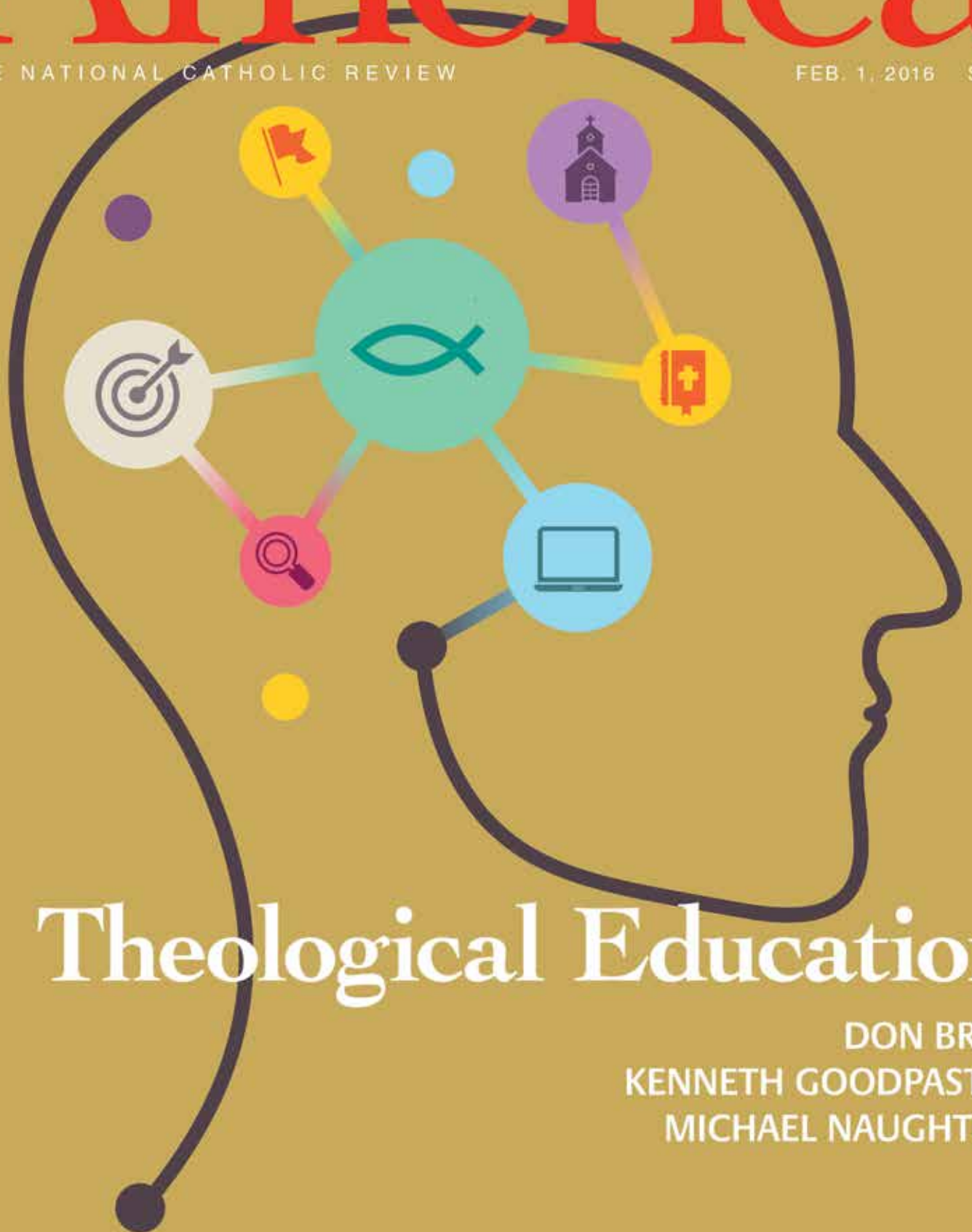


America

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Theological Education

DON BRIEL
KENNETH GOODPASTER
MICHAEL NAUGHTON

From 1951 to 1969 the State of Florida was represented in the U.S. Senate by George A. Smathers, a Miami attorney and future used car salesman who is best remembered for his close friendships with two U.S. presidents: John F. Kennedy, with whom he would occasionally raise hell; and Richard Nixon, to whom he sold his Key Biscayne home—what would become Nixon's Southern White House.

My favorite story about the otherwise nondescript Mr. Smathers is largely apocryphal. But the fact that no one ever substantiated the story didn't stop Time from publishing it, nor has it stopped thousands of political junkies from retelling it. It involves the so-called Redneck Speech, which Mr. Smathers was said to have delivered to uneducated audiences during the 1950 election:

"Are you aware that Claude Pepper is known all over Washington as a shameless extrovert," Mr. Smathers supposedly said. "Not only that, but this man is reliably reported to practice nepotism with his sister-in-law; he has a brother who is a known homo sapiens, and he has a sister who was once a thespian in wicked New York. Worst of all, it is an established fact that Mr. Pepper, before his marriage, habitually practiced celibacy."

Clever, huh? Perhaps too clever to be true. I thought of the story, though, when I learned that Senator Ted Cruz had accused Donald Trump of having "New York values." To be honest, I live and work in New York and I don't know what that means. But I can tell you that I have never heard a New Yorker talk in a seriously derisive manner about "Peoria values."

Whatever it means, however, there is a definite "us" and "them" at work here: Peoria and Midland are the "real" America; New York and San Francisco

are not. Perhaps this is what is meant when presidential aspirants say that "we" are going to "take our country back." Perhaps they are suggesting that Peoria should reclaim from New York what is rightly theirs? Maybe that's not what is meant, but then just who is the "our" in "we are going to take our country back?" And from whom are they (and or we) taking it back?

Such is the logic of demagogues, which would be as laughable as Smather's Redneck Speech if it weren't for the fact that in the current political climate, this kind of politicking is akin to smoking near a tinderbox. The electorate is anxious and afraid; their thirst for some sense of control is so great that they'll drink the sand just because some would-be Moses tells them it's water. This shows in one of the more disturbing trends in recent polling: the growing authoritarian sensibilities of voters.

Matthew MacWilliams of the University of Massachusetts found that "education, income, gender, age, ideology and religiosity had no significant bearing on a Republican voter's preferred candidate. Only two of the variables...were statistically significant: authoritarianism, followed by fear of terrorism, though the former was far more significant than the latter."

I note for the record that the G.O.P. does not have a monopoly on tactical demagoguery. As David Brooks recently remarked on the PBS NewsHour, "the big question" in both parties is "how deep is the disgust in the country. It's the tectonic question. There is a level of anger which is not only there, but building. And that could sweep away all the establishment candidates."

As scary as it seems, Mr. Brooks is right. Then again, he's one of the smartest homo sapiens I know.

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ON THE WEB

Nathan Stone, S.J., writes about the role of **racial, religious and ethnic bigotry** in today's domestic and international relations, and Megan McCabe discusses the **problem of pornography**. Full digital highlights on page 16 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



The Unions' Coup de Grâce?

Despite a historic collapse in the private sector, public sector union labor remains strong, representing about 36 percent of the workforce. That prominence has been under attack from many quarters in recent years as state-level “reforms” seek to whittle away union strength. After hearing oral arguments on Jan. 11 in *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, the U.S. Supreme Court appears poised to join the national legislative and executive thumping of public sector unions.

The case concerns objections from public sector workers who have declined to join unions but who are required to reimburse them for the cost of collective bargaining on their behalf. In a decision expected in June, the court may conclude that such a requirement constitutes a violation of workers' free expression; union supporters argue that allowing such “free riders” would constitute a crippling blow to public sector unions. However the court decides, organized labor should use this opportunity to reintroduce itself to the American public, which seems no longer to appreciate the necessary role unions play as a counterweight to otherwise unrestrained capital. The increase in economic and political inequity and the decline of the nation's middle class correlate neatly with the loss of union strength. Revitalizing unions will not be easy, but it must be done.

