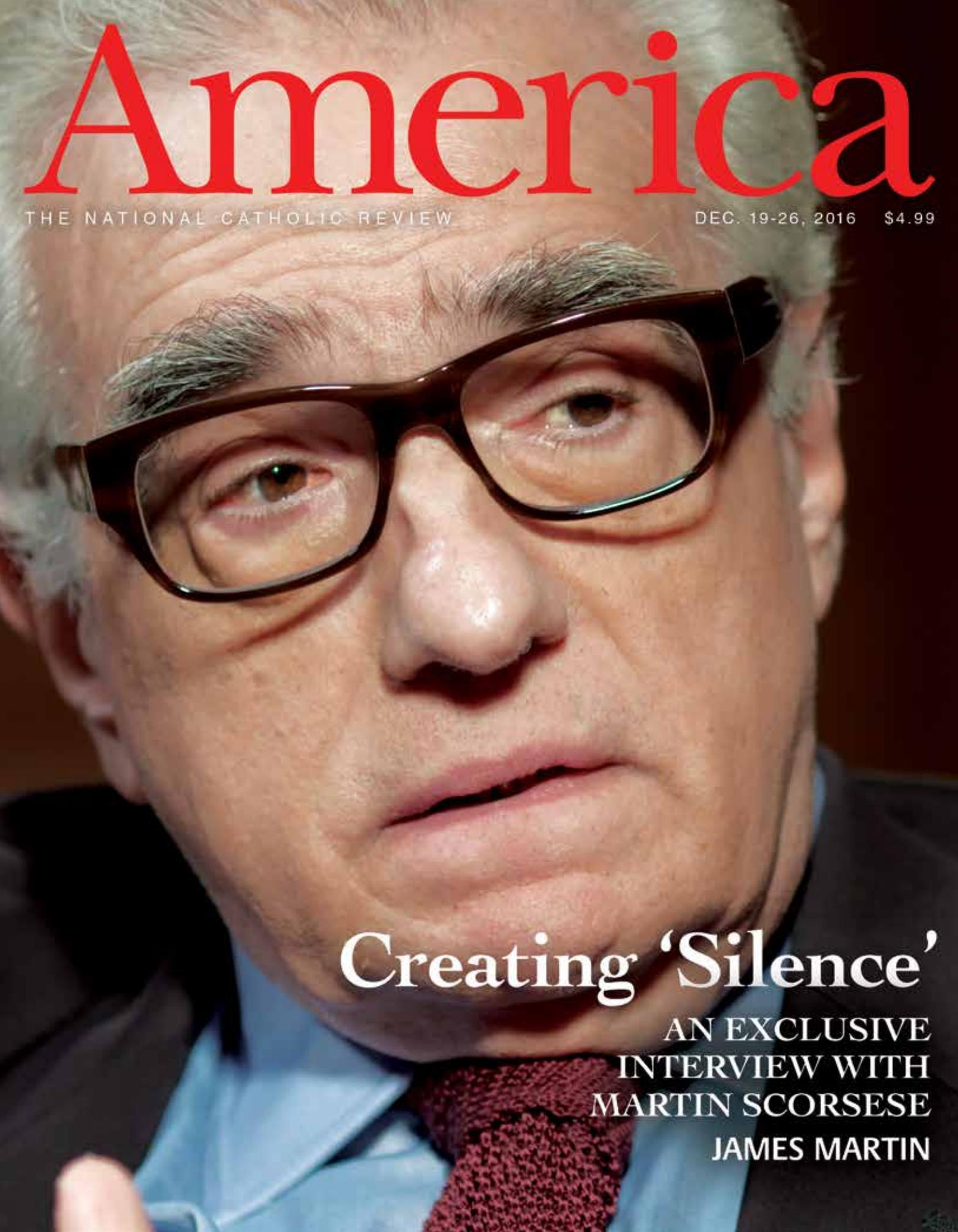


America



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Creating 'Silence'

AN EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW WITH
MARTIN SCORSESE

JAMES MARTIN

He assumed his high office in a time of unprecedented change and challenge. At first, no one who voted for him really expected him to win. The outcome frightened some and reassured others. The man was Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., the 29th superior general of the Society of Jesus, who died last month at the age of 87. He had been a Jesuit for 68 years, serving as superior general for nearly a quarter-century.

Dutch by birth, German and Italian by genes, Father Kolvenbach was elected superior general in a time of crisis. Church officials, including Pope John Paul II, had grown suspicious of the Jesuits under the leadership of Father Pedro Arrupe, Kolvenbach's immediate predecessor. The Jesuits had lost their way, some thought, especially in Latin America, where the sons of Ignatius had embraced liberation theology. At the height of the Cold War, they wondered why any Catholic, let alone a priest, would associate himself with a movement that, in part, had Marxist underpinnings.

Just a few months after the assassination attempt on John Paul in 1981, Father Arrupe suffered a devastating stroke that ended his active ministry. Forces in the Roman Curia allied against the Jesuits seized the moment to call the ecclesial equivalent of a time-out. The pope intervened directly in the governance of the Society, suspending its constitutions and bypassing Father Arrupe's presumptive successor. After an anxious two years, the pope at last gave permission for the Jesuits to hold a general congregation and elect a new leader.

But who among the delegates possessed the necessary holiness, gravitas, humility and aplomb that the moment required? Who could heal the breach? The task fell to Father Kolvenbach. As Joseph M. McShane, S.J., president of Fordham University, recently told America: "Most if not

all Jesuits would tell you that Father Kolvenbach's humility, holiness, integrity and savvy diplomacy were what stabilized the Society after one of the roughest periods of our history. Without his serenity and savvy, we would have been very much at sea. We owe him more than we could ever repay."

It's safe to say that without Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, there would be no Pope Francis. Thirty years ago there was a profound rupture in the relationship between the papacy and the Society of Jesus. Today the pope is a Jesuit. That the College of Cardinals would entrust the governance of the universal church to a Jesuit is a testament to Father Kolvenbach's tireless efforts to reconcile the Society with the church and pontiff it exists to serve.

After 25 grace-filled years, Father Kolvenbach had a "Simeon moment": Let your servant go in peace, he told us, as he became the first Jesuit superior general to resign from office. Many insiders say that Father Kolvenbach's resignation paved the way for Pope Benedict XVI's resignation in 2013. When asked what he would do in retirement, Kolvenbach replied: whatever my superiors ask me to do. He spent his final years as the assistant librarian for the Jesuit university in Beirut.

In one of his final interviews, given in these pages in 2007, Father Kolvenbach shared with us what he had learned through his time as general: "Jesuits are not as brilliant and excellent as people believe us to be, and we are not the liberals, protesters and free-thinkers some like to say we are." The key to who we are, he said, is our living relationship with Christ and his church: "I hope and pray that, inspired by the experience of St. Ignatius in the Spiritual Exercises, we can continue this mission, which leads Jesuits, other religious and laypeople to a personal encounter with the Lord, the origin of our vocation and of our mission in the world." R.I.P.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

106 West 56th Street

New York, NY 10019-3803

Ph: (212) 581-4640; Fax: (212) 399-3596

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EDITORIAL E-MAIL

america@americamedia.org

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CONTENTS



ARTICLES

16 CREATING 'SILENCE'

An interview with Martin Scorsese
James Martin

21 A MISSING MEMORIAL

How should Chicago properly honor Emmett Till?
Carolyn Alessio

COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

4 Current Comment

5 Editorial Fear Not!

6 Reply All

9 Signs of the Times

14 Column Peace Over Politics *Margot Patterson*

24 Vatican Dispatch No "Reform of the Reform" *Gerard O'Connell*

25 Faith in Focus The End of Despair *Joe Watson Jr.*

28 Philosopher's Notebook Teachers Who Teach *John J. Conley*

38 The Word The Right Word; Keep and Ponder *Michael R. Simone*



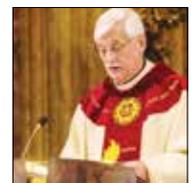
BOOKS & CULTURE

29 **TELEVISION** "A Charlie Brown Christmas" **POEM** Adoration of the Christ Child **BOOKS** *A Culture of Engagement; Prophecy Without Contempt; The Salvador Option; Almighty*



ON THE WEB

An exclusive video interview the newly elected superior general of the Society of Jesus, **Arturo Sosa, S.J.** Plus, Nathan Schneider asks: Is it time for a **Spotify for news?** Full digital highlights on page 37 and at americamagazine.org



The Right to Data

One of the signs of a functioning democracy is confidence in data from the government. The United States has several agencies that let us know “what’s going on,” to use a favorite phrase of President-elect Donald J. Trump. The Census Bureau remains the gold standard for information about topics like poverty, household income and the persistence of racial segregation. Other sources of data about our nation, and our universe, include the F.B.I., NASA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It is impossible to debate public policy without agreement on facts. Unfortunately, Mr. Trump had a habit on the campaign trail of passing on debunked numbers to support his own rhetoric—saying, for example, of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Don’t believe those phony numbers when you hear 4.9 and 5 percent unemployment.... I even heard recently 42 percent.” He continues to be unaware or dismissive of government data on crime and immigration, and he essentially accused state election departments of a massive conspiracy when he retold a story about millions of votes being cast fraudulently in the presidential election.

Mr. Trump’s cavalier attitude toward statistics is worrisome because many agencies on which we rely for accurate data are directly or indirectly supervised by presidential appointees. For instance, the president names the director of the Census Bureau, who must be confirmed by the Senate. It would be preferable to minimize political pressure on data-collection agencies. A good model is the Government Accountability Office, which monitors government spending and whose head is appointed to a 15-year term. For now, it is important that journalists, and Congress, do what they can to make sure that federal agencies continue to report valuable data without political spin or favoritism.

Risk Factors

A disturbed Somali teenager who had come to the United States with his mother and six siblings in 2014 went on a rampage at The Ohio State University on Nov. 28. He was quickly gunned down by police but not before he used his car and a knife to injure 11 people. The incident is sure to encourage more calls for restrictions on refugees and attacks on faith groups that facilitate resettlement or advocate on behalf of refugees. But that short-sighted response, fixed on absolute security and suspicious of members of the Muslim community, will only exacerbate tensions that can lead to acts of extremism.

Since the end of World War II, U.S. policy on refugee

admission has adapted to the changing needs and crises of the times. Today’s humanitarian crises in the Middle East should be similarly addressed with a generous, judicious resettlement policy, especially since so much of the disorder in the region has been the result of reckless U.S. geopolitical decisions. No civilized society can remain indifferent to the clear suffering of so many at this time, but no program can be foolproof. The risk will always remain that an extremist actor may infiltrate the resettlement system.

But the Christian life cannot be lived without risk, and risk itself can take many forms. It is worth noting that the young Somali man behind the attack at Ohio State was apparently “self-radicalized” after his arrival in the United States, not before. Indifference to vast human suffering and antipathy to all Muslims based on the actions of a minority are not without risks of their own.

Social Mediation

This Christmas season, many of us will find ourselves scrolling through social media feeds filled with countless pictures of holiday cheer. Does this window into the festivities of friends and acquaintances help us to share in the joy of the season or make us feel left out in the cold? Like any technology, it depends on how we use it.

In 2011, the American Academy of Pediatrics introduced the term “Facebook depression,” described as “depression that develops when preteens and teens spend a great deal of time on social media sites, such as Facebook.” In a new study from Lancaster University, researchers delved deeper into the emotional effects of social media, studying 35,000 participants from 14 countries. Among the negative behavior researchers detected were accepting friend requests from ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends or former friends. David Baker, one of the lead researchers, said, “We found that comparing yourself with people on social media was more likely to make you feel depressed than comparing yourself offline.”

Comparing yourself with other people is never a good idea, and unfortunately social media make it all too easy. But it also allows people to discover and receive support from virtual communities. Someone who is clinically depressed or who is a survivor of sexual assault can find support groups on platforms like Twitter or Tumblr. Friends and family can connect across countries and oceans with the click of a button. While we should continue to study the effects of social media, it is important to remember that we can also use sites like Facebook for building relationships to support and strengthen each other.

Fear Not!

The recent presidential election unearthed a stratum of anxiety and fear that extends across the country like a vein of ore. There is the fear of the person living in a declining industrial town who watches as jobs migrate overseas and wonders how he or she will provide food, clothing and health care for the family. There is the fear of the migrant who seeks to support his or her family on a minimum-wage job, whose anxiety is compounded by the possibility of deportation. There is the fear of an American society in decline and an erosion of any truly meaningful sense of public morality and community, particularly in the wake of a poisonous election season. Across the world there is the fear of those who wonder where their next meal will come from and the real fear of unending, catastrophic violence in places like Syria, South Sudan and Afghanistan.

Into this world comes Jesus Christ—through the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit, through the church and its sacraments and through the love and care of Christians for their fellow human beings. Into this world, we believe, Jesus Christ, will come again in his glory.

But over 2,000 years ago, into this world came Jesus Christ.

Christians sometimes feel guilty about fear, seeing it as a sign of weak faith. If only they trusted in God more, they think, they would not be fearful. But the Gospels are replete with stories of fear, even among those who knew Jesus best. The disciples shrink in fear when Jesus stills a storm: “They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this, then, who can command the wind and waves?’” (Mk 4:41). When they spy him walking on water, they feel the same: “‘It is a ghost!’ they said, and cried out in fear” (Mt 14:26).

The Nativity narrative also includes stories that hint at fear. Mary’s first reaction to the Angel Gabriel is often translated as “perplexed,” but there was probably no little fear involved. Otherwise, why would the angel say, “Do not be afraid” (Lk 1:28-9)? Pregnant mothers in precarious social situations know this fear.

When Joseph discovers that Mary is pregnant, a dream tells him, “Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife” (Mt 1:20). Fathers who worry over their families’ future know this fear. On their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem, since travelers had a great deal to fear from robbers in those days, Mary and Joseph worry as they wend their way through a violent land in search of a safe place for their child. Migrants know this fear. And like many

migrants and refugees today, Mary, Joseph and their newborn son are forced to flee again after a violent ruler threatens their very lives.

