effort the barrier between the medieval and modern worlds.”

The classic's seminal effect on St. Ignatius Loyola is recorded by the Portuguese Jesuit Gonçalves da Câmara. Ignatius discovered the *Imitation* while at Manresa, and “since then he had never wished to read any other devotional book. He recommended it to all he had dealings with...; after dinner and at other times he would open it at random and he always came across something that was close to his heart at that time and which he needed.”

St. Thérèse of Lisieux cites the *Imitation* 14 times in her writings. The sculptor Auguste Rodin found that when he replaced each occurrence of the word “Jesus” in the *Imitation* with “sculpture,” every passage remained true.

Originally written in Latin, in meter and rhyme, the style of the *Imitation of Christ* is neither linear nor systematic. It is rather, in the words of St. Francis de Sales, “a charming labyrinth of piety.” The four books comprising the *Imitation* were initially independent treatises.



Title page of the *Imitation of Christ*, printed in 1505

The *Imitation of Christ* asks our question: “What sort of life is this, from which troubles and miseries are never absent, where all things are full of snares?” The voice of Christ answers: “I am wont to visit my elect in two ways—by temptation and consolation.... When you think you are far from me, then often I am very near you.” We sense the exceptional character of this mystical gem in a prayer to Christ: “Left to myself, I am nothing but total weakness. But if you look upon me for an instant, I am at once made strong and filled with new joy.”

I fell in love with the *Imitation* as a teenager. Upon my decision as a sophomore to transfer to a minor seminary, my friend Bobbianne Phillips gave me a copy of the book, a gift from her encouraging mother. The inside cover bears her name and the date she acquired it, 1947. It is the book on my nightstand.

The prophetic quality of the *Imitation* is confirmed in the words of Pope Francis: “I believe that the secret [the Lord used to reveal his mystery] lies in the way Jesus looked at people, seeing beyond their weaknesses and failings.”

Peter John Cameron, O.P., teaches homiletics at St. Joseph's Seminary in Dunwoodie, N.Y., and is the editor in chief of *Magnificat*.

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‘The Young Pope’ The Catholic art that Catholics need—but might not want

By Nick Ripatrazone



“I don’t want any more part-time believers,” Jude Law declares as Pius XIII in “The Young Pope.” “I want fanatics for God.”

“I am a contradiction,” says Pope Pius XIII, born Lenny Belardo—the first American pope. HBO’s sleek, provocative new series **The Young Pope** suggests paradox is part and parcel of Catholicism. Fictional and real pontiffs resist our attempts to classify and simplify them.

Written and directed by Paolo Sorrentino, and starring Jude Law and Diane Keaton, “The Young Pope” is visually arresting, and occasionally surreal. Dream sequences are stretched to their limit. In the first episode, Pius gives a lengthy, heretical opening address to a swelled, shocked crowd at St. Peter’s before Sorrentino cuts back to reality. The dream serves its purpose: Pius will push the envelope. He knows the power of surprise.

Although provocative, “The Young Pope” is not perverse; like Ron Hansen’s novel *Mariette in Ecstasy*, the show plays with sensuality and sexuality but is never gratuitous. As Pius, Jude Law is handsome, confident, cold and given to aphoristic pronouncements. He is gifted with many great lines. When the longtime papal cook, a nun, greets Pius as she would a son, he rebukes her. “Friendly relationships are ambiguous,” he says, but “formal relationships are as clear as spring water.” Pius was able to manipulate hearts and minds during the papal conclave because the cardinals thought he would be malleable. Once in office, he is staid. A proud traditionalist, he proclaims, “God overwhelms; God frightens”; “I don’t want any more part-time believers, I want fanatics

for God”; and “Liturgy is no longer a social engagement.”

Pithy lines like these speak to a peculiar success of the show. “The Young Pope” will draw in both secular and Catholic audiences for curiously similar reasons. By drawing attention to the performative aspects of his position—the theatrics of the papacy—Pius forces those around him to take nothing for granted. He is not what people think he will be. There can be no relaxation in his presence.

Pius is not a stand-in for Pope Francis, but the analogy is instructive. Many secular champions of Francis’ environmental encyclical “Laudato Si” are disappointed by his allegiance to doctrine and tradition. (He has defended the encyclical “Humanae Vitae,” for instance, with its prohibition of birth control, and he affirmed the teaching that reserves the priesthood to men.) Yet Francis pushes back against simplistic labeling. As does Pius. Although young, Pius is drawn to tradition, pomp and circumstance. He embraces the spectacle of his position, but as a spectacle performed on his own terms.

Part of this appreciation for spectacle might come from his fractured origins. Law plays Pius as complicated and alluring, and slowly develops his vulnerability. “I’m an orphan,” he says, “and orphans are never young.” He grew up in an orphanage from age 7 onward, raised by Sister Mary, who joins him in the Vatican. Played by Diane Keaton, Mary is so close with him, so influential, that people think she is the real pope.

But vulnerable is not the same as sentimental. Pius can be flippant. When presented with an elaborate breakfast spread, he dismisses the arrangement, quipping, “All I have in the morning is a Cherry Coke Zero.” He is also Machiavellian, punishing all slights, and even makes decisions based on the perceived sexual orientations of those in the Vatican.

Although his portrayal is fascinating on many levels, Law never quite convinces that Pius is, well, pious. This is not a deficiency of Law’s performance but rather a testament to it.