Unions should reconsider their misinvestments in political campaigns—more than \$140 million in 2014 alone—and redirect those considerable resources to the hyper-local, street-level organizing that built Big Labor in the first place. A public relations campaign suitable to our social-mediated times should remind Americans what they owe to organized labor and what they risk losing by its further diminishment.

Students Hike Own Fees

Last year, undergraduate students at Loyola University Chicago voted to raise their own student fees by \$2.50 per semester to create a scholarship fund for undocumented immigrant undergraduate students. In December, the university's board of trustees voted to approve this fund, to be called the Magis Scholarship Fund. The first recipients are slated to be selected this spring and are scheduled to receive the scholarship beginning next fall.

This student initiative grew from a report presented early in 2013 by researchers from Loyola as well as Fairfield and Santa Clara universities. The researchers recognized that there are many bright, talented and highly motivated men and women of college age whose parents brought them to the United States without government

authorization or, in some cases, overstayed their visas. They have great potential to contribute to the future of our country but cannot yet do so because of obstacles they face in pursuing higher education. Most other Jesuit colleges and universities endorsed this research.

In response, members of Loyola's student government and its Latin American student organization spearheaded the effort to build this \$50,000 scholarship fund. Don Graham of TheDream.US, a web-based scholarship fund, matched the students' contribution. Speaking for his fellow students, Flavio Bravo explained, “As students at a Jesuit university, we recognize that our personal development is shared among one another.” This student initiative is a challenge to all to notice the needs of our brothers and sisters and to take the first small steps that can grow and help build a better future for all of us.

Healthy Samaritans

Anyone with a passing familiarity with the Gospels or church teaching knows that helping one's neighbor is good for the soul. Now there is growing evidence that acts of service can benefit physical health as well. In a study published in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics*, researchers found that Canadian 10th-grade students enrolled in a volunteer program lost weight and had lower levels of cholesterol compared with peers who did not participate. And in *Social Science and Medicine* (January 2016), Eric Kim and Sara Konrath report that among people over the age of 50, volunteering was associated with higher use of preventive measures (like flu shots and prostate exams) and 38 percent fewer nights in hospitals.

There is, however, a caveat: motivation matters. In an article in *The Atlantic* by James Hamblin (12/30/15) exploring the connection between volunteering and health outcomes, Mr. Kim explains, “Only the people who were doing it for more outward reasons—compassion for others—had reduced rates of mortality.” So spending a few nights at the soup kitchen this February just to keep one's health resolutions for the new year on track might not have the desired effect.

Pope Francis has given Catholics ample inspiration to carry out the corporal works of mercy anyway. In his message for the World Day of Peace, the pope said that as a sign of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, we are “called to make specific and courageous gestures of concern for [our] most vulnerable members, such as prisoners, migrants, the unemployed and the infirm.” Such service is surely its own reward; a papal indulgence and healthy heart could be a welcome bonus.

The Saudis' Little Cold War

On Jan. 2 the government of Saudi Arabia executed the prominent Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr. The cleric, along with 46 other individuals, was accused of inciting terrorism within the kingdom. Following the execution, protesters stormed the Saudi Embassy in Tehran. In the aftermath, Saudi Arabia—as well as Sudan, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates—cut off diplomatic and commercial ties with Iran. In a statement released on Jan. 10, the Arab League also expressed support for the Saudis and condemned the Iranian government for not doing more to protect the embassy in Tehran.

The increased tension over Saudi Arabia's reckless decision to execute Sheikh Al-Nimr has only deepened what many are calling a Middle Eastern cold war. The execution and the predictable Iranian reaction to it risked further destabilization of the region. Saudi Arabia, along with other members of the Arab League, accused Iran of fomenting sectarianism. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the U.A.E. foreign minister, who chaired the league's latest meeting, said that Iran "doesn't hesitate to use the sectarian card as a way to dominate the region and interfere in the internal affairs of Arab countries."

Yet this execution demonstrates that the Saudi government is also responsible for violence in the region. The execution of Sheikh Al-Nimr sends the message that the Saudis will not tolerate any kind of demand for political reform, particularly from the already marginalized Shiite population.

The U.S. response has remained muted, partly because of its close relations with the Saudi government, a stance that dates back to the founding of the kingdom in the 1930s. That is unfortunate. A stronger voice against the execution of Sheikh Al-Nimr might have prevented the crisis in the first place. But these latest events raise important questions: Is the U.S.-Saudi relationship truly viable? And should it be?

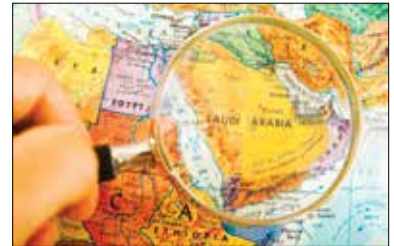
The new leadership under King Salman, particularly the actions of Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, has grown especially incautious in recent years. Faced with what Prince Muhammad describes as the constant threat of the resurgence of Shiite jihadists, the Saudi government says it has no choice but to adopt extreme and uncompromising measures when dealing with even alleged claims of terrorism or sedition, as the latest executions show.

The Saudis' latest executions threaten to undermine the Syrian peace talks in Geneva. A few weeks ago, the prospect that Iran and Saudi Arabia might sit down to discuss ending the war—in which 300,000 Syrians have been killed and millions more displaced—seemed likely. Even though the Saudis are urging peace talks despite tensions with Iran, the chances that the two nations will agree to productive measures now seem quite dim.

Western countries, chiefly the United States, must encourage dialogue and peace between Iran and Saudi Arabia. But the Obama administration should not be afraid to take stronger stands in criticizing Saudi actions. For too many years U.S. dependence on foreign oil has dictated how the United States deals with the Saudis, despite accumulated evidence of tacit and practical support for terrorist groups emerging from within the kingdom. But U.S. values and comprehensive regional interests—not oil—should dictate the U.S. posture toward Saudi Arabia.

The administration should seriously consider applying what pressure it can on the Saudis toward moderating the kingdom's treatment of dissent and its increasingly brutal role in the skies over Yemen. It should freeze any future arms deals with the kingdom. A more peaceful accommodation between Saudi Arabia and Iran will not just benefit Syrians who are being displaced by proxy wars but will also stem the growth of ISIS. Experts believe that continued tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia will allow ISIS to increase its influence and power, particularly in Yemen.

The United States has managed to create a cautiously improved relationship with the Iranians through the recent nuclear weapons deal. Last year, Pope Francis expressed hopes that this agreement would help foster fraternity within the Arab world. That hope can be achieved only when it is accompanied by clear and credible action to reduce tensions in the region's little cold war. In his final State of the Union address on Jan. 12, President Obama reminded Americans that "the United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth." The Obama administration should use some of that power to push for greater moderation from its regional partner, Saudi Arabia.



REPLY ALL

Middle Class 2.0

Re “Defending the Middle Class” (Editorial, 1/4): The primary issue with reversing the shrinking of the middle class is job quality. The service economy has proven to be incapable of supporting middle-class incomes. High school-level microeconomics explains why: Service businesses do not generate enough gross margin to support middle-class employee wages in addition to proper benefits. Place the blame on greed, weak management or anywhere you would like. Whatever the underlying cause, the result is a middle class being slowly destroyed as real incomes decrease year on year.