Jesus himself, during his 30 years of ordinary life in Nazareth, would have known fear. We can presume that Joseph died before Jesus began his public ministry: He is nowhere on the scene in the Gospels, unlike Jesus’ mother and his “brothers and sisters.” His death would have injected a note of worry into a poor family in the small village. And surely Jesus’ extended family—aunts, uncles, cousins—knew what it was like to live both on the economic edge, as they eked out a living, and on the political edge, in an occupied territory.

Into a world crowded with fear Jesus comes to proclaim an end to fear. He proclaims this not only in his words, when he says repeatedly, “Fear not.” He proclaims it not only in his deeds, where his miracles remove the need for fear both in healings, where years of fear vanish, and in the nature miracles, where the storms that threatened to swamp rickety boats evaporate. He also proclaims it in his incarnation and birth.

The Nativity means many things—God became human, God is with us, God is among us, but also, as the angel declared to Mary, nothing is impossible with God. The tiny infant in the rough-hewn manger will grow up to be the greatest of rulers. The powerless one dependent on a poor young woman for sustenance will become the all-powerful one who brings riches to all who believe. The one who feeds will become our food. It is no accident that he sleeps in a manger, a word meaning “to eat.”

Jesus understands fear. He understands us when in prayer we confess our worst fears to him. But he tells us that hope is stronger than despair, love is stronger than hate, and life is stronger than death. Nothing—not poverty, not injustice, not cruel rulers like Herod—can thwart God’s desires in the world. But we must participate in those desires because God acts through us.

To those who lived in that world of fear, it must have seemed absurd that an infant would be the answer to their fear. But, improbably enough, it was true. For nothing is impossible with God.



REPLY ALL

Wealth in a Paperback

Re “How the World Will End,” by Paul Almonte (11/28): Sixty years ago in a high school senior English class, Sister Rose Margaret recommended a small jewel of a paperback: *Mr. Blue*. It was love at first “read.” Who wouldn’t love J. Blue? Sister’s additional recommendation, *Gift From the Sea*, completed a duet of treasured classics that remains on my shelf. Rereading them at various stages of my life has awarded new insights, literary pleasures and—dare I add—graces. Thank you Sister Rose Margaret, Myles Connolly and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, respectively.

Reading the concluding paragraph of *Mr. Blue*, I tucked between those last pages a personal reflection: “I like to believe that J. Blue is not dead but alive in each of our souls—alive as so many sparks of an eternal flame.”

My conviction holds. What a wealth contained in a 65-cent paperback. Thank you for your review of *Mr. Blue*. Such heroes, begotten by gifted writers, deserve eternal life.

BRETTA RIBBING
Manchester, Mo.

Theatrical Angels

It is good news that Myles Connolly’s *Mr. Blue* has been reissued this year through Cluny Classics. In 1928 Myles Connolly foresaw the crisis of faith, the need for solidarity with the poor, the rise of agnosticism and the emptiness of the arts when devoid of faith.

Another Connolly prediction noted by Mr. Paul Almonte in his review was that the “new masses” would not have time for the printed word. If Connolly is correct on this one too, then why not meet the amazing Mr. Blue through live theater?

Two years ago, on the 50th anniversary

of the death of Connolly, it was my honor to prepare a stage adaptation of *Mr. Blue* as a commemorative reading directed by George Drance, S.J., and performed with actors at the Dramatists Guild of America in New York. In attendance were Connolly family members, including his daughter, Mary Connolly Briener, who wrote the preface to the new print edition. (See *America’s* article “A Journey With *Mr. Blue*,” by Michael V. Tueth (5/29/14). Last year, the Sheen Center provided two readings of the play, again under the masterful direction of George Drance.

What’s next? How about a full stage production to introduce this charismatic character to new audiences? Where are the theatrical angels to make it happen? As J. Blue himself said: “Anything’s possible!”

MARY KAY WILLIAMS
Richmond, Va.

Buyer’s Remorse

Re “The Change is Us,” by Robert David Sullivan (11/28): I do not think our best days are behind us, but I do not see a tendency to look forward to the future with hope. Instead of net-zero energy buildings with solar power and electric cars (or good public transportation), we are acting like the “good old days” really existed and we need ever more mining of fossil fuels.

LISA WEBER
Online Comment

In God’s Image

Re “A Crossroads in Oakland,” by Kaya Oakes (11/21): The Second Vatican Council calls us to encourage liturgical celebrations that honor the worshiping community regardless of race or ethnicity. In my own experience as an African-American Catholic, I have seen that expressions

of cultural identity at worship help all of us to remember that we are all created in God’s image. The church has much to gain, in the words of the late liturgist and musician the Rev. Clarence Joseph Rivers, “from the refreshing, renewing and inspirational experience that Black [Catholic] worship is and can be.”

BORETA SINGLETON
Online Comment

In Full Swing

Re “Northern Warning” by James T. Keane (11/21): Mr. Keane’s good article on how American Catholics are turning to secularism, as are the modern Québécois, ignores something too readily ignored in the United States: intellectual culture.

Firstly, the change in Quebec was not a matter of 1968—it was in full swing with what was and is still called the Quiet Revolution, beginning in 1960. But even that came 12 years after Le Refus Global of 1948, a manifesto against clerical connivance with capitalist domination, signed by the painter Paul-Emile Borduas and other important artists and intellectuals.

Ultimately, the Québécois hostility toward the church can be traced to the British settlement, by which only Catholic clergy were legally permitted to speak French.

JOSEPH MASHECK,
New York, N.Y.

Failure to Address

An interesting article by Mr. Keane, and so true. The sexual abuse scandal in the church is still on the front burner. The failure to address it directly is still on the minds of most Catholics. In the minds of the laity, the church hierarchy is elitist, sly and not to be trusted. The young people feel this.

ROBERT HARRISON
Online Comment

Correction: The byline for “The Heart Beat,” by Elizabeth Dias (11/14), did not make clear that the Hunt Prize is co-sponsored by the Saint Thomas More Chapel & Center at Yale University, where the lecture was delivered. In the same article, the photo of Ms. Dias should have been credited to Robert A. Lisak.

Desperate Need

Re “Correction Course” (11/14): Donald Lee has written a refreshing, honest and meaningful article about the desperate need for prison reform in the United States.

Mr. Lee is correct that recidivism rates are very high in most states; prisoners released today have at least a 60 percent chance of returning to prison within three years. The cost of maintaining one prisoner per year is so high. Clearly something must be done to alleviate this evil situation in our criminal justice system.

First, we need to set up drug treatment courts in all counties that would help addicts recover their sobriety. Second, we need educational programs in all prisons, as a way to help each prisoner discover his own sense of worth by pursuing a high school or college degree. Third, we need to incentivize businesses to hire recovered addicts and former criminals after they have served their time.

I am fortunate to volunteer at my local prison. Most of the prisoners I meet are youths who have made a mistake and need a mentor to advise them as to their life goals. I pray Mr. Lee will succeed in his new life goals.

EDWARD J. THOMPSON,
SR.
Gettysburg, Pa.

All Is Well

I always enjoy reading anything James Martin, S.J., writes. “Not Yet a Saint” (10/24) is no exception.

The cleaning of two Jesuit churches makes a fine example of the spiritual journey we must all make in our life times. My own spiritual journey as an Episcopal priest has had its ups and downs. There have been the risks I have

had to take, which were sometimes followed by disappointment and at other times by great joy. Like Father Martin, there are times I scaled the heights and found the view breathtaking and others when I found the change terrible. And yet, in retrospect, I can see that many of those changes were needed, and I can now rejoice in them.

(REV.) GEORGE STAMM
Diocese of Eau Claire, Wis.

Feminist Catholic Theology

Upon reading the thoughtful essay by T. Howland Sanks, S.J., “Fully Formed” (9/26), two issues stand out for me.

The first is his dismissal of “academic philosophy” as “no longer [giving] a broad understanding of the human condition.” It is true—as perhaps it has ever been—that the practice of some who teach philosophy in the academy can be so characterized, but it is a mistake to assume that in those groves nothing else can be found under the rubric “philosophy.” For nearly 40 years I taught in three different programs,

including two in state universities. The fact is that there are still people in our discipline for whom the literal understanding of philosophy as the “love of wisdom” is meaningful. One just needs to know where to find such teachers.

The second issue is this: Father Sanks wisely notes it is problematic to be stressing a context that is geocentric and anthropocentric at a time characterized by awareness of the “new, post-Hubble cosmology.” But unfortunately, he omits any reference to another centered perspective that is at least as old as and arguably most damaging to our theology: androcentrism.

Thankfully, however, we live in an era where the consciousness-distorting view of a male-centered universe is not only recognized but rigorously critiqued by a multitude of scholars both here and abroad. To name just a small sampling of resources that can add both breadth and depth to seminary education, consider, for example: Catherine Mowry LaCugna’s “Catholic Women as Ministers and Theologians,”

published by *America* in 1992; the recently published book by Barbara E. Reid, O.P., *Wisdom’s Feast: An Invitation to Feminist Interpretation of the Scriptures*; and the Liturgical Press’s commitment to publish the *Wisdom Commentary on the Bible*.

Admittedly, some seminarians may find these feminist works unnerving. Such students perhaps could be eased into an encounter that, while painful, is necessary by their first reading *Catholic Women Speak*, the book incisively reviewed by *America*’s own Luke Hansen, S.J., in the 11/28 issue.

BARBARA PARSONS
Platteville, Wis.



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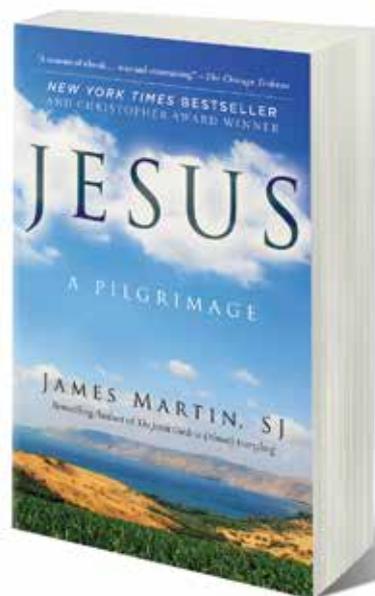
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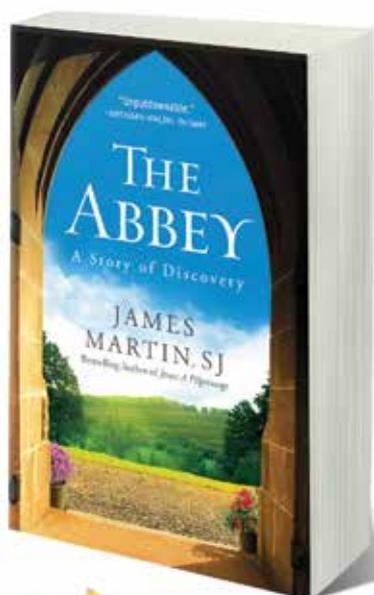
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SOCIETY OF JESUS

Jesuits: Models of Reconciliation For a World in Need of Mercy

SUPERIOR WISDOM. Arturo Sosa, S.J., left, newly elected superior general of the Jesuits, is interviewed in Rome by Matt Malone, S.J., of America.



In a world of conflict, deeply in need of the mercy frequently implored by Pope Francis, Jesuits can be agents of reconciliation and dialogue, the Society's new superior general said in an exclusive interview with **America**.

Arturo Sosa, S.J., elected on Oct. 14 superior general for the Society of Jesus, told **America's** editor in chief, Matt Malone, S.J., that he believes the far-flung Jesuits can be models of discernment, adaptability and "the very rich experience of...multiculturality" for the church and the world, especially in those regions of conflict where Jesuits are present.

He spoke with Father Malone in Rome on Nov. 28.

Father Sosa, born in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1948, is the first Jesuit from Latin America to be elected to the office, which is usually a lifetime position. His election comes as the church is experiencing its first Latin American pope. He suggests this historic moment represents an invitation "to see the Latin American church" and the progress it has made since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

"Jorge Mario Bergoglio—Pope Francis—and myself, we're sons of a church and a living church. The Latin American church has made a very nice process after Vatican II. We were formed in that process—the pope and myself—in different points in Latin America."

That mutual historical experience, he said, "takes very seriously the faith of the people...takes very seriously the community life as the base of the church life, takes very seriously the respect for the other and very seriously tries to make the social justice a practical commitment of the church, of the society."

A Jesuit pope creates special opportunities and connections for the Society to be of service to the whole church, Father Sosa said, "because [Pope Francis] knows and he practices very well the Ignatian spirituality. He talks all the time about that—about discernment, about consolation, about desolation, about reconciliation."

"And also he is a person very committed to the Vatican II view of the church," the father general added: "all the synodality—[that] this is a co-responsibility."

"This is a man who understands very well the role of the religious life in the church. So for the Society it's really an opportunity to be used."

On Nov. 26, just a few days before the two Jesuits spoke in Rome, a former superior general, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., passed away in Lebanon.

Father Kolvenbach had accepted in 1983 the burden of leading the Society during a time of strained relations with the pope at the time, John Paul II. Describing the late Father Kolvenbach as both "father and brother" to him, Father Sosa said he would be remembered for his openness to dialogue and his sensitivity during a difficult time. "He made this kind of tension between being in fidelity to the pope and being in fidelity to the discernment of the Society about the mission of faith and justice." He added that the late father general "opened the Society" to dialogue with other cultures. "He was very aware of the importance [of other

traditions]—different from the Latin tradition—in the church.

After the shock of being elected superior general, he said, he quickly came to feel at peace with the decision of his brother Jesuits, partly because of his confidence in the system of discernment applied by Jesuits to the election.

“It’s a time of praying, of discernment, of dialogue among the electors,”

HIGHER EDUCATION

A Pledge to Protect ‘Dreamers’

Presidents of 27 Jesuit colleges and universities pledged themselves to “protect to the fullest extent of the law undocumented students on our campuses” and to “promote retention of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program” in a statement released on Nov. 30. The presidents said they also would “support and stand with our students, faculty and staff regardless of their faith traditions.”

The Jesuit statement joins two other recent position statements from university presidents who have taken a stand in support of the nation’s so-called Dreamers, young adults who had been brought without documentation into the United States as children. One statement, signed by more than 70 college and university presidents, was released through the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities.

The school presidents acted in anticipation of a crackdown on undocumented young people when President-elect Donald J. Trump assumes office in January. Many worry that the president-elect may follow through on campaign pledges to rescind President Obama’s executive orders and seek

he said. He described it as a deeply spiritual experience, of “being in the hands of God.”