Maybe Pius is not a conventional man of God. He is ambitious, conceited and probably heretical. (Pius tells Don Tommaso, the papal confessor, “I don’t have any sins to confess”; while describing the conclave vote, Pius admits that his prayer was “Lord, I don’t care with what means, licit or illicit, they’re all fine—just let it be me, not them.”)

Might one be manipulative in earthly matters—in the institutional machinations of the church—yet also be pious? Does that mean he is really not pious? I am not sure, and the series leaves that question open. In one subplot, an old-guard cardinal, Voiello, tries to create a scandal to ensnare Pius. Esther, a beautiful, devoted woman married to one of the Swiss Guards, previously had a secret affair with one of the priests who is now an assistant to Pius. Voiello uses Esther’s past to blackmail her into seducing the pope.

Without giving too much away, how Pius responds to the seduction speaks to the complexity of his char-

Photo courtesy of HBO



Sister Mary, played by Diane Keaton, is so close with Pius that people think she is the real pope.

acter, as well as to the depth and nuance the show comfortably lives in.

Cinema's fascination with Catholicism has mostly been focused on its supernatural elements, such as the visceral ritual of exorcism, and on the marked juxtaposition of cassocked priests walking among the poor. The concerns of "The Young Pope" are more material and corporeal than mystical. Like Ron Hansen's novel, in which a young nun is drawn into a nearly erotic, though nonetheless chaste relationship with Christ, it makes us reconsider the relationships that we often maintain between sex, sensuality and belief. Law's character is attractive, and the director knows it. Shots are framed and defined by the pope's appearance, so much so that we flirt with idolizing his character. Yet in another way, the series shows how faith and desire intersect; both experiences involve people seeking something they cannot quite touch.

"The Young Pope" will likely appeal to different factions within reli-

gious audiences for different reasons, but its existence should be welcomed. At a time when clergy are represented on television as sexually repressed and authoritarian, as in the campy "Asylum" season of "American Horror Story," "The Young Pope" strikes a more nuanced tone. When the poet Dana Gioia lamented the lack of good new Catholic literature, he noted that most representations of the faith are trite. "Catholic exposé," he wrote, "is now a mainstream literary genre, from the farcical to the tendentious." While Gioia acknowledges that good Catholic writing and art exist it is another thing to be good and visible, or good and noteworthy, within the broader artistic conversation.

Great contemporary Catholic art—the works of Hansen or Alice McDermott, the films of Martin Scorsese, and select others—tends to be disparate rather than continuous. There are pockets of brilliant Catholic storytelling these days, but not a substantive, influential presence as

there was in decades past. "The Young Pope" might not be the Catholic art that many Catholics want, but it is the Catholic art they might need. Much like Robert Harris's recent novel *Conclave*, the show portrays the political posturing, deals and double-crossing that occur within the Vatican. Whatever its fictional exaggerations, the show is a fascinating window into the politics and spectacle of a world that informs the lives of so many Catholics worldwide. It should not, though, be taken as a pastoral work; it is not a window into, nor a spiritual guide for, the common person's faith.

"The Young Pope" may strike viewers as a show that is objectively accurate about a Catholic milieu while not being Catholic in a devotional sense. In that way, the show is similar to the film adaptation of *The Exorcist*, a story written by a Catholic (William Peter Blatty) but directed by a Jewish agnostic (William Friedkin) who has said he "strongly believes in the teachings of Jesus." "The Young Pope"



is a good example of how Catholic art should gesture toward morality—and should be honest in its representation of that morality—but does not need to be a pastoral work. It does not have to be a guidepost for “growing in the faith.”

“The Young Pope” is a rarity: a show about Catholics on HBO, with name actors, stylistic and arresting direction and visuals, and an interesting plot that can catch and keep the attention of diverse audiences. The show does not parody Catholics or oversimplify them; rather, it speaks to the complexity of faith in lived practice, and how even its “official representatives” can be terribly imperfect.

Nick Ripatrzone has written for *Rolling Stone*, *The Atlantic*, *The Paris Review*, and *Esquire*. His newest book is *Ember Days*, a collection of stories. He lives in New Jersey. Twitter: @nickripatrzone.

Letter to My Son

Meena Alexander

You are in a country I have never seen.
Under your balcony children knock sticks against balls

Cry out in words you teach yourself to understand.
Streamers from a festival float free,

You picture them in flight, set aside a camera,
Pore over your notebooks

Pondering life in the favelas,
The persistence of samba, clash of urban borders.

What ancestral cities can I bring you?
What Jerusalem, what Kashi, what Cordoba?

How to load my hands with jeweled scripts
I never learnt to write my poems in?

Malayalam flesh of my dreams,
Arabic that rings through desert nights, Hindi that sears my speech.

Sometimes I feel I have poured all my love and grief into a foreign language
Yet words remain flashing in air

As birds outstrip the strength in their own wings
To soar into a darkness insurmountable.

In your room so close to the sky,
Do not forget the provisions of earth—

Water to drink and fruit,
Whatever is near at hand and common

Also apples, plums, rice and beans
And fish that leap babbling out of the sea.

Meena Alexander has two new books forthcoming in 2018—*Atmospheric Embroidery* (a book of poetry) and an edited collection, *Name Me a Word: Indian Writers Reflect on Writing*. She is a professor at Hunter College in New York.

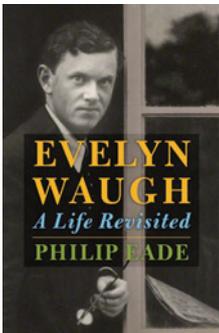


Evelyn Arthur Waugh and Laura Herbert on their wedding day, April 17, 1937.