Government subsidized housing is nothing but a Band-Aid on the hemorrhaging middle class. Middle-class wages need to result from two- and four-year degrees and jobs with ongoing training for career development. Now is the time for state and federal economic development to focus on commercializing the next generation of manufacturing technologies for new consumer products—pharmaceuticals, electronics and the like. This is the path to creating companies that can support a vibrant middle class.

JOHN BREWER
Online Comment

Presidential Disqualifications

I heartily agree with Robert D. Sullivan’s comments in “Too Much Authenticity” (1/4). Can we imagine any current candidate rising in the polls with rhetoric like Abraham Lincoln’s? Love of country today begins and ends with waving the flag rather than putting shoulder to the wheel. Candidates like Mr. Trump prove their presidential disqualifications with every news cycle.

JAMES AXTELL
Online Comment

No Vacancy

The challenge described in “Humanities and the Soul,” by John Conley, S.J.

(12/21/15), may actually be a two-part business problem. First, the academy has clearly produced more Ph.D.’s who fully expect teaching and/or research jobs in their chosen field without regard for the number of such professionals that might be needed to fill vacancies. Second, sadly, too many bright people have committed years of post-grad work to attain their credentials without carefully estimating whether the number of job seekers in their cohort will exceed the number of available positions. This is equivalent to a hobbyist who decides to open a business because “I like doing this,” without determining whether customers will want the product in sufficient quantity and at a price adequate to support the business.

As a liberal arts graduate, I do appreciate the value of coursework devoted to discovering how humans have thought about and acted on the great questions of life. That understanding, though never complete, is valuable in business, politics, medicine and most other professions. I do not think the problem reflects a lack of appreciation for the humanities but a lamentable market imbalance arising from a failure to consider the numbers.

JOSEPH J. DUNN
Online Comment

A Predictable Response

Re: “Staring Down Terror” (Editorial, 12/7/15): Less than three weeks after the Paris attacks, the United States suffered the largest terrorist attack at home since Sept. 11, in suburban San Bernardino, again by radical Islamic jihadists. And the Obama administration’s response (and that of his apologists in the press) is once again totally predictable and completely inadequate. Just as they tried to categorize the Fort Hood massacre by Nidal Hasan as primarily one of workplace violence, claimed that ISIS had been contained and said the Paris massacres were a setback in a winning campaign, the administration was last to see that the San

Bernardino killings were terror related.

Then, in his speech to the nation, Mr. Obama seemed once again far more concerned about Islamophobia than ISIS. I note the editors have the same instincts, as the editorial is more worried about anti-Islamic “hysteria” in the United States than the Christophobia of ISIS. Just who is sinning the most against proportionality?

TIM O’LEARY
Online Comment

High Standards

Re “You Were Once Aliens” (Current Comment, 12/7/15): Having read with interest the process by which Syrian refugees are approved for refugee status in the United States, it is possible to conclude that those admitted are tested, graded, documented and certified truth-tellers. Of how many governors, senators and congressmen can one say the same?

CHARLES ERLINGER
Online Comment

A Curious Review

It was most curious to see the letter by the Rev. John Feehily (Reply All, 12/7/15) on the film “Spotlight”—which he doesn’t plan on seeing—given prominence in a Jesuit magazine, given that it flies in the face of one of the cornerstones of Jesuit education. My 10-plus years of liberal arts education under the Jesuits told me that one reads or sees or hears the material that one is going to address in a critical way. Thus if I am to dispute Nietzsche or Richard Dawkins on matters of atheism, I am obliged to find out what their arguments are before I can attempt to refute them.

Father Feehily does not bother to go through these steps, and thus his observations on this splendid film on true journalism and what monumental efforts it took The Boston Globe to “crack open” the full story behind the pedophilia scandal in the Archdiocese of Boston miss the mark.

I advise the reverend to see this film

and he will come away impressed with the professionalism with which the whole messy topic is treated.

JOHN J. HOLLOHAN
Naples, Fla.

Premature Believer

“The Fight for Religious Freedom,” by Barry Hudock (11/30/15) is in many ways more interesting for what it does not say than what it does. For instance, can there really be any doubt that those who opposed the views of John Courtney Murray, S.J., (Lefebvre, Ottaviani, Siri, etc.) were in fact quite correct in saying that those views ran completely counter to the church’s historical teaching on the evils of religious freedom and freedom of conscience?

Were Gregory XVI’s “Mirari Vos” or Pius IX’s “Syllabus of Errors,” for example, magisterial teachings? If not, why not? Did Popes Gregory and Pius believe they were subject to change? If so, how? Would I be a heretic, or at least the first cousin of a heretic, if I were a premature believer in the values of religious liberty in 1910 but thoroughly orthodox in those same beliefs in 1970? Why? Simply because the church had changed its mind and caught up with me at last? If so, what do such questions say of the place of the magisterium, the role of the magisterium and so forth?

Obviously I do not expect a short article to answer such questions, but I think it should at least raise them, particularly since the American bishops, in their quadrennial “Fortnight for Freedom” are apt to sound as if Catholicism invented the whole idea of such liberty.

NICHOLAS CLIFFORD
Online Comment

The Church at Sea

Re “Deep Catholic Waters,” by Peter Reichard (11/30/15): I was a young Navy chaplain on my first sea duty tour in 1980-82, the last years of the active

Navy career of Capt. Jake Laboon, S.J. His Naval Academy training gave him an understanding of the Navy that most chaplains do not have and allowed him to bridge the gap between the chaplains and the line Navy.

There have been two warships named for Navy chaplains. One was named after the Rev. Vincent Capodanno, a Navy chaplain serving with Marines in Vietnam, and the second is named after Father Laboon. There are mixed sentiments about having warships named after chaplains. On the one hand, they are ships of war; on the other hand, there is a sense of pride in the history of the Chaplain Corps, a reminder of the cost paid by chaplains, men and women who serve worldwide to ensure that sailors and Marines are able to receive the sacraments of the church and have a moment of hope in one of the toughest times of their lives. Wherever one falls on that issue, however, Capt. Jake Laboon, S.J., was truly a “Navy Priest.”

(REV.) CHRISTINE MILLER
Online Comment

Canada’s Abortion Politics

Thanks to John Conley, S.J., for giving a larger perspective in “A New Subordinationism” (10/19/15). I live in Canada, and, sadly, the subordination of the church to the state that Father

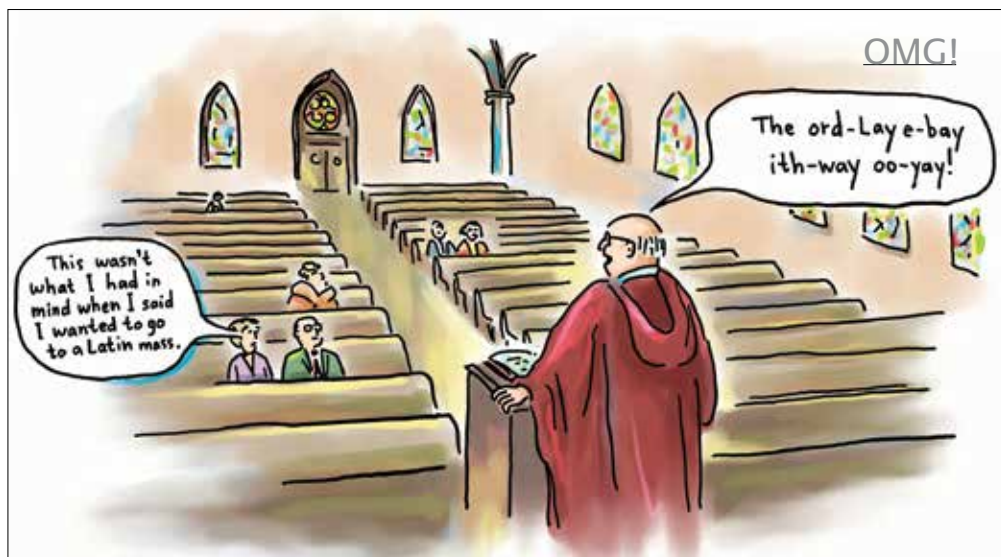
Conley describes has been happening for generations, in my opinion. Several years ago our Supreme Court threw out the existing federal law on abortion. The newly elected Liberal leader Justin Trudeau has banned persons that favor pro-life positions from running for the Liberal Party. Perhaps this country provides a glimpse of the future of the United States.