“If we take seriously that the Spirit talks in the election...that gives me peace,” he said. “It was not my desire; it was not my plan; I didn’t want to do that. So it’s really like a call from the Spirit through my brothers, the Society.”

widespread deportations of undocumented people. The DACA provisions had been implemented by the Obama



FAMILY DISUNION. Immigration advocates demonstrate for deferring deportation plans in front of the White House in Washington in December 2015.

administration to address the special case of adults brought as children into the United States. Many face deportation to countries and cultures they have never known.

In an attempt to head off the possible intervention against DACA by the incoming Trump administration, Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, is readying legislation that would extend legal protections to the 740,000 young people who have been shielded from deportation by President Obama’s 2012 executive order.

In the statement released by the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, the presidents wrote, “Grounded in our Catholic and Jesuit mission, we are guided by our commitment to uphold the dignity of every person, to work for the common good of our nation and to promote a living faith that works for justice.”

The presidents said that their institutional roles represented a sacred trust that “prompts us to labor for solidarity among all people and especially with and for the poor and marginalized of our society...[and] calls us to embrace the entire human family, regardless of their immigration status or religious allegiance.”

The presidents said that in addition to the spiritual and moral call to defend DACA, “experience has shown us that our communities are immeasurably enriched by the presence, intelligence, and committed contributions of undocumented students, as well as of faculty and staff of every color and from every faith tradition.”

Regarding a potential federal pushback against the institutions because of their stand on undocumented students once the new administration moves into power in January, the A.J.C.U. spokesperson, Deanna Howes, said, “Certainly the presidents are aware of the political climate and things that are going on right now, but as the statement says: This is part of our Jesuit heritage and mission—to support all students regardless of their legal status. She described the position as “very much in keeping with the character of Jesuit institutions.”

Signatories to the A.J.C.U. statement included all the member presidents with the exception of William Leahy, S.J., of Boston College.

Jack Dunn, the Boston College spokesperson, said Father Leahy's support for DACA should not be in doubt because of that omission. "Father has clearly stated his position, that he fully supports DACA, and that's what's important," Mr. Dunn said, pointing out that the Boston College president had already "expressed his support for DACA within the Boston College community and, having signed two statements before the A.J.C.U.'s statement was released, believed that was sufficient."

Post-Castro Church

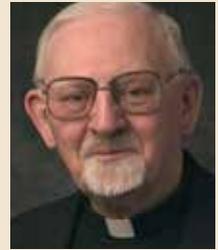
Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami was one of the first Catholic Church officials to respond on Nov. 26 after the death of Fidel Castro. "The death of this figure should lead us to invoke the patroness of Cuba, the Virgin of Charity, calling for peace for Cuba and its people," he said in a statement. Later that day at Ermita de la Caridad, a Miami shrine that honors Cuba's patron, Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre, he said, "The Cuban people are a noble people but also a people who suffer." Referring to recent moments in the history of the island, when Catholics hid their faith fearing persecution by a government and a society that looked down on religion, he said the Virgin was present in the prayer cards people hid in their dressers and present with those inside and outside Cuba who "fight for respect for human dignity and to establish a future of freedom, justice and peace."

An American Martyr

Pope Francis has recognized the martyrdom of the Rev. Stanley Rother of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, making him the first martyr born in the United States and clearing the way for his beatification. The Vatican

NEWS BRIEFS

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., who served from 1983 to 2008 as the 29th Superior General of the Society of Jesus, died in Beirut, Lebanon, on Nov. 26, just four days shy of his 88th birthday. + In a report released on Nov. 30, Caritas Europa charged that austerity policies have left 120 million people in Europe "living in or at risk of poverty...a clear indication that current social protection systems are not keeping their promise." + Colombia's Congress ratified a **revised peace agreement** with FARC rebels on Nov. 30, the apparent epilogue to four years of negotiations, a stunning referendum-rejection and last-minute compromises. + Pax Christi International called for a new peace process between **Israelis and Palestinians** and a return to a dialogue "rooted in mutual respect for human rights and the dignity of the other" in a statement released on Dec. 1. + After the deaths of more than 9,100 Haitians, outgoing U.N. **Secretary General Ban Ki-moon apologized** on Dec. 1 for the United Nations' role in the spread of cholera in Haiti, but stopped short of admitting that U.N. peacekeepers brought the disease to the country in 2010.



Peter-Hans Kolvenbach

made the announcement on Dec. 2. Father Rother, born March 27, 1935, on his family's farm near Okarche, Okla., was gunned down on July 28, 1981, in a Guatemalan village where he ministered to the poor. He had gone to Santiago Atitlan in 1968 on assignment from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. He helped the people there build a small hospital, school and its first Catholic radio station. As the violence rose around him, he received numerous death threats over his opposition to the presence of the Guatemalan military in the area. Father Rother chose to remain in his Guatemalan community, explaining in a letter back home before his murder, "the shepherd cannot run away at the first sign of danger."

Iraq Devastation

The Syriac Catholic Patriarch Ignace Joseph III Younan said he was horrified to see widespread devastation and what

he called "ghost towns" during a recent visit to northern Iraq. He said by email that there was little left in some of the communities that he toured on Nov. 27-29 and that "the emptiness of the streets except for military people...the devastation and burned-out houses and churches" was shocking. About 100,000 Christians—among them more than 60,000 Syriac Catholics—were expelled from the Nineveh Plain by the Islamic State group in the summer of 2014 as the militants campaigned to expand their reach into Iraq. The patriarch met with the faith community, religious leaders and nongovernmental organizations to discuss the future of Christianity in northern Iraq. Based on "what happened in recent times," the patriarch noted, "it was the overall opinion that none would dare to return, rebuild and stay in the homeland, unless a safe zone for the Christian communities in the Plain of Nineveh is guaranteed."

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

DISPATCH | NEW YORK

Record Homelessness Hits a High Rent City

New Yorkers can be forgiven if they believed homelessness were a problem consigned to the past. Tent cities that in the 1970s and '80s crowded city parks are gone—mostly—and television exposés no longer shock the public with depictions of subhuman conditions at the city's infamous homeless hotels.

But while the problem of New York homelessness may be less obvious on the streets—depending on the neighborhood a visitor may pass through—it has not only never gone away, it is actually spiking to new highs. In September the city's Coalition for the Homeless reported a new daily record of just under 62,000 people in city shelters, including nearly 16,000 families and about 24,000 children. (There is no accurate measurement of New York's larger, unsheltered homeless population, according to the coalition.)

The Rev. Michael Callaghan is the executive director of Nazareth Housing, a housing assistance and homelessness prevention service that has long been at work on the crisis. Today's homeless people, he says, are often hidden from view—women with children escaping abusive relationships or living doubled, tripled, even quadrupled up with family or friends or sheltering in building basements or other improvised places that were never intended for human habitation.

For him, the cause and effect of New York's homeless problem is not hard to discern. "The overarching problem is poverty," Father Callaghan says.

The big city may have a reputation as a glittery play-land for the wealthy,

but for most New Yorkers it is simple a gritty place to call home. That is becoming harder to do all the time. A study conducted by the Coalition for the Homeless reports that while median rents in low-income neighborhoods shot up 26 percent between 2010 and 2014, real median household income in those communities fell 7 percent. Where those data points cross, people are losing their homes.

As Nazareth Housing's director for

The cause and effect is not hard to discern. 'The overarching problem is poverty.'

Outreach, Prevention and Supportive Housing, Mildred Perez works with people fresh to homelessness or on the verge of it. Plenty still lose their homes because of classic dilemmas like an unexpected medical crisis, the loss of a job or death of a spouse. But given how close to the bone many New Yorkers are forced to live, Ms. Perez has seen families topple into homelessness after paying for a child's birthday party or Christmas shopping, even a weekly supermarket visit—expenses taken for granted by families not as stressed by high housing costs.

One of the people she worked with was Natalie Rizzo. Within a two-year span as the Great Recession gripped New York and the rest of the nation, Ms. Rizzo lost her marriage, her job and finally her home. By 2009 she had been struggling for a year to raise her young son solo, her only income a \$400 weekly unemployment check. Two of those checks a month were not enough

to cover her rent, but because of them she did not qualify for any other social assistance. She eventually stopped paying rent as survival expenses like food were prioritized. She decided she had to abandon her apartment, but she did not want to abandon her life in New York to double up with relatives in Florida, nor did she want to be a burden on other family members in the city.

Ms. Rizzo sold her furniture and anything else she could from her apartment and prepared to enter the city's shelter network. "That was my lowest point," she remembered, "sleeping on the floor of my apartment that night," knowing the next morning she would be officially among the city's homeless.

Fortunately for Ms. Rizzo, she quickly connected with Nazareth Housing. Taking full advantage of the various programs facilitated through Nazareth, she finds herself a few years later, not only in an affordable one-bedroom apartment with her now teenage son, but a graduate of City College and working on her master's degree. She plans to become a special education teacher.

Grateful for all the help she has received, Ms. Rizzo stands out as one of those heartwarming, homeless turnaround stories loved by the media, but she remains painfully aware of how tenuous her current standing is in a high-rent city like New York. These days, "I don't take anything for granted," Ms. Rizzo says.

She's content to live in her Lower East Side one-bedroom, but would like to someday to move into a two-bedroom that would better suit her family's needs. That's the hope anyway. For now she knows, that is still a dream she cannot afford.

KEVIN CLARKE

KEVIN CLARKE is *America's* chief correspondent.

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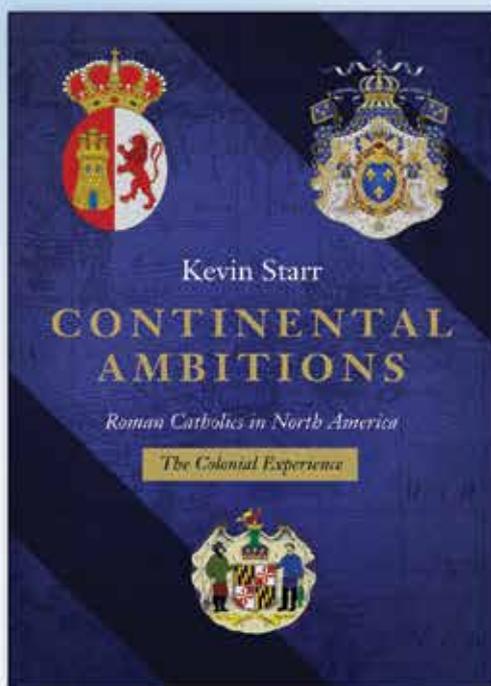
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KEVIN STARR has served as the State Librarian for California. He is currently a Professor History at the University of Southern California, where he is a director of the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies. He is author of the acclaimed *Americans and the California Dream* series.



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Peace Over Politics

This Christmas season comes as the breath between two battles, the political battle that just ended with the election of a new president and the one sure to begin once he takes office. For some opponents, who see the election as a call to mobilize, there is no letup. But for many Americans, this interregnum is a respite, a time to turn away from the clash of ideas, interests and agendas we have just experienced as a nation. It overlaps a holy time, a time for silence, gratitude, humility. That time, and that spirit, seem sorely needed.

Greatness is a word we heard often during the last six months. Donald J. Trump campaigned for president on the need to restore American greatness; Hillary Clinton maintained we had never lost it. But national greatness never came about through advocacy or assertions of it—more often it is in response to dire necessity—and the greatness of America is so axiomatic among our politicians that it is easy to forget how prone we are as a nation, and as individuals, to arrogance, ignorance and error. Two failed wars during the past dozen years, a political system that voters in both parties perceive as corrupt and dysfunctional, a widening gulf between the haves and have-nots, and a dearth of imaginative ideas on how to deal effectively with these and other challenges demonstrate our limitations.

The presidential race did not address those limitations so much as highlight them. Mr. Trump's flame-throwing populism won the Electoral College, but the vehement

opposition it stirred has the country more divided than it has been in decades. His candidacy showed our democracy to be more fragile than we had supposed and underscored how baseless are claims made about America's superiority to other countries.

As a country, we do not examine our blunders. We ignore them, even our biggest ones. By not reflecting on both our failings and our many blessings and advantages, we lose perspective. Our problems are real but relatively minor when compared with those of other countries. We are a fortunate people living in an imperfect, not-so-great democracy, as has been true from its inception. Accepting and acknowledging our not-so-greatness, that as a people we are about average as regards conduct and sometimes worse, might be a saving grace—the beginning of an end to grandiosity and a rejection, at least for a time, of the delusions of grandeur to which we are prone. Donald Trump is not the only American to reside in Trumpland, that shining place we go to in our mind where we are forever strong, justified and righteous.

"Politics, as a practice, whatever its professions, had always been the systematic organization of hatreds," Henry Adams wrote more than a century ago in his autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams*. The son of Lincoln's ambassador to Great Britain during the Civil War and the grandson and great-grandson of two presidents, John Quincy Adams and John Adams,

Henry Adams grew up in a family steeped in politics. I hope that politics can be something better than our hatreds, that it can be also an expression of our virtues, but Adams's statement is as apt in our own time as it was in his.

The I-hate-Donald-Trump camp and the I-hate-Hillary-Clinton camp seem roughly even today. After the election, the former may have the edge in intensity and fury. The impassioned opposition to him has not ceased with his victory, and almost every day prominent individuals and political groups make statements as to why his election should be overturned. But unless the Electoral College decides otherwise, Donald Trump will be our next president.

As such, he deserves the good will of all Americans, even those who hate him, and the cooperation of Democrats in Congress when they can rightly give it.

The acrimony in our country will not be easily overcome. Forbearance, forgiveness, patience, charity—these are not democratic traits but what faith urges us to strive for. After 9/11, religion was regarded with suspicion. The election may do something similar for our view of politics, reminding us that if politics can inspire our best efforts, it can also elicit our worst instincts. In an increasingly secular society, in which many regard religion as irrelevant, we still need the peace of Christ, a peace that is neither created nor destroyed by politics.

I hope
that politics
can be
something
better
than our
hatreds.