Photo by Fred Morley/Fox Photos/Getty Images

Addicted to alcohol and sex and haunted by God

By David Leigh



Evelyn Waugh
A Life Revisited
By Philip Eade
Henry Holt and
Company. 432p
\$32

Any biographer of Evelyn Waugh writing 50 years after the writer's death has to justify competing with major predecessors, such as Christopher Sykes's portrait of his friend, Martin Stannard's two-volume academic study of Waugh's life and works and Douglas Lane Patey's critical analysis of Waugh's masterpieces. Unfortunately, Philip Eade's claim to present a "fresh portrait" of this "life revisited" does not hold up to even a casual reading. The new material is mostly letters from Waugh's 1930 flame, Teresa "Baby" Jungman, whom he pursued after the failure of his first marriage, but these letters reveal more

about Jungman's refusal to marry him than about Waugh himself.

Eade admits that he is not writing a "critical" biography, so he includes newspaper reviews of Waugh's books but little literary analysis of the writer whom novelists Graham Greene and Henry Green called "the greatest novelist" of their generation. When Eade does spend time on the characters in the novels, it is primarily to speculate about the real-life models for the most highly satirized victims, a guessing game played by most previous biographers of Waugh. Disappointingly, *A Life Revisited* provides few insights into Waugh's motivation for giving up his youthful dedication to high Anglicanism in favor of the Catholic Church in 1930, which made him one of the most notable converts of the 20th century.

Eade's account shows little of how Waugh's spiritual renewal helped him deal with addictions to alcohol and sex, and with issues of fidelity in his marriage to Laura Herbert and their

family, not to mention with his lifelong search for God and meaning in the modern secularized world. Eade mentions the influence of Waugh's many Catholic friends (and of his Jesuit instructor, Martin D'Arcy), his reading in theology and his writings on Catholicism, but he fails to explore them for their significance to Waugh's own life and thought.

In fact, several English reviewers of Eade's biography dismiss it as the work of someone with "a predilection for snobbish and salacious gossip." One reason is that the author never finds a way to distinguish between accurate stories and false allegations by Waugh's friends and enemies. Throughout the biography, various assertions about Waugh are qualified with a quiet "may have." For instance, after gossiping about Waugh's sexual wanderings for many chapters, Eade admits that a visit to France in 1927 with his brother "may have occasioned Evelyn's first sexual encounter with a woman."



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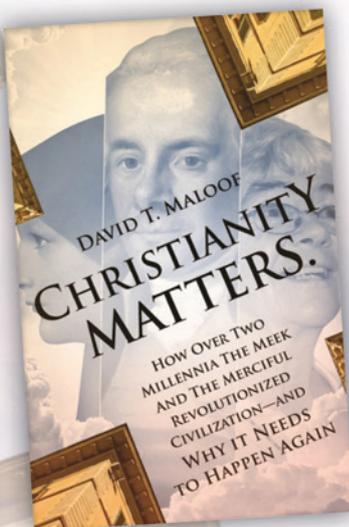
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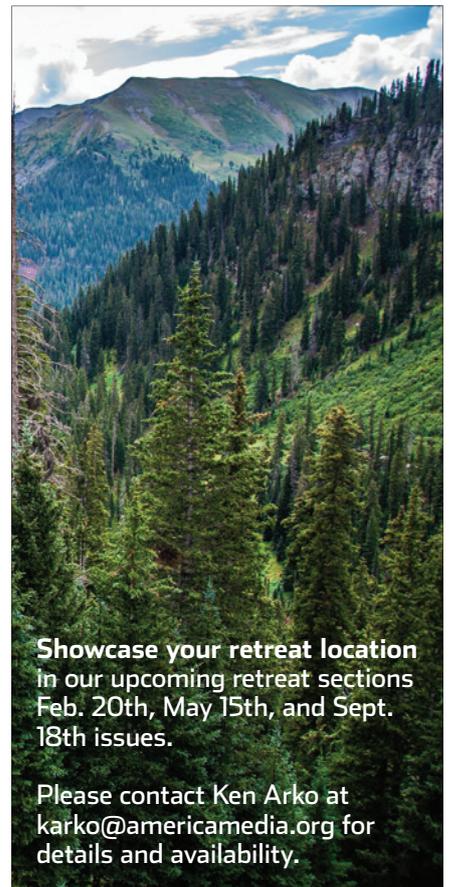
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Waugh's humor and assertiveness garnered a circle of loyal friends but also several enemies.

Sometime Eade merely cites contradictory opinions about Waugh without providing a criterion for judging their value. And while admitting that Waugh called his own diary a mixture of fact and fiction, Eade cites it as if it were trustworthy when the author is admitting his flaws. At times, Eade does not pick up on the irony and humor in many of Waugh's letters and conversations, some of which are as hilarious as his satirical novels. Indeed, Waugh's satires on the roaring twenties were implicitly as critical of himself as of the fictional characters in *Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies*, *A Handful of Dust* and *Scoop*.

Most of Eade's biography repeats the well-known accounts of influences on Waugh from his family, friends and fellow authors. His father Arthur's pompous theatricality and sentimentality, and his favoritism for his elder son, Alec, are analyzed for their psychological pressure on Evelyn, and how they led the younger son into pugnaciousness, bullying and caustic criticism of others. The years at Lancing, a second-level boarding school, show Evelyn gaining notoriety for wit, writing prizes and crude behavior toward both boys and girls. The years at Oxford portray him as neglecting his history studies and earning humiliating grades as he lapsed into a decade of heavy drinking and what his friend Christopher Hollis called "a passing phase" of homosexual crushes. Eade also notes Waugh's introduction to the world of art, to the writers in the Bloomsbury group and to academics whom he later caricatured in his novels. In his 20s, he also made lifelong literary friends with Henry Green, Rebecca West, Nancy Mitford and Graham Greene, among many others.