WILLIAM RYDBERG
Online Comment

A Just Resolution

In “Of Many Things” (10/19/15), Matt Malone, S.J., writes, “Both supporters and opponents of same-sex civil marriage should be concerned about how the matter was settled.” Given that many people were affected by laws they felt to be unjust and unconstitutional, it is hard to imagine the court refusing to deal with cases crying out for resolution. Would it have been preferable for the issue of marriage equality to have been resolved through dialogue within society, involving the faith communities, all affected populations and ultimately the legislatures? Certainly. But was that dialogue not underway and making progress while Obergefell was wending its way to the court? And how long were those excluded from marriage to wait “patiently”?

(REV.) FRANK BERGEN
Tucson, Ariz.



CARTOON WRITTEN BY JAKE MARTIN, S.J.; ART BY BOB ECKSTEIN

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Ten States Where Christians Were Most Persecuted in 2015

With North Korea leading the way and Islamic extremism rapidly expanding, 2015 was the “worst year in modern history for Christian persecution,” according to Open Doors’ 2016 World Watch List, a ranking of the 50 most dangerous places in the world to be a Christian. Iraq was ranked just behind North Korea, the first of 35 countries on the list where Islamic extremism “has risen to a level akin to ethnic cleansing,” according to the report, released on Jan. 13.

The nonprofit organization Open Doors has tracked persecution of Christians since 1955. On its World Watch List map, the top 10 nations where “extreme” persecution of Christians takes place are highlighted in blood red.

North Korea, where as many as 70,000 Christians are held in labor camps because of their faith, topped the list for the 14th consecutive year. According to the report, in North Korea Christians hide their faith to avoid arrest. “Being Christian has to be a well-protected secret, even within families, and most parents refrain from introducing their children to the Christian faith in order to make sure that nothing slips their tongue when they are asked.”

Number two, Iraq, was followed by Eritrea, the first of several sub-Saharan African nations on the list. Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Iran follow consecutively. Libya finishes up the top 10, appearing there for the first time in 2015. Saudi Arabia, which recently executed a Shiite cleric, came in at No. 14.

In 2015 more than 7,100 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons, and 2,400 churches were destroyed or damaged, said David Curry, president of Open Doors. Curry gave a world tour of murder, exile, terror, detention and destruction at a press conference in Washington introducing the new report. The militant groups Boko Haram and al-Shabab, he added, are the “sinister” power behind persecution in four African countries.

“The level of exclusion, discrimination and violence against Christians is

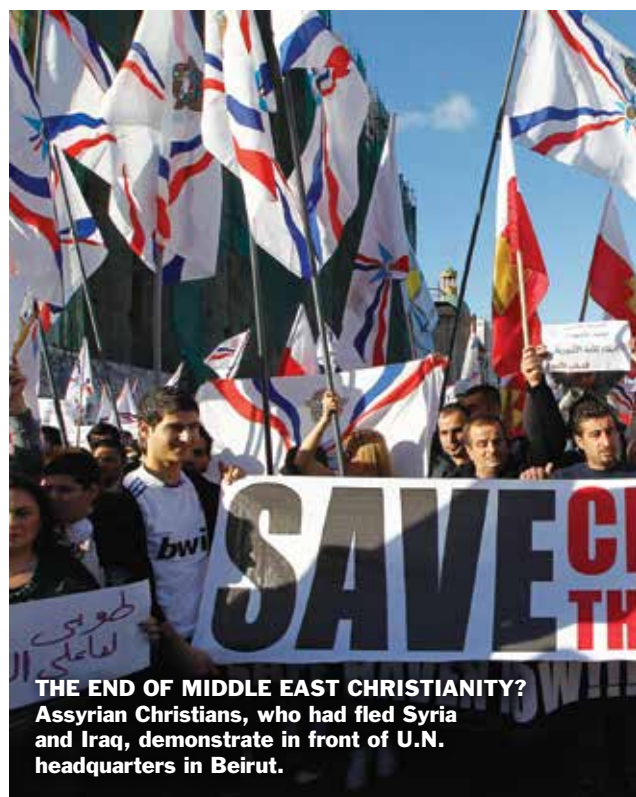
unprecedented, spreading and intensifying,” said Curry.

It’s vital to track such persecution, not only on behalf of its victims, but to recognize growing threats to global peace and security, Curry said. “The persecution of Christians is a lead indicator of when countries are beginning to tip into chaos.”

David Saperstein, ambassador at large for international religious freedom, added to Curry’s list of atrocities and crimes against humanity.

“In far too many countries far too many people face daunting, alarming restrictions” on living and practicing their religion; and yet, Saperstein said, most “refuse to surrender their faith or their God.”

“Every one of the numbers in this report is a human being,” the ambassador said, as he stood at the podium directly in front of Gladys Juma, whose husband was murdered in Kenya.



Juma described in detail a heart-breaking night of searching for her husband, Benjamin, who had gone with a pastor to “share the word of Christ” in a nearby Muslim area.

Hours after the two men went missing, Juma went to a hospital nearby, where she was shown a gunnysack of hacked and burned body parts and a seared skull sitting in a burned tire rim. No one could say who they were. A few hours later, she learned that those unidentifiable victims were, in fact, her husband and the pastor.

“It hit us very hard,” Juma said. “In Mombasa, we had had religious tolerance for many years and suddenly the tables had turned with no warning. We are still healing.”

That healing, for herself and her four children, relies on forgiveness, on trust in God and in her belief, she said, that America will act “to make sure people respect other people’s faith.”



PRO-LIFE

New Strategies to Support Mothers

As a mother of six, Leah Jacobson is watching other parents try to raise children in a society that no longer supports sisterhood among mothers. And that's a shame, said the founder and president of the Guiding Star Project, a Duluth-based organization seeking to combine under one roof a variety of holistic health care services for women and families.

"If we stop duplicating services and start using donor dollars to share space...we can save thousands and thousands of dollars that can be directed to services" and better compete with Planned Parenthood through brand power, said Jacobson, 34, a parishioner.

"This is so much bigger than abortion. This is about supporting motherhood," she said.

Forty-three years into legalized abortion in the United States pro-life advocates say their mission to save babies is broader than preventing abortions. These same advocates from several Minnesota-based organizations have been working to change how pregnancy resource centers operate in the era of smartphones and other technologies.

Pregnancy resource centers want to be clear that they strive to serve women with authenticity and sincerity because they care about them and their situations, said Sarah Mealey, a marketing and strategic planning consultant who helped streamline a merger of two established pro-life pregnancy resource centers in the Twin Cities to form Abria Pregnancy Resources last fall.

"And in the process, we hope and pray that she chooses life," Mealey said.

Focusing on a woman's or family's needs during an unexpected pregnancy or other volatile time allows pregnancy resource centers to earn trust and build relationships. Mealey acknowledged that while some affiliates of the pro-life movement might prevent abortions through shock or shame, advocates are asking, "At what cost?"