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Creating ‘Silence’

An interview with Martin Scorsese

BY JAMES MARTIN

Martin Scorsese, the acclaimed filmmaker, has completed a film about 17th-century, Portuguese Jesuits ministering in Japan, based on Shūsaku Endō’s novel *Silence*. The film, to be released this month, stars Liam Neeson as Father Cristóvão Ferreira, a Jesuit who recants his faith after undergoing torture, and Andrew Garfield and Adam Driver as two younger Jesuits, Fathers Sebastião Rodrigues and Francisco Garupe, respectively, whose mission is to find their mentor. They, too, find themselves submitted to torture and struggle with whether to apostatize.

Early in this interview, Mr. Scorsese spoke about his childhood as a Catholic schoolboy educated by the Sisters of Charity on the Lower East Side of New York, his brief stint at a minor seminary, his love for the church, which he said took him out of the “everyday world,” as well as his early fascination with Maryknoll Missionaries. “I loved what they had to say,” he said about the Maryknolls, “the courage, the testing and the helping.” This interview took place in Mr. Scorsese’s office in New York on Nov. 8 with James Martin, S.J., who served as an adviser to the film. This part of the conversation, edited for length and clarity, focuses on the creation of “Silence” and Mr. Scorsese’s own spiritual journey in making the film. The full interview was filmed and can be viewed online at americamagazine.org.

James Martin, S.J.: *When did you run across Silence, the book?*

Martin Scorsese: I wound up at Cardinal Hayes [High School in New York] within two to three years [of leaving the minor seminary] and it gave me a structure and a focus. Somehow at that time also, around 1959 or 1960, the possibility of making films became very real. The whole industry changed. You could make independent films on the East Coast. It wasn’t that way before. So I wound up at Washington Square College, and the passion found its way into the films. “Mean Streets” has a very, very strong religious content to the picture, and the premise really, and to a certain extent “Taxi Driver” and certainly “Raging Bull,” though I didn’t know it.

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is editor at large of *America* and the author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*; *Twitter:* @jamesmartinsj.

Right around that time, I had gotten involved with [Nikos] Kazantzakis’s book *The Last Temptation of Christ*. I wanted to make that. By 1988, when that was finally made, and it was about to be released, there was a great deal of an uproar, and we had to show the film, the film at that moment, to different religious groups to show what it was, rather than arguing about it without having seen it. One of the people was Archbishop Paul Moore of New York, Episcopal, and he came to a little meeting afterwards at a small dinner we had. He felt



that the film was, as he said, “Christologically correct.”

He said, “I’m going to send you a book,” and described some of the stories in [*Silence*], and he described the confrontation, the “choices,” the concept of apostasy and faith. I received the book a few days later, and in 1989, a year later, is when I read it.

By the time I did “Goodfellas,” I had promised the great Japanese director Akira Kurosawa to be in a film of his called “Dreams.” He wanted me to play van Gogh.

So I was 15 days over schedule on “Goodfellas.” The studio was furious. We were just scurrying to finish, and Kurosawa was waiting for me in Japan. He was 82 years old, and he had just finished the majority of the shooting, and he had only my scene to shoot and he was waiting. Two days after shooting that film we flew to Tokyo and then to Hokkaido, and while I was there I read the book.



Above, Martin Scorsese, left, with James Martin, S.J. Left, on the set with Andrew Garfield. Below, Adam Driver and Andrew Garfield in “Silence.”

Actually, I finished it on the bullet train from Tokyo to Kyoto.

So you read Silence in Japan. This is in 1989?

1989. August, September. That’s when I thought, “This would be an amazing picture to make at some point.” At first I didn’t think so. At first I didn’t really immediately know, while I was reading the book, how to realize it,

make it real, stage it, because I didn’t know the heart of it. In other words, I wasn’t able to really interpret it. And I think it took all these years. Because I tried writing a script right away, around 1990. Jay Cox and myself, in 1991, were able to get [the rights], and we were going to make the film right away; and we got halfway through the script, and I didn’t know what I was doing. I just didn’t know.

Then I got sidetracked doing other films: “Age of Innocence.” I owed a film to Universal. I had to do “Casino,” wound up doing “Kundun,” which also was a way of working some of this out. In the meantime, I was always going back to the book. What’s important to understand is that from 1989 to 1990 to 2014, or ’15, when we finally got to shoot the picture, there were many legal problems, and it was a Gordian knot of intricacies, a complicated mess, a legal mess, and so it became more forbidding to do the picture. Some of the people involved wound up in jail. It was not for reasons of dealing with “Silence,” but other business practices.

Finally, there were a number of people who worked it out, but it took many years to try to understand, or feel comfortable with, how to visualize the picture, and how to deal with the last sequences of the film. Not just the confrontation at the end, but the epilogue.

You said it took you a while to understand the “heart” of the book. How would you describe the heart of the book?



Well, it's the depth of faith. It's the struggle for the very essence of faith. Stripping away everything else around it.

The vehicle that one takes towards faith can be very helpful. So, the church—the institution of the church, the sacraments—this all can be very helpful. But ultimately it has to be yourself, and you have to find it. You have to find that faith, or you have to find a relationship with Jesus with yourself really, because ultimately that's the one you face.

Right. Father Rodrigues is very free by the end.

Yes. He is. But it doesn't negate in my mind those who choose to live a life according to the rules of an institution, of the institution of the Catholic Church, or however one proceeds in their life with their own beliefs. But ultimately they can't do it for you. You've got to do it yourself. That's the problem! [Laughs.]

And the invitation.

And the invitation, and it keeps calling you.

It does. Every day.

It keeps calling you, and it's in the other people around you. It's in the people closest to you. This is what it is, and you suddenly get slapped in the face by it, and you say, "Wake up!"

But the shock is, without describing the ending of the movie, that the character finds that what he is about to do, or what he does, is antithetical to what probably all of Christian culture in Europe thinks should be done.

That's right. That's what was so compelling about telling this story. Because how could you support that? Or how could you champion his choice, his decision? Then you say: "You put yourself in that place. Think about the weakness of the human spirit. The weakness of humanity." And I've seen it. I've experienced it over the years myself too. I've experienced it with people making the same mistakes over and over again, and there are only certain people around them going to help them or be with them. It's a test. The problem is like in "Mean Streets," the character Charlie chooses his own penance. You can't do that. [Laughs.]

Often God gives it to you, or life gives it to you.

Yes. When you least expect it.

Right.

And it becomes an annoyance, and you really say: "No. That's it." [Laughs.]

Right. It's not the cross. I said to my spiritual director once, "This is not the cross that I would choose," and he said, "Well, if it's the cross you choose, then it's hardly a cross."



That's right, because it's comfortable to you! [Laughs.]

Right.

And that's what fascinated me about the decision he makes. It's such a sweeping decision too. It's very clear what he does. Yet he has it solely in him. It's there in his heart. And it's there in the book, I know.

You have this book that means so much to you spiritually, you're able to work on it and now you see the result. What is that process like for you spiritually?

Ultimately, it becomes like a pilgrimage. It's a pilgrim-

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Above, a scene from “Silence.” Left, Martin Scorsese and Rodrigo Prieto the cinematographer, right.

age. We’re still on the road and it’s never going to end. I thought it would for a little while, but once I was there, I realized no. Even in the editing room, it’s unfinished. It will always be unfinished.

It’s easy to make a pilgrimage the way I want to make a pilgrimage [laughs], but it wasn’t easy to make the pilgrimage. It’s not easy to make the film, and there were a lot of sacrifices. They can’t even be fixed in a way, some of the things that happened personally, so there were a lot of sacrifices to make the picture. Whether it’s a good picture or not is up to other people, but for me the spirituality helped to a certain extent, and it’s something that I would want my children to feel comfortable with in the future.

Christian spirituality in general?

Yes.

What you mean by saying the movie is still unfinished?

Well, there are parts of the book I wish I could have shot that we chose not to, that I would have like to have realized,

but it’s a different form. Literature is very different from the visual image and the moving image. So could I have done it page by page almost? It’s almost trying to reach a point in which you pull things away rather than putting things in, and hopefully the things that are in resonate. But the resonating? I’d like to make a film just on one of those vibrations, so to speak. So for me I don’t want to finish it. It’s been way over schedule too. I can say that now, but it’s time to finish it. It’s time to finish it, and it’s just time to let it go out there and people see it. That’ll be good, and take what comes. But it’s almost a very private thing.

Of course. Now, when you read the book there were some scenes that I’m sure that are very moving to you and that really affected you on a very deep level. When you see your film what kind of reaction do you have to those scenes?

There are a few scenes in the film that affect me. There’s no doubt. The one of the martyrs in the ocean.

That’s a beautiful scene.

While we were there you could feel it. When we were shooting it, I'm telling you, you could feel it.

What could you feel?

You felt the beauty and the spirituality of what was trying to be enacted. You could feel it through the actors. Through Shinya Tsukamoto and Yoshi Oida, Andrew and Adam, it was gut-wrenching and sad and beautiful. Those caves were beautiful. When we went on location just to check those caves, when we were in there, there was a woman in there meditating. It's a special place. So we spent a lot of time there, and it was comforting, in an odd way. It was very moving. And when I see it on film, yes, I get some of that.

What do you think someone without faith would take from this film?

Look, we know that there will be a lot of people that are going to be scathing, I would think—those without faith. The problem is the certitude, particularly in the modern world; because with technology, we always think...well, I imagine that no matter what point in time, particularly from the Industrial Revolution on, you must have thought that this was the best we can ever do.

In other words, this is the best of all possible worlds and we're so advanced. And maybe we're not.

But with the technology and the possibility of explaining spirituality through chemistry of the brain, all of this, I think

some people would be extremely hostile to it, or at least point out maybe the negative aspects of the "mission," so to speak. And there have been so many films, so many books on that, going back to "Aguirre, the Wrath of God." In any event, this goes beyond that, I think. This goes to the very essence of the gift that they brought.

My sense is that for someone without faith, they are brought along on Father Rodrigues's journey; and he's a good person, and the Japanese Christians are good people.

They are. Yes.

My sense is that by the end the viewer is with Father Rodrigues, and experiencing it with him, and suffering with him. So it's less of a portrayal of the missionary that is just from the outside in, and more from the inside out.

When you talk about why did it take me so long to be able to attempt to put it on the screen, that's the issue: the inside out. It wasn't the obvious story. It really was deeper, as I was saying yesterday to somebody. They'd asked again about "Last Temptation." They said, "Do you think this was a direct offshoot?" I said, "Well, no. 'Last Temptation' was where I was at that time in my own search, and that left off on one track, and this took up another track. This went deeper." But I realized after that film, for myself, that I had to go deeper, and it wasn't going to be easy. I don't say I have gone deeper. I'm just saying that I had to try.

That's interesting. You mean deeper in terms of it being more stripped away?

Yes, but also to the very understanding of what compassion is about.

Yes, because in the end it's about the relationship between him and Jesus.

Yes.

You had an early fascination with missionaries. You came into contact with this book about missionaries. You planned to do the film for years and years, and now you've finally realized this beautiful project. How has the making of the film influenced your faith life or your spirituality?

Well, I think it's forced me to look at it very closely. That's an easy phrase. But it's to contemplate it and to accept that if I've gotten to a certain point it's mainly because my life may be ending. Also, there are people around me that are very close to me, and I'm finding that they actually, not intentionally, but they, plus this story, seem to clarify for me what life is. And it's like a gift in a way.

Can I live up to it? I don't know. I honestly don't think so, but what you do is you keep trying. Just keep trying. That's the thing. ▲

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A Missing Memorial

How should Chicago properly honor Emmett Till?

BY CAROLYN ALESSIO

*Emmett's mother is a pretty-faced thing;
the tint of pulled taffy.
She sits in a red room,
drinking black coffee.
She kisses her killed boy.
And she is sorry.
Chaos in windy grays
through a red prairie.*

— Gwendolyn Brooks

"The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till"

Loose change and sagging sunflowers decorate Emmett Till's modest grave marker at Burr Oak Cemetery, just outside of Chicago. After one of my own teenage students was murdered, the site became a place of occasional pilgrimage for me. Sergio was a wildly promising teenager at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, where I teach. His death by shooting was a terrible reminder of the injustice that persists in the city where Till lived most of his 14 years.

Till's famous funeral casket—glass-topped at the insistence of his mother, who wanted the world to see his tortured body—now takes its place as a cornerstone of the new National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 24. (He was reburied in a different casket in 2005 after his body was exhumed as part of a new investigation into his murder.) It is a fitting time to question whether Till's hometown of Chicago has come to terms with the legacy of his life and death.

Emmett Till was murdered in 1955 for allegedly whistling at a white woman in Mississippi, where he was visiting family. The boy's brutal death helped to

CAROLYN ALESSIO is an English teacher at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago. Her writing has appeared in *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Pushcart Prize* and *World Literature Today*.

launch the modern civil rights movement. That history—and his mother's courage in showing the world his sickening fate—have rendered his grave a hallowed place. Yet the marker itself is easy to miss. In other corners of Chicago, the city's white titans of industry lie in rest on the regal grounds of the Rosehill or Graceland cemeteries. Why has the city failed to honor the grave of its most famous martyred son? Racism, greed and a bizarre graveyard scandal provide parts of the answer.

From a distance, the only way to spot Till's flat grave marker is a small metal sign nailed to a wooden stake that says "Emmett Till Memorial Bridge." Running horizontally near the top of the stake, the sign completes a makeshift cross and refers to the city's renaming of a highway overpass and a section of 71st Street on Chicago's South Side in 2005. The area continues to struggle with poverty and gang violence. Two years ago, a 9-year-old boy was shot down in a dead-end alley two streets away.



ART: "THE EMMETT TILL MEMORIAL TRIPTYCH" BY SANDRA HANSEN.
PHOTO: LOUIS SCHAKEL/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/ SANDRA HANSEN

Till's remaining family members placed the sign by his grave at a recent memorial service marking the 60th anniversary of his death. Family members of recent, high-profile African-American victims of killings also attended the service, including the mother of Trayvon Martin and the father of Michael Brown.

The Rev. Michael Pflieger, the activist pastor of St. Sabina on Chicago's South Side, helped preside over the memorial service. "I joined the anniversary because I believe we are not passing on his story like we should," he explained by email. "And the violence against Emmett Till is very connected with what is going on today."