Waugh's breakthrough to the

English literary scene with *Decline and Fall* (1929) is clearly portrayed by Eade, both in the novel's sources from Waugh's disastrous year of teaching in a boarding school and its inclusion of hilarious descriptions of teachers and local gentry. Waugh's marriage to Evelyn Gardner and her subsequent affair and divorce lead into a gossipy section containing excerpts from his correspondence with "Baby" Jungman and flirtations with other women. His eventual courtship and marriage to Laura Herbert after he received a delayed annulment of his first marriage are given adequate treatment, but his conversion to Catholicism is not explored in any depth. Their marriage is described as a tension between his constant affection for Laura and his efforts to continue the solitary task of writing novels, travel literature and journalism in the 1930s and '40s, highlighted by the publication of *Brideshead Revisited* in 1944—which he considered his masterpiece but which received a disappointingly wide range of reviews.

Meanwhile, he joined the Royal Marines early in World War II, spending time in a commando unit under the leadership of his friend Robert Laycock. In the war, Waugh showed bravery in North Africa and on Crete, but he had conflicted relationships with other officers and, at times, with the unit under his charge. As in many of his social relationships, his humor and assertiveness garnered a circle of loyal friends but also several enemies.

From these war experiences, Waugh was able to fashion his final fictional masterpiece, *Sword of Honour*, a trilogy published in three volumes from 1952 to 1962. It has been called the best novel to come out of World War II. Unfortunately for Waugh, although he published a few other

works that received critical acclaim after the war, such as *The Loved One* (a satire on Hollywood burial customs), his last years were often troubled. After having tensions with some of his children, he took a cruise to Ceylon, during which he suffered fits of delusion and paranoia that were eventually traced to a poison in his system from which he was eventually cured. The happy result of this episode "off his rocker" was the autobiographical novel *The Ordeal of Gordon Pinfield*, which Eade tells us most critics consider one of Waugh's "finest works."

Eade portrays the subsequent declining years with some sympathy, although not with a full understanding of Waugh's resistance to the changes that emerged from the Second Vatican Council in 1965, the year before he died. He was never reconciled to the use of vernacular in the Catholic liturgy. In the words of his daughter Margaret from a letter to his friend Diana Cooper, "You know that [Papa] longed to die and dying as he did on Easter Sunday, when all the liturgy is about death and resurrection, after a Latin mass and holy communion, would be exactly what he wanted.... I am very, very happy for him."

Readers of Evelyn Waugh will still be looking for a full critical and personal biography of this great stylist and author of fiction, biography, satire and travel literature.

David Leigh, S.J., a professor of English at Seattle University, is the author of *Patterns of Apocalypse* in *Twentieth Century Fiction*.

A mass murder every day

About halfway through his book *Another Day in the Death of America*, author Gary Younge makes the observation that as a journalist you are “constantly gauging what more there is to say [on a given subject] and who would be listening if you said it.” It is an apt question for his project, which aims to recount the stories of every child killed by gunfire in the United States on a random date, Nov. 23, 2013. Every day an average of seven children are shot and killed here, the equivalent of a mass shooting. And yet, “far from being newsworthy...they are white noise set sufficiently low to allow the country to go about its business undisturbed.”

Younge, a black British journalist

who worked in the United States for over a decade, is a gifted storyteller. He treats each child (ranging in age from 7 to 19) and their families with empathy and respect. Their unique situations also open myriad other issues, from smart guns to modern gangs to journalists’ tendency in reporting the deaths of children to emphasize their innocence, as though if they were not blameless their deaths would somehow be more tolerable.

Younge is particularly inspired in observing what it is like to be a black parent today. Deaths of black children are so common, he notes, “that every black parent of a teenage child I spoke to had factored in the possibility that this might happen to their kid.” While other parents are taking their kids to

camp or helping them get into college, “these parents (who love their offspring no less) are devoting their energies to keeping their kids alive.”

Some of Younge’s presentations on social issues leave chapters diffuse. And for those who resist any limitations on the Second Amendment his project might seem polemical. But Younge is actually quite careful not to reduce the lives of these children and their families to a political position. He lets their stories speak for themselves. And whoever has ears, let them hear.

Jim McDermott, S.J., is a screenwriter at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Twitter: @popculturpriest.

A lover of fiction sets out to find the truth.

Memoir is where the action is. We have a growing thirst for true stories that help us make sense of our fractured world. Who, after all, has time to get lost in make-believe when life is changing so fast? For many, perhaps most, fiction feels outmoded, irrelevant and impractical. This state of affairs hasn’t escaped the notice of the Pulitzer Prize-winner Michael Chabon. His brilliant new book *Moonglow*, though billed as a novel, may be the most entertaining, and truthful memoir you’ve ever read.