"We want these young women not only to choose life, but also to be effective, strong parents, or to choose adoption," said Mealey, who serves on Abria's board and is a parishioner of Holy Family in St. Louis Park. "A lot of these women don't understand the inestimable worth of their own soul, and so they can't possibly

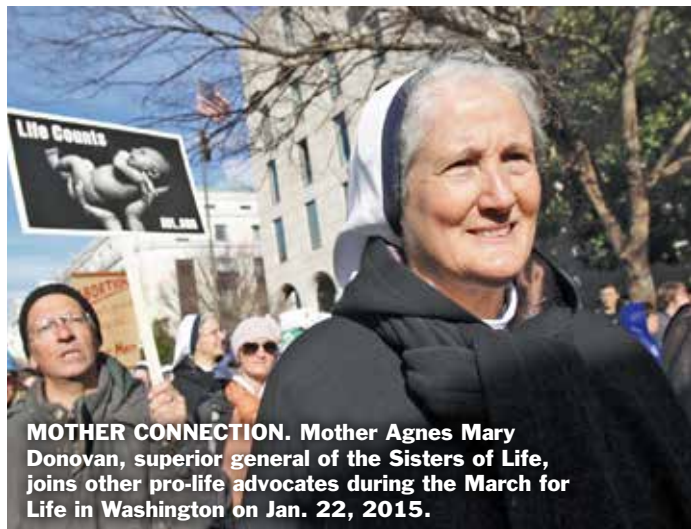
understand the inestimable worth of their child's soul."

Abria Pregnancy Resources is located within five miles of 10 colleges and universities and a dozen low-income neighborhoods, positioning it to reach people in need of its services. It is also across the street from the state's only Planned Parenthood site.

Mealey said Abria's biggest challenge is reaching millennials, who are highly engaged through mobile devices and also are most likely to have an abortion. That is why Abria's website is mobile-friendly, and staff members are capable of providing information by online chat and texting. The next goal is to create a mobile app, Mealey said.

Under the Guiding Star model, a variety of fertility, pregnancy and medical service providers are considered tenants in a space the nonprofit owns. Jacobson said tenants agree to Guiding Star's philosophy statement and are willing to work with others.

Jacobson said full medical clinics are the way pregnancy resource centers truly can compete with Planned Parenthood, especially with services that accompany women's needs. "We're really hoping we can eventually do mammograms."



MOTHER CONNECTION. Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, superior general of the Sisters of Life, joins other pro-life advocates during the March for Life in Washington on Jan. 22, 2015.

“We’re making strides in changing public opinion on abortion, but until we as a movement can find common ground, the underlying issues of the culture of death aren’t being addressed,” Jacobson said. “Bigger is better to have presence and legitimacy.”

Supreme Court Stops Florida Death Penalty

The U.S. Supreme Court on Jan. 12 said the state of Florida’s death penalty system is unconstitutional because it allows judges, rather than juries, to determine whether a convicted criminal should be given a death sentence. Michael B. Sheedy, executive director of the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops in Tallahassee, said the conference was “pleased this decision was issued so promptly” on the first day of Florida’s 2016 legislative session. “This should compel the legislature to address the issue immediately,” he said in a statement. Ruling 8 to 1 in *Hurst v. Florida*, the high court said that the state’s “capital sentencing scheme” violates the Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Writing for the majority, Justice Sonia Sotomayor said the amendment, which guarantees the rights of criminal defendants, “requires a jury, not a judge, to find each fact necessary to impose a sentence of death.” In Florida, the jury plays an advisory role, deciding if the defendant is eligible for the death penalty.

End Deportations?

Two U.S. bishops wrote to Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson seeking an end to deportation raids that rounded up more than 120 Central American immigrants early in the new year. “We disagree with the underlying rationale behind this action: that sending children and families back to the danger-

NEWS BRIEFS

The Islamic extremist group Boko Haram killed 16 people in Nigeria on Dec. 25, continuing a **gruesome tradition** of village massacres on Christmas Day. • Delivering America Media’s John Courtney Murray lecture in New York on Jan. 12, **Rabbi Dan Polish** described 1965’s “Nostra Aetate” as the beginning of a process that has charted a new course for the relationship between Jews and Catholics. • The board of the United Methodist Church’s pension and health fund **voted to divest** from Israel’s five largest banks because of their involvement with settlements in the Occupied Territories. • On Jan. 11 Catholics and Lutherans made another step toward a joint commemoration in 2017 of the **500th anniversary** of the Reformation by issuing common liturgical guidelines for ecumenical services. • Two refugee families are being hosted by the two parishes of the Vatican, responding to an **appeal by Pope Francis** during an Angelus in September that every parish in Europe welcome a family of refugees. • Because of security concerns, on Jan. 13 the Diocese of El Paso **scrapped plans for a Mass** at the border at the same time as the closing Mass of Pope Francis’ visit to Mexico on Feb. 17.



Rabbi Dan Polish

ous environment they fled will serve as a deterrent for other children and families who are considering fleeing Central America,” said the Jan. 8 letter, signed by Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio L. Elizondo of Seattle, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Migration, and Bishop Kevin W. Vann of Orange, California, chairman of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network. “To send migrant children and families back to their home countries would put many of them in grave danger because they would face threats of violence and for some, even death,” they said.

Euthanasia Challenged

Belgium is embroiled in a religious freedom controversy after the new head of the country’s Roman Catholic Church demanded that church-run hospitals and nursing homes have the right to refuse to euthanize their patients. Euthanasia for terminally ill adults was

legalized in Belgium in 2002 and has been broadly supported. But opposition has grown as lawmakers extended the practice to terminally ill children and people with severe psychological problems. In a newspaper interview published the day after Christmas, the nation’s new primate, Archbishop Jozef De Kesel of Mechelen-Brussels, acknowledged that secular-minded Belgians had no problem with abortion or euthanasia. “But it is not obvious from my faith,” he said. “I think that we have the right, on an institutional level, to decide not to do it.” Despite dwindling Mass attendance, the church still plays an important role in Belgium’s mixed private and public health care system. Catholic hospitals, which receive state subsidies, officially offer only palliative care for end-of-life patients, but not all of them have an outright ban on euthanasia in their guidelines.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

Cupich: Confront Gun Violence

The late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago once used the image of a seamless garment to describe a Catholic ethic of life that includes respect for the unborn; the dignity of the weak, disabled and elderly; and opposition to the death penalty. Blase Cupich, the current archbishop of Chicago, is seeking to extend that fabric to include curbing gun violence.

“This is a pro-life issue and should be front and center with all of the others,” the archbishop told me recently in a far-ranging interview that addressed a mounting homicide rate in Chicago, the strained relationship between that city’s minority communities and its police, and the growing fear nationwide over the potential for domestic terrorist attacks.

Archbishop Cupich is calling for a ban on assault weapons, stricter background checks and prohibiting the sale of guns to people on the government’s no-fly list. On assault weapons, he says, high-powered weapons that “really can only be used to create havoc and mass destruction need to be banned... and the Catholic Church can be a voice for that.”

Archbishop Cupich’s call reflects positions already taken by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. What gives his words heft is the perch from which he is making these pronouncements. Chicago experienced 468 homicides last year—more than any other city in the United States. “We all

know deep down we can do better and we should do better,” the archbishop said.

Expect to hear the bishops’ conference and individual bishops speak out more forcefully on gun control in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election, Archbishop Cupich says. “The bishops do feel strongly about the taking of innocent human life whether it’s in the womb or in the streets, so I

‘This is a pro-life issue and should be front and center with all of the others.’

think they will speak out.”

He expressed disappointment, however, that the responsible committee of bishops did not have adequate time to revise the quadrennial voter guide “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” which reflects Catholic positions on a number of prominent issues. Archbishop Cupich worries that this year’s revision leans too heavily on the original version, published in 2007. In its current form, curbing gun violence is dealt with largely in one paragraph. There are multiple references to other pro-life issues, like abortion and euthanasia.