Till's name is frequently invoked in connection with tragic

Why has the city failed to honor the grave of its most famous martyred son? Racism, greed and a bizarre graveyard scandal provide part of the answer.

deaths that have given rise to the Black Lives Matter movement. Joy Bivins, director of curatorial affairs at the Chicago History Museum and native South Side Chicagoan, recently told me in an interview:

There is still a good deal to learn from Emmett Till's story, unfortunately. While the surface has changed and lots of laws have been enacted since the time of his murder, we still see that there's a very vulnerable place that young black people have in American society—nationally and locally, as well. It seems that the actors have changed, but in many ways, the vulnerability of the story of that black body has not changed.

The nature of racial violence has changed significantly since Till's murder. What hasn't changed is the perception that some lives are fundamentally cheap. If a young man or woman living in one of Chicago's affluent neighborhoods were to be gunned down in broad daylight, it would likely be a front-page story. When a teenage person of color is murdered on gang-ridden streets, he or she often becomes just another tragic statistic.

That was the case with my murdered student, Sergio, who showed remarkable creativity in class and earned impressive test scores. His friends and family said that he was not a gang member, but because Sergio's murder while rid-

ing in a friend's car had some of the hallmarks of gang-related violence, his death made few headlines.

When I ask my high school students if they have heard of Emmett Till, many say they have, and from a wide variety of sources. They may mention a poster at an elementary school, an exhibit at the Chicago History Museum, a TV show or, most often, the music of another prominent Chicagoan, Kanye West, who in his breakthrough single "Through the Wire" described himself after a disfiguring accident as a "modern-day Emmett Till."

A Fitting Remembrance

Although Till's story resonates in Chicago to this day, the physical reminders of his life and death are not easy to find. Chicago lost custody of Till's casket in 2009 after investigators discovered it battered and abandoned in a storage shed at the cemetery. Raccoons and possums had taken up residence in the casket that had once alerted the world to Jim Crow injustices and racial violence. A former manager at the cemetery is now serving prison time for an elaborate reburial scheme in which she and several other employees resold burial plots and either exhumed the bodies once buried there or stacked several corpses in a single plot. Though Till's remains still lie beneath his oxidized, copper-plated marker, more than 200 graves at the historic African-American cemetery were believed to have been raided.

Adding to the sacrilege and heartbreak, the former manager reportedly broke a promise to Till's mother, Mamie Till Mobley, that Burr Oak would one day erect an "Emmett Till Historical Museum and Mausoleum" on the site. Till's mother, a teacher and activist, is also buried there, alongside her second husband, but her elegant crypt is oddly separated from her son's grave by the distance of roughly a city block. "Her Pain United a Nation" reads her apt epitaph.

Recently, when my sophomore students and I were reading a poem from Marilyn Nelson's book *A Wreath for Emmett Till*, I showed the students photos of Till's current gravesite. "That's it?" asked more than one surprised sophomore. "There's nothing else there?"

I mentioned how the first time I visited Burr Oak, five years ago, the situation was even worse: Crime tape from the investigation into the reburial scheme still covered the grounds. Dirt streaked Till's marker, and it was hard to imagine any improvement in the whole grim scene. Today, however, the interior roads are paved and the grass carefully trimmed by a conscientious staff. A lovely new monument dedicated to families affected by the reburial scandal stands just inside the entrance. I saw it during my most recent visit,



when I also noticed the diligent grounds crew busily preparing for a burial. Despite the time pressure, they welcomed me as I approached Till's grave and answered a few questions. Interacting with the new, vigilant stewards of Burr Oak reminded me that the work of the living can also serve as a memorial.

"The power of [Emmett Till's] story is not necessarily in the tragedy of his murder," Ms. Bivins told me. "It's the ability of his mother and the community to turn it into the story of his vulnerability."

It may not be essential to have a large cemetery structure for Till. Perhaps the memorial services and renewed tending of Burr Oak are recognition enough, coupled with Chicago's spiritual affinity for the teen. But the fundamental way to honor Emmett Till is not through mausoleums or pop references. It is the struggle to end the racial violence that still afflicts this city and our country—a more distant goal than the search for a fitting physical remembrance.

"You can never get enough of Emmett Till's story," said the filmmaker Keith Beauchamp, who produced a documentary on Till in 2004 and is currently working with Whoopi Goldberg and Frederick Zollo on "Till," a film about the notorious murder. "There's no other story that speaks to the consciousness of America better than Till's, and the story must be told, time and time again." **A**

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No 'Reform of the Reform'

For some years now there has been talk of a “reform of the reform” of the liturgy promulgated by Paul VI after the Second Vatican Council. Such talk became more vocal following Pope Benedict XVI’s decision in July 2007 to restore the “extraordinary” rite alongside the “ordinary” one. Moreover, more recently some prelates, including Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, have given credence to this possibility and advocated that priests return to celebrating Mass facing the altar rather than the congregation.

Antonio Spadaro, S.J., asked Pope Francis what he thinks of such proposals when he interviewed him on July 9, four days after Cardinal Sarah had given a lecture in London calling for priests to implement this change at the beginning of Advent and affirming that a “reform of the reform” is underway.

Francis’ answer appears in the preface to the 1,000-page book *Nei Tuoi Occhi È La Mia Parola (In Your Eyes Is My Word)*, a collection of his main talks and homilies as archbishop of Buenos Aires.

He began by affirming that Pope Benedict XVI (in his *motu proprio* of July 2007 “*Summorum Pontificum*,” on the use of the Roman Liturgy prior to the reform of 1970), “made a right and magnanimous gesture by going to meet some groups and persons with a certain mentality that had nostalgia [for the old liturgy] and were distancing themselves.”

He emphasized, however, that this

was “an exception” and “for that reason it is referred to as ‘the extraordinary’ rite, but the ordinary rite of the church is not this.” Francis recognized the need “to go to meet with magnanimity the one who is attached to a certain way of praying,” but he stated clearly that “the ordinary rite is not this.”

He insisted that the Second Vatican Council and its “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” “must be carried forward as they are” and declared furthermore that “to speak of ‘the reform of the reform’ is an error!”

Probing further, Father Spadaro asked whether “apart from those who are sincere and ask for this possibility out of custom or devotion,” the desire for this rite “could also express something else.”

Francis responded: “I ask myself this. For example, I always try to understand what is behind persons who are too young to have experienced the preconciliar liturgy but who nevertheless want it. At times, I find myself in front of persons who are very rigid, an attitude of rigidity. And I ask myself: How come such rigidity?” And when one “digs” deeper, he said, one discovers that “this rigidity always hides something: insecurity, or at times something else.... Rigidity is defensive. True love is not rigid.”

Turning to the question of tradition, Father Spadaro noted that “some understand this also in a rigid way.” Francis responded, “But no: tradition blossoms!” Nevertheless, he said, “there’s a traditionalism that is a rigid fundamentalism; this is not good. Fidelity on the other hand implies growth. In

transmitting the deposit of faith from one epoch to another, tradition grows and consolidates itself with the passing of time, as St. Vincent of Lerins said in his *Commonitorium Primum*.” And the Liturgy of the Hours, the pope pointed out, quotes St. Vincent: “The dogma of the Christian religion too must follow these laws. It progresses, consolidates itself with the years, developing itself with time, deepening itself with age.”

It is worth noting that on the day Pope Francis spoke with Father Spadaro, he also received in private audience Cardinal Sarah, who has emerged as the standard bearer of those who are pushing for a “reform of the reform.” Two days later, at the pope’s instruction, the Vatican spokesman, Federico Lombardi, S.J.,

issued a declaration stating that the “ordinary” form of the celebration of the Mass is the one envisaged by the Missal promulgated by Paul VI, while the “extraordinary” rite approved by Benedict XVI is not to take its place. Father Lombardi denied that new liturgical directives would be introduced in Advent and asked that the expression “reform of the reform” be avoided in referring to the liturgy. He revealed that Cardinal Sarah “expressly agreed to all this” in his meeting with the pope.

In a word, Francis wants the Second Vatican Council’s directives on the liturgy to be more fully implemented, not rolled back. It seems clear that he feels this has not yet happened.

GERARD O’CONNELL

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

The End of Despair

How prayer saved me from myself

BY JOE WATSON JR.

I was driving home from church after my fourth Mass of the day, and the dark night hung like a nightmare, closing in and pressing down. My thoughts, churning like rapids, ventured deeper and deeper into the pit of despair.

My marriage had just ended. For several weeks I put up a strong front, not betraying the growing depression that was overcoming me. Eventually, it hit with the ferocity of a tsunami, making me spin and spin until finally I saw no way out, nowhere to go except the end.

Backing Up

When I got married, I doubt anyone imagined I would give up on the Catholic Church. After all, before I met the one, the girl I knew I would marry, I had been discerning a vocation with the Jesuits for nearly five years.

But I left. I left for some not-so-good reasons but primarily because I had no spiritual life to speak of. I found it much more difficult to have a healthy prayer life while married, especially after our kids were born. Occasionally, I said a rosary or recited some other prayers, but the distractions were too great. Without the help of a good, consistent spiritual

guide, I was in over my head, not prepared for marriage or the spiritual responsibilities it entailed.

But I came back. I came back to the church a week before my wife left

me were my salvation. Without the weeks I spent easing back into prayer, I would not be alive today.

On the Edge

It was a Sunday in November and the case of a young woman who had chosen to take her life by physician-assisted suicide had been all over the news for the past week. I attempted to conquer the questions gathering like storm clouds in my mind. Could I too choose to make the pain stop by staying busy? I volunteered to help out with as many of the Mass duties and as many Masses as I could—pushing the inevitable away and lying to myself that everything was O.K.

Eventually, the action was over and everyone had to go home. There is always a point when the doing ends, and then we are faced with the deafening and horrendous silence that is our thoughts. The light was extinguished; the darkness had conquered. Every thought that raced through my mind was worse than the last. The

drive home quickly became a torture. The only solace came when I devised the method that would be the most efficient but the least painful. I had heard about this point on the road: the flood, if you will, that sends one over the top. The relatively long drive from the church to my apartment became a curse.

But somewhere along the road,



me. I shudder to think of how things might be different now if I had not. I was even luckier to have found a wonderful priest who, though busy, took time to guide me back to a life closer to God. During this time, he gave me a piece of advice I would need to get through my darkest hours: “You do too much; you need to pray more.” This priest and what he taught

JOE WATSON JR., a native Texan and Army veteran, is a lay Dominican and a member of the Knights of Columbus. He has studied biochemistry and mathematics.

God broke through the thick, viscous shroud that hung as a barrier to my inner being. Finally, that shield was penetrated ever so slightly, just enough for a small piece of self-realization and reason to break through. Suddenly, the impending danger to my life was hanging on the air as clear as a wild animal standing nearby; only I was the wild animal.

I drove straight past my apartment complex and checked myself into the hospital about half a mile down the road. That decision saved my life.

When I refused to go to the V.A. hospital, the doctor sent for a government representative, a psychiatrist, to evaluate me. The representative put me very much at ease, and instead of chastising me for “wasting resources,” as I expected, he simply said: “You’re very strong! To have realized the danger you were in and then come here for help—that’s not common.” I thank God for that moment of uncommon strength in the midst of despair.

Walking With God

It has been a year and a half now since that fateful day, and I wish I could say that I am cured, but that is not true. In reality, this kind of thing almost never fully goes away. One must admit that. One must understand that, or it will eat you alive. The question now is not, “Am I cured?” but rather “How do I live?” Every day is a struggle that I must meet head on—but not alone; that is where I went wrong and sometimes still do. The struggle is too much for us as individuals. While having the support of another person is always a bonus, it is just that, a bonus. The key is having a relationship with the strongest, wisest and most loving being in our existence: God.

I know: It sounds like a cliché. But we often rely on our personal relationships with family and friends, especially when life hits hard. Why, then, is it so embarrassing to do the same with the Lord? I needed to leave my ego behind and stop worrying what others

thought of me. I began my journey the way one normally undertakes a new challenge: by finding teachers.

From the Benedictines I learned inner contemplation, to slow down, to meditate. At their monastery in Clear Creek, Okla., I was immersed in the beauty of the Liturgy of the Hours, which the monks prayed in the most arresting Gregorian chant.

With the guidance of Jesuits I was able to return to my Ignatian roots. They have a house just down the road from me, and the superior allowed me to go on retreats there, even though I could not pay all the costs. Through the assistance of these wonderful Jesuits and Ignatian spirituality, I learned to find the shadows, the damage, the problems in my soul before they are able to build into a new crescendo.

Finally, I have gained much from my lay brothers and sisters. I joined a lay chapter of the Order of Preachers soon after leaving the hospital and with them learned the joys of Dominican balance. I learned that what I need is not too much prayer, not too much work, not too much community or alone time but to balance all of them together.

In a recent Sunday homily, the priest, the one who brought me back to prayer when I needed it most, made a wonderful comment about achieving such balance: “When the Benedictines open their ‘schedule,’ they put down when they pray and meditate, then they fit in the work that needs to be done. When we open our schedules, we shove work in until there is barely any room left, and then we try to squeeze prayer in.”

Not that long ago, I was not even trying to squeeze prayer in. Today, my prayers are constant and consistent. I am not free of my depression. Each day I wake and must force myself to think good thoughts and force the bad ones away, and it does not always work. But I am at peace. And that, I pray, is where I will remain. **A**

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Teachers Who Teach

Let us now praise famous and not-so-famous teachers.

During my annual retreat I was praying a meditation on gratitude. I suddenly thought of Sister Thaddeus, the nun who had taught me in fourth grade at our parochial school in suburban Philadelphia in the early 1960s.

Three images returned. My friend Vince had the worst handwriting in the class. Rather than upbraiding him, as other teachers had done, Sister Thaddeus would cheerfully tutor him during recess. "It's getting better, you know. Keep up the good fight." This was no minor issue. In the preconciliar Catholic grammar school, penmanship enjoyed quasi-sacramental status.

The poorest pupil in class was Charlotte. The school's class structure was simple: the split-levelers, the row-housers and the people from "the project," where Charlotte lived. She also stuttered badly. In Sister Thaddeus's class, one of the girls would call out a pupil's name from a stack of cards as we plowed through the daily oral drills. After several weeks, however, I noticed that Charlotte was the one pupil whose name was never called. Only years later did I surmise that Sister Thaddeus had pulled her card to avoid any humiliation.