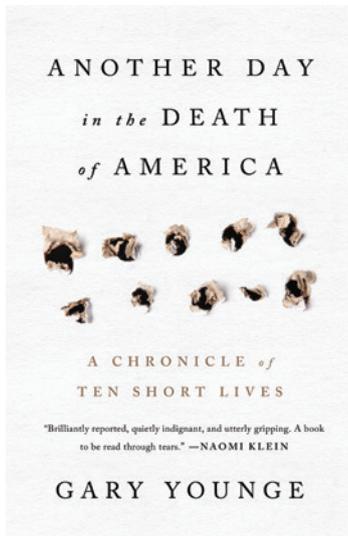
As the narrator, Mike Chabon, interviews his dying grandfather, we travel back and forth in time to different stages in his grandfather’s life—growing up in depression-era Philadelphia; chasing retreating Nazis as a U.S. in-

telligence officer at the end of World War II; falling in love with a beautiful, traumatized French refugee at the end of the war; and near the end of his life, snake hunting in a Florida retirement community. The result a cavalcade of linked stories that provide a marvelous and convincing kaleidoscope of his wonderful, tragic life.

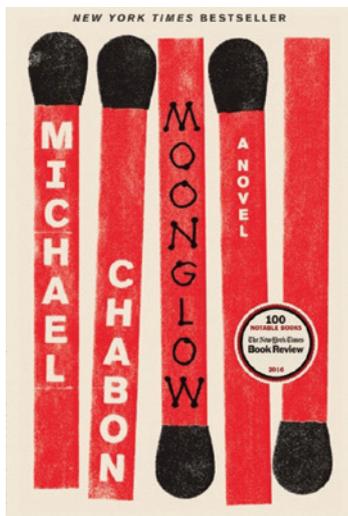
Chabon’s conversations with his grandfather and with his mother, too, interspersed throughout the narrative, add intimacy and verisimilitude. Really every piece of Chabon’s puzzle moves the story forward, magically it seems, given these stories actually happened. The narrator confesses that he first tried writing a novel about his grandfather’s life before realizing that “sometimes even lovers of fiction can be satisfied only with the truth.”

It is as if Chabon the author does everything in his considerable power to convince us this really is a memoir that he had to publish as a novel because of a few fictional liberties he had to take. Chabon is so skilled at getting us to suspend our disbelief, we become enraptured by the “realness” of his story, when like a magician he slyly lifts the curtain with a few unlikely coincidences to reveal his grandfather’s life was made up after all. Ultimately *Moonglow* makes a strikingly effective argument that reading fiction is still the best way to make your heart race with delight, and, yes, paradoxically, get closer to the truth.

J. Greg Phelan has written for *The New York Times*, *The Millions* and other publications.



Another Day in the Death of America
A Chronicle of Ten Short Lives
By Gary Younge
Nation Books. 304p \$25.99



Moonglow
A Novel
by Michael Chabon
HarperCollins. 430 p \$28.99

A father opens up the Islamic world.

Contributing his moderate but compelling voice to Islamic discourse, Omar Saif Ghobash, ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Russia, has written a series of essays to his two teenage sons, Saif and Abdullah. Written with the loving—at times repetitive—patience of a concerned father, *Letters to a Young Muslim* covers a wide range of topics, from the history of Islam and of Ghobash’s family to the challenges facing devout Muslims today.

Religious extremism prompted Ghobash to write these letters. “My overwhelming desire,” he writes, “was to open up areas of thought, language, and imagination in order to show myself and my fellow Muslims that our world has so much more to offer us than the limited fantasies of deeply unhappy people.”

Ghobash shares several personal stories—including memories of his father’s assassination, a month spent at summer school memorizing the Quran and experiences growing up as a mixed-race Muslim in the United Arab Emirates—to describe how his current opinions on politics, religion, education and prejudice have formed.

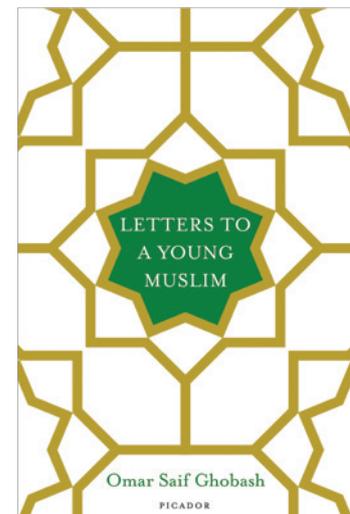
He touches on themes universally important for teenagers, like the importance of a sense of a belonging and the necessity of taking responsibility for one’s identity. Ghobash urges his sons to respect the independence of their mind: “If what someone tells you sounds convincing, ask more questions.” And he does not shy away from describing the complex,

and at times problematic, relationship between Islam and the West.

Ghobash’s views on religious extremism make for provocative reading. He censures the ulema, or religious scholars, responsible for espousing extremist teachings while also criticizing those whose only response to religiously motivated violence is to say, “Islam is a religion of peace.”

Although unflinching about the work that needs to be done to establish the religion Islam is meant to be, the collection maintains an optimistic tone, repeating that the next generation of Muslims can make a difference: “You are correct in thinking that if someone is going to change the world for the better, then it is you.”

Teresa Donnellan,
Joseph A. O’Hare Fellow.



Letters to a Young Muslim
A Memoir of
Spiritual Disobedience
By Omar Saif Ghobash
Picador. 256p, \$22



Physics matters in “The Expanse.” Sin does, too.

Gravity is a hard fact, whether it comes from a planet or from an engine. **The Expanse**, a SyFy drama beginning its second season on Feb. 1, faces up to the physics of space travel rather than follow Star Wars or Star Trek and wash its hands of the narrative problems the hard facts create. The complexity of human society—politics and tribalism especially—is also a hard fact, and “The Expanse” deals with this rigorously as well. Set in the 24th century, it worries not only about the details of orbital mechanics but also about how colonizing the solar system is likely to be at least as messy and complicated as the colonization of continents here on earth.