“We are seeing an evolution of that document,” Archbishop Cupich says. “There was very heartfelt debate on the floor when [it] was presented.” He thinks it may have been a “mistake” not to rewrite the document “because it limited us in talking about these other issues in a more ample way. The next time we write this document

we’re going to start all over.”

The archbishop notes, however, that the point of “Faithful Citizenship” is not to tell Catholics what party or candidates to vote for but to offer them “a chance to reflect on the teaching of the church. For every person who goes into the voting booth, it’s like going into the confessional. They have to own the decisions they make in going into those two boxes.”

The archbishop says he understands the fear many Catholics may feel in the wake of recent terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino.

But, he says, Americans should avoid that trap. “ISIS is not ideological in the sense of wanting to promote a particular faith or religion,” he says. “Their motive is to wreak havoc, to create violence in society. ISIS wants us to be divided, to be afraid. America should not let ISIS win.”

In many ways, the issues of violence facing the nation, Archbishop Cupich says, serve to underscore the importance of the Jubilee Year of Mercy that Pope Francis has proclaimed for 2016. “A jubilee means there is a sense of freedom, of release, of starting over. It’s an opportunity to integrate mercy into our conversations and actions,” he says.

“We have a coarseness in our dialogue; we have a harshness in the way we deal with conflict,” the archbishop says. “We see this in families with regard to domestic violence, across the board to violence in our streets and to international politics. The Holy Father is looking for a way in which we to make sure mercy is a part of the whole living process of relationships.” By speaking out in a clear, prophetic voice about the scourge of violence, Archbishop Cupich seems to be seeking much the same.

JUDITH VALENTE

JUDITH VALENTE, *America’s Chicago correspondent*, is a regular contributor to NPR and “Religion and Ethics Newsweekly.” Twitter: @JudithValente.



Fugitives From Injustice

From the moment Daniel Berrigan took the stage at Cornell University on April 17, 1970, he and everyone else there knew he would be arrested. Among the thousands of students present were countless F.B.I. agents. Some had traded their blue suits for hippie disguises, but one could still pick out those Fordham and Boston College boys a mile away. Daniel and his brother Phil had been ordered to report to prison a week before for destroying draft records two years earlier in Catonsville, Md.; and despite the crowd's loud support, it looked like Cornell would be Dan's last day of freedom for some time.

But wait. As the house lights went down, the slight Jesuit was led to a huge burlap-and-papier-mâché puppet of an apostle, one of a dozen used that night for a creative rendition of the Last Supper. Guided by unseen hands while hiding inside, he made a clean getaway into the Ithaca night.

J. Edgar Hoover was enraged by Berrigan's whimsical escape and put him on the F.B.I.'s Ten Most Wanted list. The next few months proved to be Hoover's worst nightmare, as Berrigan, calling himself "a fugitive from injustice," cropped up time and again at churches, convents and campuses, always evading capture. Even the conservative scion William F. Buckley Jr. ridiculed the F.B.I., noting "it was much likelier that you would see [Berrigan] on Johnny Carson's show, thumbing his nose at American jurisprudence, than behind the bars he belonged behind." Many others found themselves cheer-

ing on this unlikely "Catholic Robin Hood," and Berrigan's message of non-violent resistance to the American war machine was heard by ears that had never before listened.

Four months later, at William Stringfellow's house on Block Island, a dozen F.B.I. agents posing as bird-watchers finally caught up with Daniel Berrigan. The three-year prison stay that followed left him undeterred. After that came decades of peace activism. A photograph of Dan after his arrest—smiling gleefully as he flashes the peace sign with cuffed hands—has become an icon for the peace movement and for nonviolent protesters everywhere.

But the merry chase could never happen today.

Berrigan would be caught within days, perhaps minutes, boxed in by a surveillance state that he himself has warned against multiple times over the past four decades. He would be photographed a dozen times daily from lampposts and taxicab cameras; every phone and computer he used would be tracked; he would be observed from the sky by drones. And every fellow traveler who offered him assistance—from the nuns who hid him in convents to the Catholic families who hid him under their beds—would face charges that they had assisted a fugitive.

Don't think so? Just weeks ago, the infamous "affluenza teen" Ethan Couch was caught almost immediately in his flight from the law because he used a cellphone in Mexico to call for a pizza. Note: this was not the C.I.A. hunting Osama Bin Laden with every tool at the

nation's disposal, or the F.B.I. putting on a nationwide manhunt to apprehend Whitey Bulger. This was U.S. marshals and Mexican police tracking down a teenager who had skipped a meeting with his probation officer.

Obviously no one is going to defend Ethan Couch. But shouldn't we ask who has access to our cellphone activity, and when and how? Shouldn't we ask what it means for a free society

when such surveillance is implemented for every violation of the law, and extended beyond our borders? What happens when it isn't Ethan Couch but a more defensible violation of the law? Might it sometimes be in our interest as a nation to hear voices that are temporarily illegal?

If the U.S. government had enjoyed this level of surveillance in the 1970s, we would never have heard Berrigan's "Sermon From the Underground." Daniel Ellsberg would have been jailed long before the Pentagon Papers ever made it to the Xerox machine. "Deep Throat" would have found parking garages poor hiding places from Nixon's security apparatus. And as a result, far more malicious lawbreakers than these would have been left to their own devices.

There is little doubt that technological advances in the detection, prevention and prosecution of crime since 1970 have made us all safer in many ways. We should hold grave doubts about whether or not they have been worth it.

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

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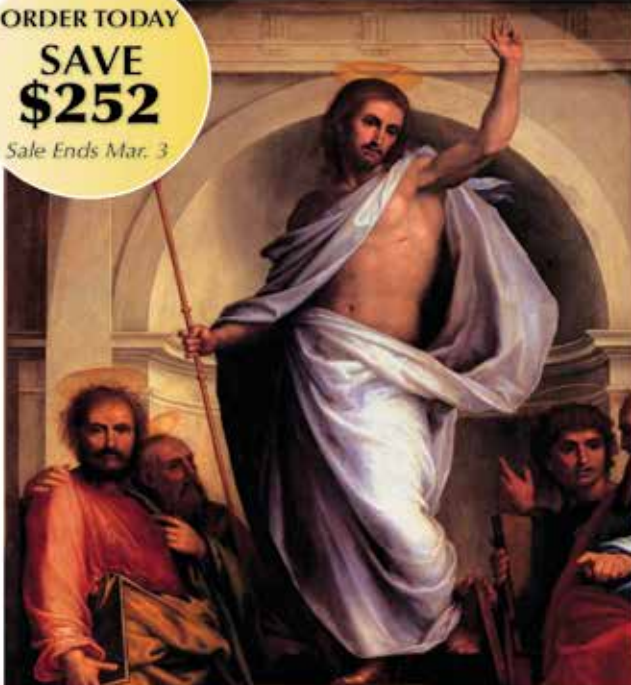
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Our Reason for Being

Restoring the pillars of Catholic education

BY DON BRIEL, KENNETH GOODPASTER AND MICHAEL NAUGHTON

At the heart of leadership lies the responsibility to develop one's institution according to its deepest purpose. Yet this task can be undermined in Catholic universities when faculty and administrators attempt to remake their organizations in the image of other academic institutions. While vestiges of their original character remain, they begin to lose a distinctive Catholic vision and with that, ultimately, their true meaning, purpose and unique identity.

The recent 25th anniversary of St. John Paul II's apostolic constitution on Catholic universities, "Ex Corde Ecclesiae," presents an opportune moment to re-examine the character and role of Catholic universities in light of their deepest purpose. One of the clear intentions of "Ex Corde Ecclesiae" was to recall and emphasize the two basic pillars of Catholic universities' mission and distinctive character: the pursuit of the unity of knowledge and the ultimate complementarity of faith and reason. These two principles guide and inform all aspects of a genuine university education, whether in the arts and humanities, the professions or the sciences.