Our parish was an endless round of social celebrations: the May procession, the carnival, the St. Patrick's dance, the St. Joseph table, bingo, the concert by the Mummers string band. Sister Thaddeus would circulate among the families with a warm greeting for each person. When our

family showed up at the festivals, we often brought our sister Nancy, who had Down syndrome. Sister Thaddeus would always go out of her way to give a small gift to Nancy. We quickly acquired "the Sister Thaddeus collection": a St. Bernadette medal, holy cards of Our Lady, a plastic rosary bracelet.

After decades of teaching, it dawned on me that Sister Thaddeus had long ago made her own preferential option for the poor. Whereas many teachers play for the stars, Sister Thaddeus cared for the vulnerable. Her pedagogical compass was compassion. The Gospel made her tick.

Several months ago I read in the University of Pennsylvania alumni magazine that Dr. Malcolm Laws, a professor emeritus of English, had died. I had taken a course from him on Victorian literature in the spring of 1970. He was an old-fashioned teacher, more prone to savor than dissect a text. I soon discovered there was more than Old World charm at work.

In May of 1970 the United States military forces invaded Cambodia. Campuses nationwide exploded. Student antiwar activists demanded a moratorium on the imminent examination week. Most faculty canceled the exams or offered an alternative, such as a brief paper. But no cancellation notice from Dr. Laws appeared. His exam was on.

I still remember the eerie silence as we trudged into Bennet Hall, with its marble staircases and frosted glass in the doors. We were the only people in the building that morning. The

classroom itself was silent. Some of us were angry with Dr. Laws for refusing to cancel the exam. Others of us, exhausted from an all-nighter, were simply trying to remember who Swinburne was. In the middle of the exam, a class member burst into the room. With a quaking voice, she denounced Dr. Laws and the rest of us for not caring about who was killed in Southeast Asia. Dr. Laws rose and quietly told her that he would meet

with her in the corridor. He turned to us and said, "Remember, class, you are on your honor."

I have often thought of that morning with Dr. Laws. Courage can erupt in the most unexpected corners. Against hysterical political pressure, he had reminded us of our duties as teacher

and student in the study of humane letters. Against the faculty consensus, he firmly stood alone. Ultimately, his course was about something more than Tennyson and Browning.

Teaching formation and evaluation these days often focuses on technical skills. How well does the teacher use PowerPoint, prepare for class, design exams? Questions on a teacher's moral character are oddly cramped. Is the teacher respectful, tolerant, open to diversity?

Compassion and courage count for little. But we know those virtues when we see them. Even in the age of email with attached files, education is still about one soul shaping the struggling souls of others.

Sister Thaddeus and Dr. Laws got it.

Against political pressure, he had reminded us of our duties.

JOHN J. CONLEY

JOHN J. CONLEY, S.J., holds the Knott Chair in Philosophy and Theology at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore, Md.

BOOKS & CULTURE

TELEVISION | JIM McDERMOTT

TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY

How 'A Charlie Brown Christmas' defies common sense

When “A Charlie Brown Christmas” debuted on Dec. 9, 1965, CBS executives were so sure it would fail they informed its executive producer, Lee Mendelson, they were showing it only because they had already announced it in TV Guide. “Maybe it’s better suited to the comic page,” they told him after an advance showing.

Despite six months working on

the show, the animation director, Bill Melendez, felt much the same. “By golly, we’ve killed it,” he recalls telling Mendelson after a screening.

The American public disagreed. In fact, 45 percent of Americans with a television set watched “A Charlie Brown Christmas” that night, making it the second highest rated show of the week (behind “Bonanza”). The program would go on to win an Emmy

and a Peabody, and it has been broadcast every Christmas season since.

Still, much about the success of “A Charlie Brown Christmas” did defy common sense and continues to do so today. Consider its pacing, for instance. “Charlie Brown” was one of the first animated holiday cartoons, appearing just one year after “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” And yet, unlike “Rudolph,” in “Charlie Brown” very little happens. The special opens with a long, almost meditative take of children skating loops on the pond, the wistful original song “Christmastime Is Here” playing in the background. Many of the scenes that follow have a similar fragmented, ephemeral qual-



A scene from “A Charlie Brown Christmas”

ity. Kids talk about Christmas cards, their lists for Santa; they throw snowballs; they dance; they talk some more. There is an almost documentary-like verisimilitude to the project. Charles Schulz, the creator of "Peanuts," and Melendez capture perfectly that peaceable aimlessness, that numinous timelessness that many American children experience during the holidays, their lives hushed like the landscape under a thick blanket of snow.

Into that wintry reserve trudges Charlie Brown, Schulz's bald, moon-faced loser. "I think there must be something wrong with me, Linus," he says at the start. "Christmas is coming, but I'm not happy." Imagine the Coca-Cola executives who hired Mendelson

and Schulz discovering that their new Christmas special was about a kid trying to figure out why Christmas made him depressed. Who is going to want a soda pop after that?

Not only does Charlie Brown keep talking about how sad he is, he spends most of his Christmas special spotlighting and attacking the ways commercialism has crept into the holiday. Things like Snoopy entering his doghouse in a Christmas decorating contest to win a cash prize; Lucy complaining that all she ever gets at Christmas are "stupid toys or clothes or a bicycle," when what she really wants is "real estate" (you have to love Lucy); or little Sally writing to Santa that if gifts are too much trouble, "make it easy

on yourself, just send money." When Charlie Brown challenges this, she explains, with her absolute innocence, "All I want is what's coming to me. All I want is my fair share."

"We all know Christmas is a big commercial racket," Lucy finally admits. "It's run by an Eastern syndicate, you know," a comment that could hardly have been lost on CBS's East Coast executives.

For its creators, though, the most problematic element of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" was Schulz's decision to build the climax of Charlie Brown's search for the true meaning of Christmas around Linus's proclamation of the Gospel of Luke's Nativity story. Much like today, to discuss reli-

Adoration of the Christ Child

Jacob Cornelisz van Oostsanen, c. 1515

Sometimes it's not the infant's holy face that awes us, but the teeming blitz of cherubs wielding horns and lutes to fill the Arab stable with their overweening praise. If neither Mary nor the shepherds glance their way, remember that, while putti bow the beams and swell their cheeks in this tableau, such hosts are rarely seen and sing in silence. Still, we need directions to which manger holds the Christ. We want melodic wings to tell us God has come. We usher them inside and close our eyes to hear. The danger then is that we crown the worship king: hymn blunts our prayer until we look at Him.

GEORGE DAVID CLARK

George David Clark is the author of Reveille and winner of the Miller Williams Prize. His most recent poems appear in AGNI, The Gettysburg Review, Image, The New Criterion and elsewhere. He edits the journal 32 Poems and lives in Washington, Pa., with his wife and their three young children.



"THE ADORATION OF THE CHRIST CHILD," BY JACOB CORNELISZ VAN OOSTSANEN AND WORKSHOP. C. 1515. PHOTO: DADEROT/ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

gion publicly was considered fraught with hazard. When Melendez first heard about it, he thought “it was a very dangerous place to go into.” There were no religious cartoons at the time; animation was “an entertainment,” not a church service.

Melendez told Schulz, “We can’t do this; it’s too religious.”

But it had been the religious dimension of Christmas that had drawn Schulz to the project in the first place. “If we can talk about what I feel is the true meaning of Christmas, based on my Midwest background,” Mendelson remembers Schulz explaining to him, “it would really be worth doing.”

He told Melendez, “Bill, if we don’t do it, who else can?”

That scene with Linus, in which what little action there is completely stops—Linus literally steps centerstage and calls for a spotlight—is certainly memorable. But for me, the real power of “A Charlie Brown Christmas” lies not there but at the story’s end. Charlie Brown, having been liberated from his sadness by Linus’s “tidings of great joy,” tries to decorate his pathetic, molting little tree, truly the Charlie Brown of Christmas trees. The placement of a single red ornament causes it to buckle, leading Charlie Brown to believe that he has failed once again. “Everything I touch gets ruined,” he says, abandoning the tree and the TV screen.

Then the other children show up. They have spent the entire half-hour either ignoring or making fun of Charlie Brown, calling him “a blockhead,” telling one another, “He’s not the kind you can count on to do anything right” in a pitch-perfect imitation of gossiping adults. But when they see that wilted little tree that he cared about sitting there near-dead and alone, their hearts are moved. “I never thought it was such a bad little tree,” says Linus. “It’s not bad at all, really. Maybe it just needs a little love.”

He takes his security blanket—which he has until now repeatedly

refused to let go of—and wraps it around the tree’s base. The others remove ornaments from Snoopy’s now award-winning decorations, and together they transform that ugly branch into something that is still simple, but somehow beautiful. They gaze at it silently for a moment, then softly break into song.

Today the chances of selling a Christian-themed, anti-commercialism Christmas special would seem just as slim as they were in the 1960s. But more challenging in the present

than either of these options is Schulz’s vision of a group of sweet (but also self-centered), adorable (but also kind of mean) individuals allowing their own self-interest and sensibilities to fall away before a humble, fragile life. To see with clarity that no matter who or what stands before them, they aren’t so bad, really. They just need a little love.

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., a screenwriter, is *America’s* Los Angeles correspondent. Twitter: @PopCulturPriest.

BOOKS | EDWARD McGLYNN GAFFNEY

ENGAGING POLITICS

A CULTURE OF ENGAGEMENT **Law, Religion and Morality**

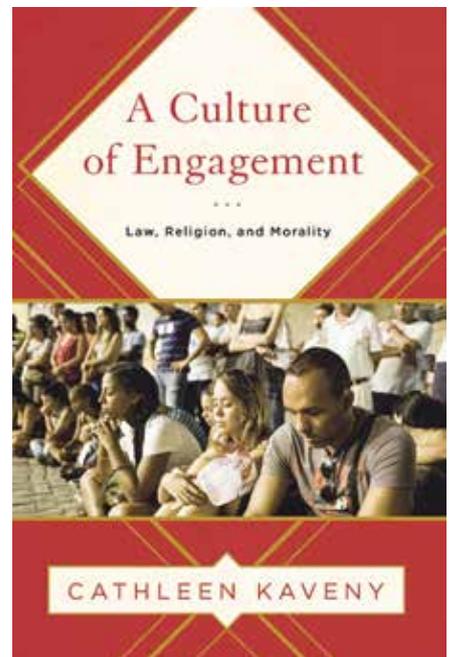
By Cathleen Kaveny
Georgetown University Press. 320p
\$32.95

PROPHECY WITHOUT CONTEMPT **Religious Discourse in the Public Square**

By Cathleen Kaveny
Harvard University Press. 464p \$49.95

Cathleen Kaveny is one of this country’s most renowned public intellectuals focusing on the intersection of religion, law and morality. Kaveny’s work as an ethicist is interdisciplinary. She connects the dots between history and political theory, law and jurisprudence, philosophy and theology. She is a prolific scholar with a keen aptitude for knowing what to focus on and when to speak. She also understands the duty of writing for a wider public than those fortunate enough to have her as a colleague or a teacher. Kaveny has also served for years as a columnist for *Commonweal*.

The genres of these books are different. One is a collection of short essays on a broad range of hot issues:



health care, contraception, abortion, the death penalty, assisted suicide, war, torture, economic boycotts, migration, constitutional interpretation (especially religious freedom) and much more. The other is a thick, carefully articulated study of contempt in U.S. political discourse.

Both are timely challenges to the escalating rancor of this year’s presidential election, which bottomed out in a nadir of narcissistic nastiness. After what we have been through recent-

ly, Kaveny offers much more wisdom than we have received from what passes for political discourse these days.

Except for a chapter on the complexity of Catholicism, *A Culture of Engagement* is Kaveny's selection of columns or blogs that appeared in *Commonweal* between 2004 and 2014, which she has occasionally updated but only lightly. She added sources cited in each chapter, as well as useful suggestions for further reading on all topics she discusses.

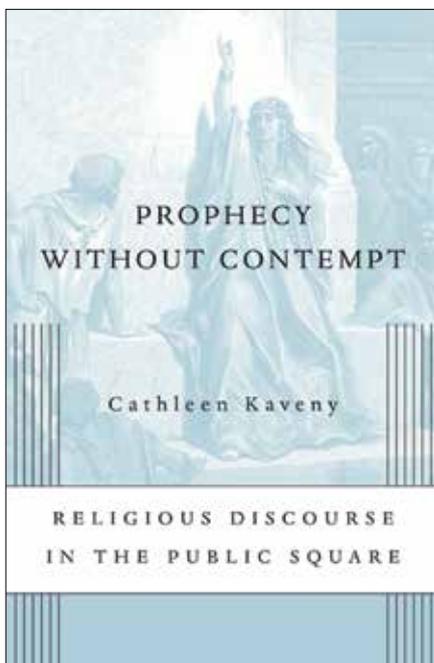
Kaveny describes three distinct cultures surrounding the relationship between religion and morality, including law, openness, identity and engagement. She associates openness with the Second Vatican Council, stated classically in the opening paragraph of the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," linking followers of Christ with the joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of modern men and women. She associates identity with the long pontificate of St. John Paul II.

The short essays in this book forge an impressive argument for a third culture: engagement, or bringing into proximity different traditions—religious and secular—viewed not as separate one-way streets leading in opposite directions but as going in both directions simultaneously. Kaveny imagines an interaction that may generate an interrelation. Recognizing that U.S. Catholics "cannot stand completely outside" either our national or religious identities, Kaveny seeks to create "some critical distance in order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of both identities."

Kaveny recurrently offers ways of seeing complexity where others are reductionist. For example, President Obama stated in 2009 that empathy is a desirable quality in a judge. Sen. Orrin Hatch, Republican of Utah, immediately mischaracterized this view as a code word for judicial activism. Kaveny acknowledges that rules

are meant to protect the due process value of impartiality for all members of society. Citing her mentor John Noonan—a renowned Republican circuit court judge appointed by President Reagan—she argues that when rules become masks concealing human faces and needs, the application of rules can then be "merciless and inhuman."