Science fiction tends toward a niche audience, so if you haven’t seen “The Expanse” yet, you can be forgiven. But you can probably guess your penance. While it lacks the budget of HBO’s fantasy juggernaut “Game of Thrones,” once it gets moving, “The Expanse” proves that it deserves a

wide viewership. Based on the novels by James S. A. Corey (a pseudonym for the collaboration of Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck), some particulars change, but the TV storyline is mostly faithful to the books.

Science geeks will enjoy the detail paid to laws of physics and how they are employed in building new worlds. The show’s creative team goes to great lengths to accurately portray life in space. The visual attention to real physics constantly reminds us how precarious humanity is outside our little bubbles. There is no magic gravity here, no force fields. When people bleed, the blood beads up and floats. When the engines fire up, all those mesmerizing red blobs rush in whatever direction is now “down” and splatter in a sickening shower. Even bar scenes don’t skimp on the physics. Happy hour in space includes accounting for the Coriolis effects of spin gravity as you attempt to pour your drink.

This attention to detail helps us

relate to the characters and their perilous place in this unforgiving world. While it is squarely in the science fiction genre, “The Expanse” crosses over into drama, crime procedural and even noir fiction in the character of Detective Miller, one of the first season’s most complicated and engrossing characters. Fantasy and science fiction have always used imaginary worlds to explore what it means to be human beings in this more ordinary realm. In a time of posturing and chest thumping by world leaders, when tribalism and distrust are rampant in national politics, “The Expanse” taps into our anxieties and concerns more than ever. We really don’t know which way is up.

Belters, natives of the Asteroid Belt, spend their entire lives in mining communities. They have developed their own language, complete with a robust system of gestures adapted to long hours in space suits. The Belters work in harsh conditions and risk their lives to send raw materi-

There is no magic gravity, no force fields in "The Expanse." Florence Faivre plays the pilot and rebel Juliette Andromeda Mao.

Photo by Jason Bell/Syfy

als back to the "inner planets." They have shouldered the risks but haven't reaped the rewards of humanity's increasing expansion. Sound familiar?

The complex lives of the characters draw us into their stories. And they are stories we know, stories we tell ourselves and stories we are not proud of. Why is it easier to explore the gritty reality of racism, sexism or elitism when it's set in another world? Are we afraid to face the hard fact of our own sinfulness? Perhaps the better question is how we can take advantage of the new openings for dialogue and conversion, whether it starts with Westeros or the Asteroid Belt. There really is nothing new under the sun—or above it, or spinning 500 million miles away from it.

Sam Sawyer, S.J., executive editor.
Twitter: @SSawyerSJ.
Eric Sundrup, S.J., associate editor.
Twitter: @sunnysdj.

A different kind of family in Providence

Before his death in 2016, at the age of 74, Vincent A. Cianci Jr. lived a life of many contradictions: He was, at one time, a young Republican mayor in the very Democratic city of Providence, R.I. He was an anti-corruption candidate aided by the mob. Better known as "Buddy," he was a trusted (and Jesuit-educated) champion for his city as well as a convicted felon.

These qualities, while making him a dubious role model, make Cianci a perfect addition to the cast of characters in the inaugural season of **Crimetown**, a podcast exploring the crime world of America, one city at a time. A production of Gimlet Media, the show is produced and hosted by Zac Stuart-Pontier and

A podcast on Providence gives the skinny on Buddy Cianci, bank heists and notorious wiseguys.



Marc Smerling, who produced the HBO documentary "The Jinx," about the alleged murderer Robert Durst.

The city of Providence is a particularly rich choice for the subject of the show's first season, as it also was home to Raymond Patriarca, the mob boss who ruled the New England mafia for decades, and who, along with his associates, features prominently in the series. Stuart-Pontier and Smerling don't ignore the gravity of being involved with the mob, but they manage to highlight some humorous takes, including stories of bank vault heists, police officers riding garbage trucks while carrying shotguns and men with nicknames like Deuce and Buckles.

"Crimetown" joins a growing list of true-crime podcasts, but it is less concerned with questions of "Whodunnit?" than with "Why?" It treats each interviewee, whether murderer or mayor, with nuance and compassion. It gives voice to the stories of the wiseguys who didn't grow up so wise, the ones simply trying to look out for a brother, show loyalty to a best friend or seek out, in an imperfect crew, the family they had never had. It is hard not to empathize with the men who, in the midst of their contradictions, often seem to be searching for connection.

Kerry Weber, executive editor.
Twitter: @Kerry_Weber.

God's Perfect Instructions

Readings: Sir 15:15-20, Ps 119, 1 Cor 2:6-10, Mt 5:17-37

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish, but to fulfill!” These words strike many Christians as strange. Most Christians today feel no compunction about eating pork or having meat and milk on the same dish. Most Christian holidays bear no resemblance to those outlined in the Pentateuch, and no Christians slaughter animals as a form of worship. The Christian community abandoned much of the Jewish law in the first few centuries after Jesus. In the centuries that followed, a profound animosity developed between the two communities that only highlighted the different ways the two faiths appropriated the Pentateuch they shared.