It is also a good moment to take a fresh look at Catholic university leaders and their role in keeping their institutions aligned with their original mission. Pope Francis' frank call to the Roman Curia to examine the ills of leadership offers a practical model of reflection for this task. In a recent article in *Harvard Business Review* (4/14/15), Gary Hamel adapts Francis' concept of the "diseases" of leadership to the problems faced by business leaders. We can bring the same frame of reference to an assessment of the governance of our universities.

Whereas Francis and Hamel provide a list of multiple diseases, we want to focus on one, which we call *teleopathy*, combining the Greek *telos* (end or purpose) with *pathos* (disorder or sickness), described in the *Encyclopedia of Business Ethics*. It is an occupational hazard with a distinct, three-

stage pattern. Institutional leaders 1) fixate on limited goals and make them ultimate aims, 2) rationalize these goals as the principal purpose of the institution and 3) eventually detach their institutions from their fundamental purpose and "reason for being." To carry the metaphor further, in a diagnostic manual describing institutional pathologies, teleopathy would be as central a disorder as heart disease or cancer.

Symptoms of Teleopathy

Fixation: focusing on secondary values. The most apparent sign of mission drift in Catholic universities is the avoidance of language that connects a school's brand of education with its foundations and religious beliefs—that is, the very thing that makes it Catholic. A vital, articulate Catholic vision of the school's intellectual life is often missing from mission documents, convocation speeches, curriculum designs, research agendas and strategic plans. Michael J. Buckley, S.J., observed this trend over 20 years ago and summarized his observations in *America* (5/29/93):

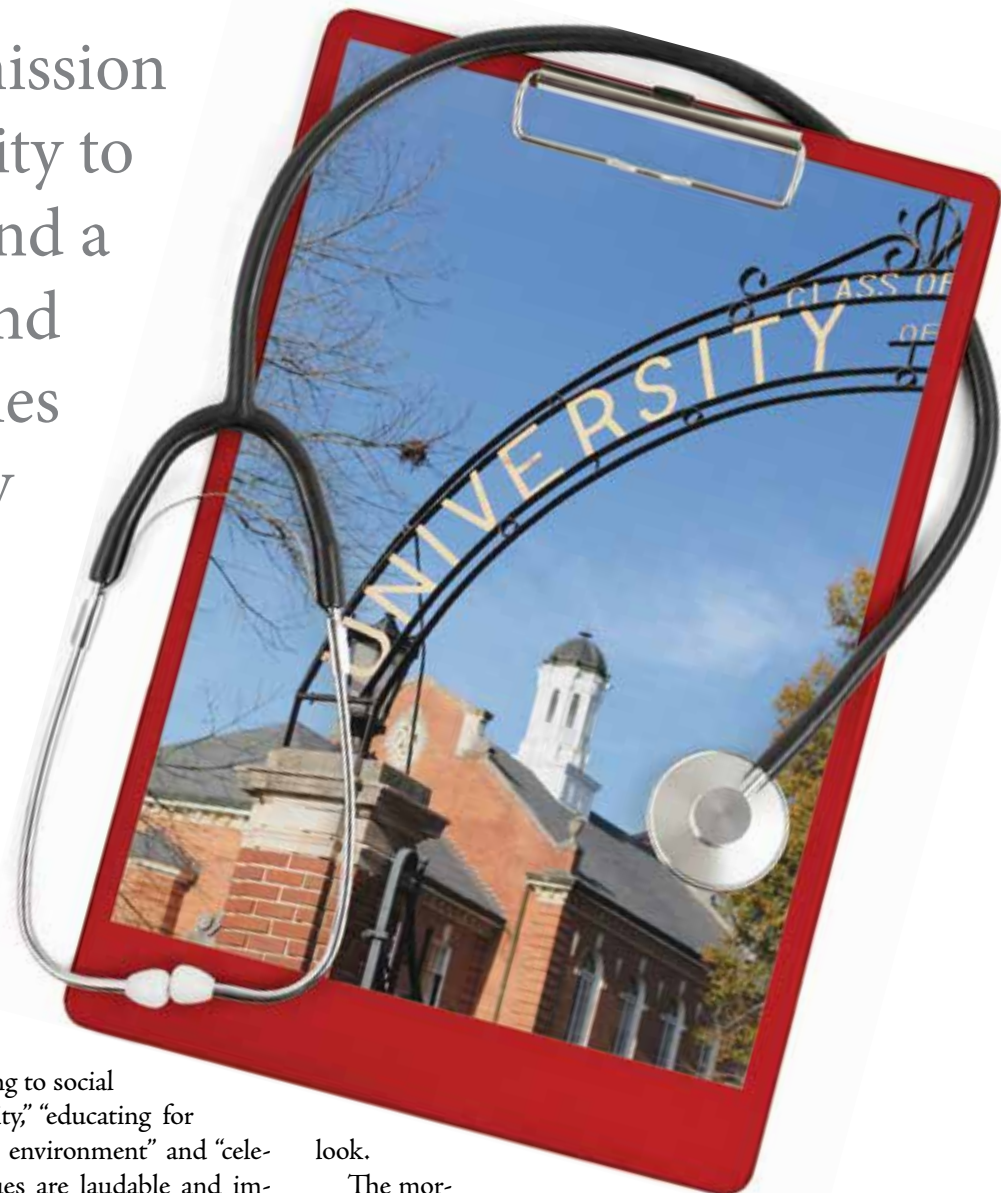
The "faith that seeks understanding"—what constitutes the substance and richness of the Creed and inspired 2,000 years of Catholic reflection and life—is reduced to a morality or a general social ethic. One looks in vain for very much beyond American civil religion. The Catholic, Christian character has shaded off into a vacuity that offers neither challenge nor much direction to the education given by the institution.

While some universities have heeded Father Buckley's warning, others have accelerated the shading off of their uniquely Catholic expression. In the last 25 years, many Catholic universities have struggled to recognize the core pillars of Catholic higher education articulated in "Ex Corde Ecclesiae"—namely, that 1) all subjects should be studied with an understanding of their relationships and relevance to other disciplines, a study that clarifies both the strengths and limits of each particular field of study (unity of knowledge); and 2) there should be dialogue between faith and reason that is at the heart of authentic human development and the complex nature of truth (complementarity of faith and reason).

The language of the two pillars is often supplanted by the general categories of ethics, wellness, service and leadership

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To limit the mission of the university to teaching around a set of moral and social principles will eventually undermine the principles themselves.



expressed in phrases like “committing to social justice,” “providing radical hospitality,” “educating for civic responsibility,” “sustaining the environment” and “celebrating diversity.” While these values are laudable and important to any Catholic university, when detached from the theological and integral core of the Catholic tradition and its epistemological convictions they can become hollow.

Take for example the shrinking liberal arts core of most Catholic universities over the last 20 years. While many reasons exist for this reduction, if leaders on campus can articulate only a vague moral rationale, the core curriculum becomes generic, resulting in a distribution of requirements bereft of an underlying pursuit of the unity of knowledge or dialogue of faith and reason. And where the two pillars are expressed in Catholic universities, they tend to get left behind in professional schools. A study by Steve Porth, John McCall and Joseph DiAngelo found that most of the Catholic business schools they surveyed made references to ethics in their mission statements, but very few connected such missions and their understanding of ethics to the Catholic character of the university. Without a robust root system, ethics in business schools tends toward economic instrumentality and a utilitarian out-

look.