In a chapter on the indefinite detention of terrorism suspects without tri-



al, Kaveny urges President Obama—a Nobel peace laureate—not to be satisfied with Reinhold Niebuhr's soft critique of U.S. self-righteousness but to be aware that Paul Ramsey demonstrated that "Niebuhr's framework provided American exceptionalism with its best defense yet." This counsel applies as well to the extensive use of drones to carry out extrajudicial assassination of suspected terrorists in countries with whom we are not at war and in second strikes to kill first responders to a murder scene or guests at a wedding.

Kaveny also criticizes church leaders. The culture of identity "does not easily accommodate leadership roles for women" in an era in which "women

are doctors, lawyers, military leaders, Supreme Court justices, and heads of state." The crisis of sexual abuse by members of the clergy "eroded the loyalty of lay Catholics...and undermined the church's moral authority" not only because of grave misconduct by priests, but also because of episcopal cover-up and protection of perpetrators.

A bishop's excommunication of the president of a Catholic hospital for authorizing "a procedure necessary to save the life of a pregnant woman with severe pulmonary hypertension" is bad canonically, ethically and legally. John Paul II repudiated the bishop's mistake in his 1992 encyclical "The Splendor of Truth." If the bishop had his way, "the woman would have been left to die along with the baby—and the hospital would have, and should have lost its license." Bishops, as well as judges, need empathy, or they will commit merciless and inhuman errors.

In *Prophecy Without Contempt*, Kaveny seeks "to draw insights from history in order to better understand and critique the current, almost hopelessly polarized state of political discourse in the United States." She begins the conversation by exploring the distinctive contributions of four major contemporary voices: Alasdair MacIntyre, John Rawls, John Murray Cuddihy and Stephen Carter.

She reports the value of the contribution of these thinkers and encourages religious believers to achieve agreement not by appeal to raw emotion but by inviting rational deliberation about their claims. Kaveny also points out the deficiencies in the writings of Rawls and Cuddihy, arguing that religious discourse is a legitimate mode of deliberation about matters of public concern and that civility does not require a secularist privatization of religion.

Kaveny is a skillful teacher. Where something is well known, she moves swiftly from the familiar to a fresh insight about it. Where her readers

might be less aware of something, she lingers longer in the setting or context of her texts. For example, she takes the time to reacquaint us with two biblical prophets—Jeremiah and Jonah—who become paradigms for the political discourse she encourages. Kaveny’s discussion of these prophets, moreover, is enhanced with an impressive awareness of postbiblical—midrashic and talmudic—interpretation.

Kaveny omits consideration of the prophetic actions of Jeremiah, focusing principally on his sermons announcing the imminent doom of Jerusalem. She underscores the prophet’s lament of the fall of the town he loves so well as the key to understanding his task of changing minds and hearts of as many Jerusalemites as will listen to his sermons. Jeremiah thus emerges as a model for us to refrain from contempt for one’s partners in political dialogue.

Kaveny reads the Book of Jonah as a post-exilic example of biblical irony. Jonah is a comic character who leaves Jerusalem to go down to the sea and then down further into the belly of a big fish to flee the unpleasant task of preaching salvation to the classic national foes of Judah. But the fish swims north to spit out the prophet on a beach near Nineveh. There is no escaping God’s call to announce his mercy for all. Jonah thus illustrates the value of relying on irony rather than condemnation to urge one’s views on matters of public import.

Kaveny also offers a close reading of 17th-century Puritan sermons—called jeremiads after the prophet—concluding with the critical insight that this sort of preaching “did not characteristically attack the persons of the audience; it challenged their actions.” In a stroke, Kaveny reframes the debate about U.S. political discourse.

She illustrates recurrent tensions between prophetic denouncers and reflective deliberators on hot but complicated issues as diverse and contentious as slavery and its abolition in the

19th century, or the Vietnam War or abortion and sexual issues in the 20th century, or torture and the indefinite war in which we are now enmeshed in the 21st century. Kaveny mainly contrasts the styles of prophets and deliberators, but she pays grateful homage to her friend John Noonan—whom she served as a judicial clerk—by dedicating this book to him “as a model of both prophetic witness and practical deliberation.”

This happy conjunction raises a question about why Kaveny identifies others in her study, like Daniel and Philip Berrigan, only as prophets and not also as deliberators. Does not the irony of the prophet Jonah extend to using napalm to burn draft cards rather than babies?

Before Nov. 8, the large question before U.S. voters was to select those who represent us in legislatures and executive offices at the local, state and federal levels, and some state judges. As in all such elections, it was important to focus on the prior experience, character and commitments of various candidates for public office. Numerous issues of justice and mercy still deserve our careful attention, diligent efforts to understand, reflective deliberation

TOM GIBB

A SECRET WAR IN THE AMERICAS

THE SALVADOR OPTION The United States in El Salvador, 1977-1992

By Russell Crandall
Cambridge University Press. 680p
\$39.99

The Salvador Option: The United States in El Salvador, 1977-1992 takes its name from a debate 10 years ago about how to stop the Sunni insurgency from gaining the upper hand in Iraq. American generals, politicians and pundits, following well-trod tradition,

preceding reasonable judgment and decisive engagement in political action.

The brutal and bruising campaign of 2016 is finally behind us, but Kaveny’s call for a politics infused with vigilance, not vitriol, has by no means outlived its usefulness. Now we must come to terms with the election of a president who has never previously served in public office nor indicated any awareness of the duty of all politicians to seek the common good of all in our republic. Kaveny’s work is all the more relevant as we ponder our responses to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s last and most urgent question, “Where do we go from here, chaos or community?” Kaveny does not offer a thin guide to complex issues too often reduced to superficial slogans. She is a Sherpa who can take us to the top of the mountain. If we grasp not only the difference between prophetic witness and practical deliberation, but also their necessary interaction, we may all see things more clearly. And that would be good for our country and for our fragile world.

EDWARD MCGLYNN GAFFNEY is senior research professor at Valparaiso University School of Law in Indiana.

dusted off manuals from the “last war” to find solutions.

El Salvador was the largest U.S. counterinsurgency effort before the current conflicts and after Vietnam. For 12 years, Washington funded, trained and advised the Salvadoran military in a brutal war against Cuban-backed guerrillas. More than 1 percent of the population was murdered, most by government death squads and army units. As the Soviet Union collapsed, the long-stalemated conflict ended with a U.N.-mediated peace settle-

ment, under which the rebels disarmed in return for far-reaching democratic reforms.

Opinions about that war remain polarized. For some, the “Salvador Option” represented successful democracy building that undermined the rebels, preventing the establishment of a Soviet satellite state in the U.S. backyard. For others, El Salvador was a shameful episode, in which Washington backed the perpetrators of a death squad bloodbath in a failed attempt to militarily defeat a homegrown leftist insurgency.

Russell Crandall promises a “third way” in this debate, “a thorough and fair-minded interpretation of available evidence.” But he relies too heavily on declassified U.S. documents badly compromised by wartime propaganda to succeed in this ambitious task. He quotes diverse opinions; but without a strong investigative narrative of events on the ground, he has no yardstick with

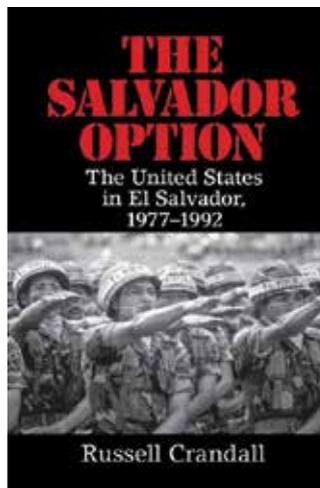
which to measure their validity, leading to some deeply flawed conclusions.

U.S. policy is portrayed as a “surprisingly moderate” democracy-building effort carried out by “imperial ambassadors” and military advisors, focusing on elections, human rights and the professionalizing of the Salvadoran military. Crandall judges that the Salvador Option succeeded in containing Communist expansionism, although at high human cost. But he argues that the bloodbath could have been worse without U.S. involvement.

The over 40,000 killings and disappearances of government opponents are misleadingly blamed on shadowy death squads funded by oligarchs, which C.I.A. cables call a “fanatic fringe” of

extremist army officers and moonlighting soldiers. One U.S. official, quoted without challenge, estimates that there were only about 25 death squad members. The United States, Crandall wrongly concludes, was not directly involved in this slaughter. Instead, he says the death squads, along with rural massacres of thousands of civilians, did more damage to the Salvador Option than the rebels ever managed.

Crandall’s vision of benign U.S. goals is at sharp odds with accounts from former rebels, police and Salvadoran government officials, few of whom were interviewed for *The Salvador Option*. At the war’s end, the country’s former president and close U.S. ally, Álvaro Magana, told me the one failing of the U.N. Truth Commission Report was that it left out U.S. involvement in the dirty war.



A Dirty War

The vast majority of death squad murders between 1980 and 1984 were actually carried out by Salvadoran security force intelligence units, following orders from senior colonels, who had full U.S. backing. The top officer most often named was Col. Nicolas Carranza, a deputy defense minister who was on the C.I.A. payroll and was later given U.S. citizenship.

It was a well-orchestrated dirty war against a committed Cuban- and Vietnamese-trained insurgency. Using infiltrators and extensive surveillance, police often rounded up dozens of suspects at once, torturing and killing many. It was not the work of moonlighting soldiers. The National Police was most active, rehiring the prewar military regime’s best agents. They called their intelligence unit

the National Center for Analysis and Investigation, or CAIN, boasting that they were capable of killing their own brothers. From late 1980 onward, according to Salvadoran officers and officials, CAIN had advisors hired by the C.I.A.

“They would sit in one room writing out questions, leaving it up to Salvadorans to get the answers,” said Gerardo LeChevallier, the governing Christian Democrat Party’s liaison with the army at the time. He said he met several of these advisors, who were not part of the official U.S. military mission. Many of the C.I.A.’s hired advisors were U.S. citizens. They were experts in urban police intelligence or veterans of other anti-Communist campaigns who trained CAIN agents on conducting searches, surveillance and interrogation. But they also planned and took part in operations.

“No one from intelligence ever did anything unless there was a North American or Venezuelan with them,” said one former police captain.

The story of CAIN shows beyond all doubt that the police intelligence units and death squads were one and the same and that the C.I.A. was heavily involved. I investigated in great detail an operation described by senior police officers as “the most successful of the war.” Built around a top guerrilla commander who turned traitor, it repeatedly hit the rebel leadership structures over four years. Rebel survivors gave horrific testimony of being forced to watch other detainees being guillotined and put through a meat processing machine in the police headquarters in the western city of Santa Ana. Some heard U.S. and Asian voices among their interrogators.

In 1981, the U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, Deane Hinton, wrote horrified cables after 100 decapitated corpses were dumped outside Santa Ana. Hinton, who was genuinely trying to improve human rights, ordered autopsies. These showed the decapitations

to be the work of a guillotine, possibly taken from a meat plant.

The C.I.A. policy to hire U.S. advisors for Salvadoran police intelligence units, like the Iran-contra policy, was kept secret because it was illegal. Police aid was banned before 1985 by U.S. law. The best description of the rationale was given later by Pentagon officials in briefings for a Newsweek article in 2005. There was a “still secret” C.I.A. strategy in El Salvador, they said bluntly, to “fund or support nationalist forces that allegedly included so-called death squads, directed to hunt down and kill rebel leaders and sympathizers.” This policy, which the officials also dubbed the Salvador Option, aimed to make the population “pay a price” for staying neutral, to “out terrorize the terrorists,” as Newsweek put it.

Hardline Reagan administration officials prioritized alliances with like-minded Salvadorans, completely undermining the authority of Crandall’s “imperial ambassadors.” Significantly, Salvadorans believed their tactics were supported by President Reagan, allowing them to ignore human rights sermons from other U.S. officials.

The central fault line of the war hinges on a question, still relevant, about whether extreme violence is effective or counterproductive against

a violent insurgency. In El Salvador, it produced spectacular short-term results, but it backfired as badly in the long term, creating a recruitment pool that turned the Salvadoran guerrillas into Latin America’s most successful insurgency. The hatred and mistrust the policy engendered undermined democracy-building long after Washington reined in the death squads in 1983.

Crandall reaches other faulty conclusions. He wrongly argues Washington was always ready to negotiate the war’s end. Rebel attitudes were far more diverse than portrayed, ranging from frustrated social democrats, who favored more internal democracy, to admirers of Stalin who carried out violent purges, killing hundreds of rank-and-file rebels. Finally, *The Salvador Option* gives little explanation as to how in 1989 the rebels were able to launch their largest offensive despite a decade of U.S. involvement.

Crandall’s work shows the desperate need for a better narrative of what actually happened in El Salvador’s civil war, without which any meaningful assessment of U.S. policy is impossible.

THOMAS GIBB spent eight years covering the war and peace process in El Salvador for BBC, NPR, *The Washington Post* and other outlets. He is now a filmmaker and is finishing a book focusing on El Salvador’s death squad war.

CLAIRE SCHAEFFER-DUFFY

OUR NUCLEAR COMPLEX

ALMIGHTY Courage, Resistance, And Existential Peril In the Nuclear Age

By Dan Zak
Blue Rider Press. 416p \$27

It has been four years since three activists entered a nuclear weapons plant in Oak Ridge, Tenn. Under the cover of early morning darkness, an octogenarian Catholic nun, along with a house

painter and a Vietnam veteran, crested a low pine ridge and walked onto the Y-12 National Security Complex, supposedly one of the most secure sites in the world. Using bolt cutters purchased at Target for \$25, they snipped through three fences, hung peace banners and spray-painted the walls of the Highly Enriched Uranium Material Facility, a massive, castle-like structure that housed enough uranium to power thousands of nuclear bombs.

Architects had designed its walls to withstand a crashing jet but probably never considered an assault of biblical graffiti.

“Woe to an empire of blood,” wrote one activist.

“The fruit of justice is peace,” wrote another.

The three then prayed and waited to be arrested.

Upon learning the news, Dan Zak, a journalist at The Washington Post, paid close attention as U.S. lawmakers railed, first reporting on the breach at Oak Ridge in a beautifully crafted piece for the newspaper’s style magazine. That article evolved into *Almighty*, one of the most captivating and penetrating books about the United States’ love-hate relationship with the bomb I have ever read.

Zak is a terrific writer. His chronicle of our nuclear complex—from the bomb’s creation to the present-day modernization of our nuclear arsenal—unfurls like a film, with drama, suspense and an eye for horrifying absurdities. Describing the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, he notes the Japanese city “was erased by an amount of uranium that weighed no more than a human fetus at 28 weeks.”