Jesus' words make sense if one remembers that while we translate “Torah” as “law,” it actually means something more like “instruction.” In Jesus' mind, the Torah would have been more than an ancient law code; it was God's instructions for becoming a human being. It was a “law” in that it demanded action, but it was also a source of divine wisdom. The first reading refers to the Torah's deeper content when it says, “Immense is the wisdom of the Lord; he

is mighty in power, and all-seeing.” The Book of Sirach speaks of a spiritual longing felt by many Jews of Jesus' day: to study the Torah with such depth that one could, however fleetingly, encounter the very wisdom of God.

The Pharisees, Essenes and Christians were among those groups that sought this deeper wisdom. Thus it is important not to make Jesus out to be some charismatic rebel against the “law.” He was, like many other Jews of his day, trying to discover a way to live out the Torah that would make God's wisdom plain for humanity to follow. Certainly, his own adherence to its precepts must have been rigorous; it is difficult to believe that Pharisees would have dined with him otherwise. The Book of Acts and the letters of Paul testify implicitly that Jesus did not make a sharp break with the Torah during his ministry. It took early Christians many generations to sort out which requirements were still binding on Gentile converts. Given these lengthy controversies, it is hard to believe Jesus had given his disciples clear instructions on the matter.

Not only does Jesus demand obedience to the Torah in this week's Gospel, he actually increases the strictness of its regulations. By this practice, he believes his followers will see God's wisdom behind each regulation. These antitheses lead to the climactic statement we will hear next week: “Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” In the mind of Jesus, following God's instructions allows us to reflect God's nature to the world. Paul takes a similar approach in the second reading, “We speak God's wisdom...which God predetermined before the ages for our glory.” Jesus reflected God's glory to the world when he understood and lived God's instructions perfectly. By conforming our life to his example, we too become the reflection of the divine glory that God always intended us to be.

“Open my eyes, that I may consider the wonders of your law!”

Ps 119:18



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How have God's instructions affected your life?

How have you lived differently because of them?

What wisdom have you found in patterning your behavior after Christ?

Michael R. Simone, S.J., is an assistant professor of Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

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The Freedom of the Father's Children

Readings: Lv 19:1-18, Ps 103, 1 Cor 3:16-23, Mt 5:38-48

“Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” If Jesus’ statements last week struck some readers as strange, his commandment this week seems downright ludicrous. Our heavenly Father is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. God is goodness itself; divine perfection is effortless. Humans, by contrast, are blind, weak and limited. We struggle to judge what is right in any given situation; perfection seems less like an ideal for which to strive and more like an indulgent fantasy that will never be realized.

Jesus does not share these anxieties, because he is drawing on a very specific example of the Father’s perfection. “He makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.” This is how Jesus understands the perfection to which he calls his followers. The Father pours out his gifts on his creatures regardless of whether or not they deserve it. We must pour out our forgiveness, compassion, honesty, understanding, generosity, effort and love on both the just and the unjust. Doing so makes us so much like the Father that Jesus calls us God’s very children.

To give such gifts to our brothers and sisters requires a lifelong struggle for freedom. Jesus saw the path to such freedom in the requirements of the Torah, but he also saw the need to intensify certain precepts for his followers in order to communicate this possibility. By sharpening the requirements of the Torah, Jesus makes them into challenging ideals that draw his disciples ever forward. As we work for greater freedom, we learn to let go of the petty forms of selfishness that stand in the way of our showing a generosity and freedom similar to the Father’s. In the Gospel readings last week and this, Jesus commands us to avoid anger, lust, adultery, duplicity, vengeance, parsimony, meanness and tribalism.

The self-control necessary to overcome these vices does not come easily, but it can grow vigorously in us when we set Jesus’ life and example as our goal. Like him, we must prefer following the Father’s example to nursing our trivial grudges or clinging to security through possessions and honors. In Jesus’ case, a life lived in pursuit

“Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.”

Lv 19:2



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How has Christ led you in some way to greater freedom?

Do you find the Father’s generosity appealing?

How do you find it frightening or impractical?

In what way could living the Father’s example transform your family? Your neighborhood? Your workplace?

of the Father’s example gave him the freedom to take up his own cross and liberate humanity from death and all death’s agents in the world. Our own struggle for a freedom like the Father’s puts us at Christ’s side. We conquer death and its effects in the world whenever we ourselves are kind to those who do not deserve it, forgive those who have wronged us, treat others as ends and not means or act honestly and generously for the good even of strangers and enemies.

Discord and hate have come out in force in recent years. People of good will everywhere have started to search for cultural transformations that will heal these rifts and quench these animosities. Witnessing in every way to the Father’s freedom and generosity is the contribution that every Christian is called to make to this search.

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New Wine, New Wineskins

Three ingredients for social media evangelization

By Mark Coleridge



I did not come quickly or naturally to social media. I was dragged into it by others, and what social media presence I have on Twitter and Facebook remains inexpert and erratic. So I am in no position to be prescriptive. I also have moments of wondering whether social media is worth the time and effort, whether it might be better to leave it to others who are younger and more adept.

Yet I have come to think that social media is not an optional extra, but rather a central part of the church's mission now. The blog that I wrote throughout the 2015 Synod—not my idea—convinced me of this. Social media became an unexpectedly integral part of the Synod for me, personally, and for many others, because it included them and helped me see more of what synodality means. Thinking ahead, social media will be integral to the Plenary Council that the church in Australia will celebrate in 2020, as it will to any future Ecu-
menical Council.

But can social media help us communicate beyond the church or beyond the “network bubble” in which we may be caught? I think so, though I am not altogether sure. Certainly, we have to find ways of speaking to those outside our community of agreement—not just through new media but in new ways. At times we pour old wine into new wineskins, but we need

new wine in new wineskins. That means, I think, that as we enter social media we need to be (at the very least) demotic, surprising and positive.

Social media is not monolithic. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter incorporate a variety of sub-cultures that have to be understood, and this presumes a new kind of dialogue. Social media can be a Wild West where anything goes, a world where people like bishops are simply one among many voices. This world reconfigures teaching authority; it is a world where everything is fluid, where boundaries are blurred and roles are not what they were. The adjustment this requires is part of being missionary today.

At times we can fall into churchy stereotypes, speaking in ways that may seem wondrous to us but which don't speak to most people. On social media we need to move beyond the stereotypes that have clerics saying predictably edifying things in predictable ways. We have to offer fresh angles not only on issues usually associated with the church but more especially on the call of the Gospel today. We need to be surprising.

Social media can specialize in negativity, but to serve the Gospel will mean being optimistic. That doesn't mean a Pollyannish approach, nor does it in any way exclude the prophetic. Being positive creates a

special place for humor—by which I mean turning an ironic eye on the world in a way that is typical of the Bible. Real humor is the servant of real hope. Positivity will also mean saying no to ideological warfare and knowing when silence is better than speech.

Pope Francis has struck a chord with many people outside of the Catholic Church because he knows how to be colloquial, surprising and positive—not just on social media but in his pastoral style. The pope is markedly present on social media not because he is technologically adept, but because others share his words and deeds for him. This is because he is a pastor and missionary attuned to the very personal encounters that social media can make possible. Pope Francis is showing something of what it means to put new wine in new wineskins. I am still trying.

Archbishop Mark Coleridge was ordained a priest in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, Australia, on May 18, 1974. On April 2, 2012, he was named metropolitan archbishop of Brisbane. Twitter: @ArchbishopMark.

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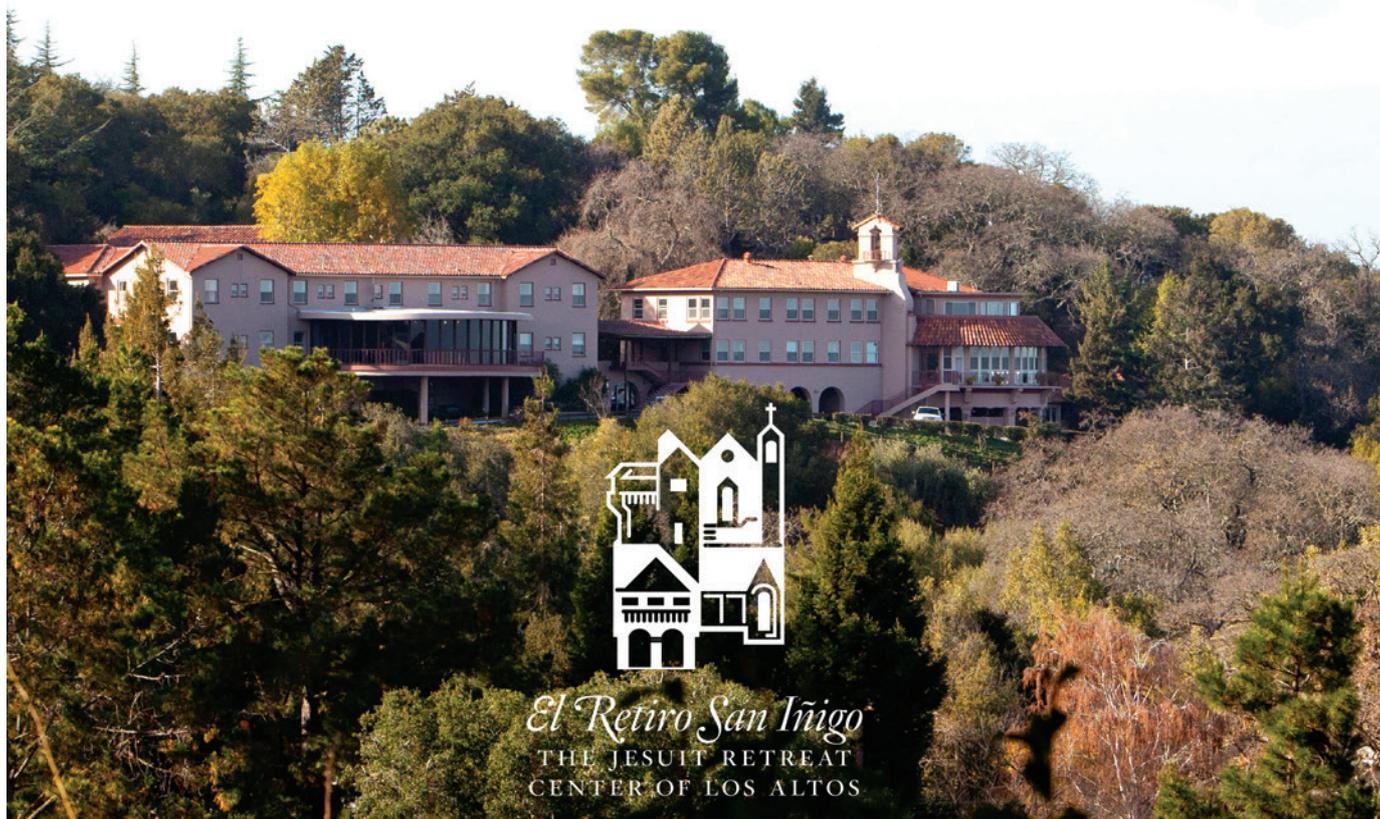
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