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* comes to mind. Except here, the monster is not craving connection. It does not get killed. It shapeshifts, appearing as the preserver of global security when its function is planetary annihilation.

Zak tells this history of apocalyptic possibilities through the lens of personal stories. His central characters are four ordinary Americans: the three activists Sister Megan Rice, Michael Walli and Greg Boertje-Obed, and the Y-12 security guard, Kirk Garland, who first discovered the peace protestors outside the Oak Ridge nuclear facility and was later fired for treating them humanely instead of drawing his gun. Among the supporting cast are scientists who conceive the bomb, presidents publicly urging nuclear disarmament, yet sanctioning the expansion of our arsenals, bomb-makers, true believers, dissenters and victims.

Dear God, the victims! Many of us

know about the Japanese vaporized at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the cancerous fate of the cities’ survivors. But what of the hundreds of thousands of U.S. atomic veterans—pilots flying unaware through mushroom clouds, ground soldiers standing in the radiated glow of desert tests?

“They lost hair and teeth in the short run,” Zak writes. “In the long run: thyroid problems, multiple myeloma, slow and agonizing deaths in their 50’s and 60’s.” High suicide rates plagued Oak Ridge and the Marshall Islands, where the United States conducted 66 nuclear tests. Cancer invaded the bodies of Americans who lived downwind from nuclear weapons plants. Brain damage and premature death felled their workers.

Catholics on both sides of the nuclear divide are featured prominently here. Richard McSorley, S.J., a pacifist of vigorous intellect, declares nuclear weapons to be “the taproot of all violence.” Leroy Matthiesen, a pastoral Catholic bishop in Texas, urges his parishioners working at the Pantex nuclear weapons plant to quit their jobs. No such sermons are heard at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Oak Ridge, where the faithful receive holy Communion on Sunday and make weapons on Monday.

This is not a history we Americans like to ponder. To do so requires reckoning with the devil among us. As Zak so clearly reveals, the bomb we believe saved our boys and ended a world war also brought dark regret and ominous faith.

“It is an awful responsibility which has come to us,” President Harry Truman said after the nuclear leveling of Nagasaki. “We thank God that it has come to us instead of our enemies, and we pray that He may guide us to use it



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in His ways and for His purposes.”

Over the decades, that faith spawned a vast nuclear network “insulated from logic and reason,” Zak notes, and the United States became entrenched in a deadly paradox: We would keep the peace by threatening global destruction.

This book is essential reading for any American. The U.S. budget for nuclear weapons is now higher than at any point in history, despite a shrunken arsenal. Yet who is asking us to con-

sider the consequences of this investment? Zak is, and he does so in a way that cuts through the psychic numbing and gives hope.

Almighty reminds us the United States, birthplace of the bomb, is also a land of prophets and visionaries, a country of unexpected converts (Henry Kissinger is now anti-nuke!), and committed believers in the value of life. In emphasizing the human dimension of our nuclear complex, the book reiterates what the peace protest-

ers symbolically suggested when they penetrated the inner sanctum of Oak Ridge with their household tools and abundant conviction.

The devil among us is not the weapons but our faith in them. Having made them, we can unmake them, if we but, to quote Sister Megan, “change the mission.”

CLAIRE SCHAEFFER-DUFFY, a writer, lives with her husband at the Saint Francis and Therese Catholic Worker in Worcester, Mass.

CLASSIFIED

Positions

Christ the King Seminary, a Roman Catholic graduate school of theology and pastoral ministry operated by the Diocese of Buffalo, announces a full-time position in Systematic Theology, beginning fall 2017. In addition to systematics, teaching experience and acquaintance with areas of sacramental theology is desirable. A doctorate or its equivalent is required, publications and prior Catholic seminary experience preferred. A more detailed description of this opening can be found at the Seminary's web site at www.cks.edu. Please send a letter of application

and curriculum vitae with at least three references to: Mr. Michael J. Sherry, Academic Dean, Christ the King Seminary, 711 Knox Road, East Aurora, NY 14052-0607. The deadline for applications is January 02, 2017.

Translator

LUIS BAUDRY-SIMÓN, TRANSLATOR (from English into Spanish): newsletters, articles, essays, websites, pastoral letters, ministry resources, motivational conferences, spirituality material, etc. Contact: luisbaudrysimon@gmail.com (815) 694-0713.

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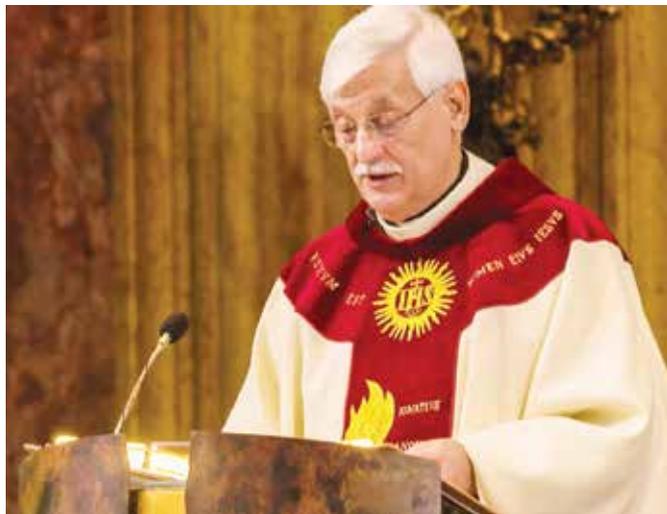
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The Right Word

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD, MASS DURING THE NIGHT, DEC. 25, 2016

Readings: Is 9:1-6, Ps 96, Ti 2:11-14, Lk 2:1-14

Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy! (Lk 2:10)

The right word at the right moment can transform a person, for good or for ill. Hollywood knows the dramatic value of these moments. In the movie “Jerry Maguire,” Dorothy sums up falling in love with “You had me at ‘hello.” In “As Good as it Gets,” Melvin’s rambling apology for insulting Carol’s dress ends with the emphatic “You make me want to be a better man.” The words strike Carol like lightning, and her heart softens toward him. In “Good Will Hunting,” when Sean repeats “It’s not your fault,” his words give Will the freedom to let someone love him.

The angels’ song to the shepherds contains another example of transformative words: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” By addressing this message to the shepherds, Luke gives readers a place to enter the story through identification with them. There are many examples of characters used this way throughout the Gospels. Jesus’ disciples, the crowds and individuals in search of healings or forgiveness are all subjects with whom the reader can identify. They draw us into the story and provide models for discipleship.

The shepherds play that role in Luke’s nativity story. Western literature (the book *Heidi*, for example) often portrays shepherds as gentle

and simple folk. This was not the case in the ancient world. In Luke’s time, shepherds were dangerous outsiders who lived rough lives in the wilderness. They interacted uneasily with people in cities and towns. The closest modern analogue might be the popular depiction of bikers; they are not criminal, exactly, but they are aggressive and unpredictable, and are probably not the first people one might invite over to meet a newborn.

Like the rough heroes of early Israel, the shepherds are entirely God’s kind of people, and are the ones he invites first. Today we imagine the angels of that first Christmas singing to all of humanity, and indeed they were. The only ones who could hear it, however, were the shepherds, and their transformation is immediate and undeniable.

“On earth, peace to those on whom his favor rests.” Luke does not tell us why the shepherds needed to hear this word of peace, but no one can doubt its transforming effect. They go without hesitation to find the child, and joy overwhelms them when they do. Anyone who has had a similar experience knows how transformative words will long continue to ring in one’s ears. Luke says the shepherds repeated what they heard again and again to anyone who would listen. The angels’ message of peace turned intimidating, potentially dangerous

strangers into Jesus’ first evangelists.

A close echo of the angels’ song appears near the end of Jesus’ life, when he enters Jerusalem. In Lk 19:38, Jesus’ disciples greet him with the cheer, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!” Although the crowd’s transformation was fleeting—a few days later they are howling for his crucifixion—the example of Christ’s disciples



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- With what words has God transformed you?
- What are the words that Christ used to transform people you love?
- Who in your life needs to hear Christ’s word? What message will unlock the joy in their hearts?

taking up the angelic hymn is a lesson for us. The unencumbered joy of the shepherds lies waiting to be unlocked in us and in every person alive. For far too many, no one ever comes with the right word to let it free. This is our Christmas duty. We fall in line along with the angels, the shepherds, and Christ’s disciples as bearers of Christ’s transformative word. The joy it brings is God’s Christmas gift to all humanity.

Editor’s note: Essays on the readings for the Christmas Eve Vigil Mass and the readings for the Mass during the day on Christmas can be found online at <http://www.americamagazine.org/sections/word>.

ART: TAD DUNNE

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



CATHOLIC INITIATIVES

Keep and Ponder

SOLEMNITY OF MARY THE MOTHER OF GOD, JAN. 1, 2017

Readings: Nm 6:22-27, Gal 4:4-7, Lk 2:16-21

Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart (Lk 2:19)

The church has found many reasons to mark the importance of today's feast. Aside from marking the calendar's turn to the new year, an appropriate time for prayer and thanksgiving, this day is also the eighth day after the birth of Christ. Older Catholics can probably remember a time when this feast celebrated Jesus' circumcision, which according to Jewish law took place on the eighth day after his birth. At various times in history, today's feast also celebrated the Holy Name of Jesus, a devotion we now celebrate on Jan. 3. References to each of those commemorations appear in today's Gospel. Some of the earliest celebrations of this feast in Rome, however, focused attention on Mary's mission to be the mother of God, and it was that mission that inspired later generations of Christians.

"Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." An old tradition says that Luke the evangelist knew the Blessed Mother and wove her memories into his Gospel account. He presents the annunciation, birth and infancy of Jesus from her perspective, and he places her among the disciples in the upper room in the days before the first Pentecost. His repeated statement that she "kept these things and reflected on them in her heart" is his acknowledgement of the wisdom she had accrued after a lifetime of contemplating Christ and discerning his word in the world.

It is impossible to ascertain the

truth of this tradition after all these centuries, but it is certain that Mary becomes an important point of continuity in Luke's Gospel. She is there almost from the beginning, reflecting on events in her son's life and discerning their meaning. She is there again among his disciples, after almost everything has changed, as they discover their new mission in community. She is throughout a symbol of unencumbered human love for Christ, bearing him into the world and seeking him in the signs of the times. Today's feast reminds us of her role in salvation history both as the mother of God and also the mother of the church.

The un-self-conscious way she gave herself to her son's mission is the best gift she has given to his disciples. Her freedom to say yes bore him into the world. After that, her thoughtful discernment made her one of the first to understand Christ's preaching and signs, and when his perplexed disciples gathered together in the days before Pentecost, her example must have given them hope. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, Luke shows the early church behaving as Mary did, giving itself to completely to Christ's mission and making time for discernment and reflection as it bore Christ into the world. Luke understands Mary as a symbol of the church at such a fundamental level that we can almost miss his emphasis. Her freedom to serve Christ's mission, bring him into the world and ponder

the significance of his life becomes the pattern for both collective and individual discipleship.

The world first received Jesus through Mary, but the task is not yet complete. The liberation Jesus preached has not yet become a reality. His disciples in the church are charged to bear him into the world. We have now become the point of continuity that Mary was in Luke's Gospel. When we give ourselves over to Christ's mission in big ways and small, we bring Christ into the world in new ways.

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Who has helped you find Christ in unexpected events, people or places?
- What actions of Christ do you return to often in prayer? What grace has come from keeping and pondering these events?
- Who in your world needs Christ's love? How can you bring it forth for them?

Part of our discipleship is continuing to seek out Christ as he is already at work in the world, to let him surprise us with all the unexpected twists and turns of salvation history as it continues to unfold. If we seek him in the signs of the times, we can make his presence known to all whose slavery will end when his love appears. This is what Mary proclaimed when she became the mother of God, and this is the mission his disciples can continue today following her example.

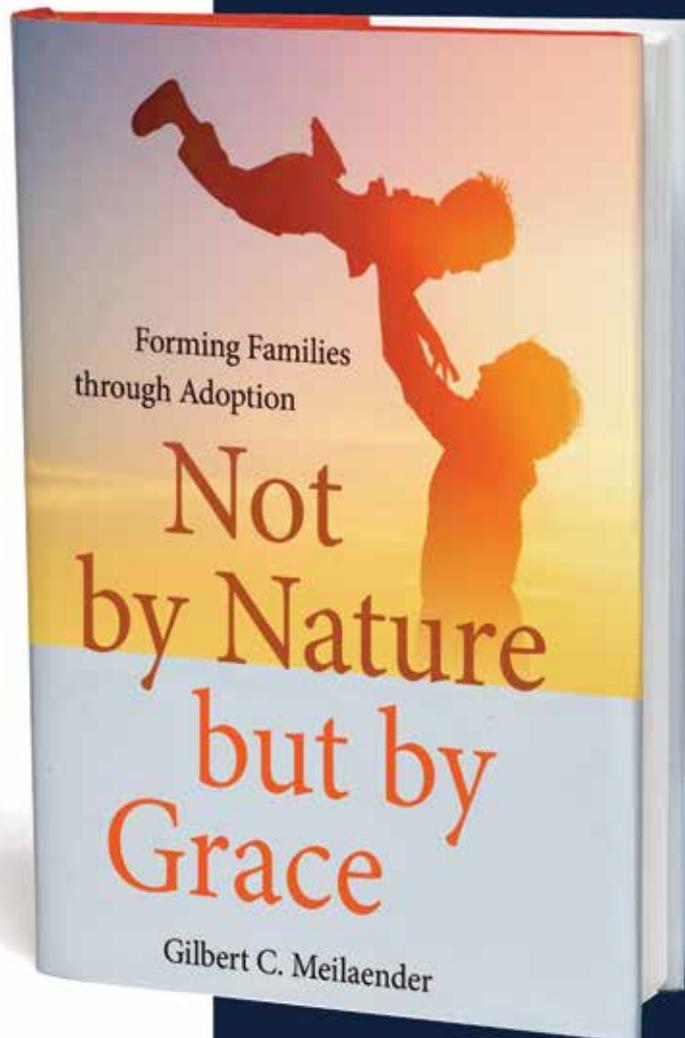
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