The moral and social values of Catholic higher education should be understood as outcomes of a deeper purpose and not the source of it. To limit the mission of the university to teaching around a set of moral and social principles will eventually undermine the principles themselves. Here Vaclav Havel’s critique of international campaigns for human rights, which appeared in the magazine *Sunrise* (Oct./Nov. 1994), is relevant. Without a connection to a deeper existential reality, he argued, human rights are in danger of becoming mere slogans:

Politicians at international forums may reiterate a thousand times that the basis of the new world order must be universal respect for human rights, but it will mean nothing as long as this imperative does not derive from the respect for the miracle of Being, the miracle of the universe, the miracle of nature, the miracle of our own existence. Only someone who submits to the authority

of the universal order and of creation, who values the right to be a part of it and a participant in it, can genuinely value himself and his neighbors, and thus honor their rights as well.

Havel recognized that a generic commitment to “rights” or “justice,” “diversity” or “ethics” is prone to the “cut flowers syndrome”: they may look attractive for a while, but severed from their cultural, religious and spiritual roots, they wither. Without a deeper root system, such so-called universals have “no integrating force, no unified meaning, no true inner understanding” to draw upon for sustenance.

Rationalization: seeking pluralism at the expense of Catholic identity. While few leaders in Catholic higher education would formally deny the two pillars of a Catholic university, their absence in convocation speeches, alumni magazines and strategic and curricular plans is rationalized on the basis of an increasingly pluralistic culture. As economic pressures increase, many universities, through marketers and their branding strategies, adapt their public language to be less overtly faith-based and more generic and often unintentionally utilitarian.

University leaders rationalize this surrogate language with an appeal to be more inclusive and more palatable to the increasingly religiously diverse populations served by

Catholic universities. A vision informed by a distinctively Catholic articulation of the unity of knowledge and complementarity of faith and reason is seen as too religious, and thus too sectarian, for today’s university stakeholders (students, faculty, donors and accrediting agencies). Religious claims might place the university at a disadvantage in recruiting faculty and diverse student populations.

As some Catholic universities distance themselves from theological and doctrinal commitments, they begin to face a particular challenge regarding what makes them distinctive. If leaders of Catholic universities mute the fundamental convictions of their own tradition, then “diversity” and “pluralism” can become mere code words for institutional conformity. If pluralism, and in particular institutional pluralism, is to be truly valued, then Catholic universities must be encouraged to bring forth their distinctive qualities; otherwise, they lose an important source of distinctiveness and move closer to becoming a commodity in the educational marketplace.

This is not to say that Catholic universities should employ only religious categories and ignore the realities of a pluralistic society. The Catholic university does have moral and social convictions; and it must speak, as it always has, in a language that is intelligible and accessible to those who do not share those convictions. Yet faculty and administrators must not downplay the theological and ecclesial commitments that are central to being a Catholic university.

Detachment: the consequences of teleopathy. When Catholic universities describe their mission in generic social and ethical terms, they also tend to de-emphasize a distinctively Catholic criteria in hiring, curriculum, research and promotion. Hiring faculty and administrators on the basis of a generic ethic or disciplinary excellence alone inevitably brings two results. First, leaders neglect to engage faculty in meaningful conversations about how to understand and implement the two pillars articulated by “Ex Corde Ecclesiae.” They focus, instead, on urgent details of day-to-day procedural management. Relationships to the Catholic intellectual tradition may be reduced to platitudes or viewed as marginal to the primary concerns of the university. Faculty members can become more loyal to their disciplines than to their university. Ultimately, the very idea of the university is reduced to that of a “holding company” for disciplinary advancement and career devel-

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opment. Students and faculty members are deprived of the promise and full value of a Catholic education.

Second, the university disconnects from the church. When doctrinal and faith commitments are marginalized, the presence of religious and priests, as well as committed lay Catholic faculty members, is seen to be optional. Liturgies like the traditional opening Mass of the Holy Spirit are often removed from university rituals and convocations. Theology and philosophy lose their integrative role within the larger university and become simply discrete disciplines among others. The role of the local bishop in supporting the university's mission is weakened. Except for occasional community outreach or service learning opportunities, the church comes to have little or no relationship to the university. Of course, leaders of Catholic universities can distort their attachment to the church by stressing the requirement of obedience to ecclesial tradition in a way that precludes a genuine intellectual vitality. What substitutes for such vitality is a pervasive emphasis on Catholic piety and devotional practice. This is not the *gaudium de veritate* (joy in truth) that St. Augustine and St. John Paul II praised.

While each institution will have its own unique expression of the teleopathic pattern we have described, each displays a form of disengagement that goes from religious truths within a distinctive ecclesial tradition (the two pillars of "Ex Corde Ecclesiae") to a humanism with broadly acceptable behavioral norms, to the methodological preoccupations of the disciplines and sometimes to whatever pays the bills. Once a Catholic university cuts itself off from its deepest theological and ecclesial roots, it yields to the various pressures and incentives of a larger utilitarian, careerist and technological culture, and its criteria of success are increasingly guided by the accreditation standards, assessments and rankings pursued by any secular university.

Recovering From Teleopathy

There are many exceptions and variations to the pattern of teleopathic leadership we have described. But senior administrators and trustees would do well to heed Francis' warning that each person who is not nourished with spiritual food "will become a bureaucrat (a formalist, a functionalist, an employee): a shoot that dries up and little by little dies and is thrown away." This possibility—of becoming bureaucrats—is a danger for all leaders who lose sight of the deeper purposes of their institutions and manage them through prevalent norms and mechanical procedures.

Maintaining or restoring the two pillars of a Catholic university education requires a healthy self-examination on the part of the university stewards—that is, boards, administration and faculty. University leaders should begin conversations to determine whether there are policies or practices at their institutions that tend to erode their distinctive mis-

sion and identity and how best to reform or eliminate them.

Their questions could include the following. What are the gaps between the aspirational language in our mission statement and the "values-in-action" driven by the incentives, rewards, hiring and promotion systems of the organization? Is there a lack of connection between the institutional "talk" and "walk"? How should we understand and implement the pillars of the Catholic university? In recruitment and hiring? In the appointment of search committees? In the choice of search firms? In strategic planning, board appointments, measurement systems? In curricular design, including the central role of theology and philosophy? In faculty and leadership formation? In new governance structures and academic programs?

Reversing teleopathic leadership also requires other stakeholders, like donors and prospective college students and their families, to bring more questions to bear. Is the Catholic university in which I am interested really providing a fully integrated Catholic education? These evaluations, conducted in the context of prayer, can refocus and re-energize Catholic university leadership, faculty, students and the communities that support them. Collective efforts to understand and restore the two pillars of "Ex Corde Ecclesiae" can lead Catholic campus communities to embrace confidently and celebrate the distinctive contributions of Catholic higher education. ▲

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A Rooted Vision

The Latin American origins of Pope Francis' theology

BY RAFAEL LUCIANI AND FÉLIX PALAZZI

Surveys conducted shortly after Pope Francis' historic visit to the United States showed that while Americans overall were left with a more positive impression of the pope, his popularity among Catholics, while still quite high, slightly decreased. According to the Pew Research Center, 81 percent of Catholics viewed the pope favorably in October, down from 86 percent in June, a dip driven largely by those who attend Mass regularly.

In July of this year, Gallup polls also recorded a hit to Pope Francis' favorability, attributable to declining support among Catholics and political conservatives. The drop coincided with two events: the publication of the encyclical on the environment, "Laudato Si," and the strong critiques of unfettered capitalism the pope delivered during his July trip to South America.

As a Latin American theologian, I would like to try to explain what I call "the theological-pastoral option" of Pope Francis, which is still little known outside the Spanish-speaking theological world. It requires a certain familiarity not only with the evolution of the magisterium of the Latin American church but also with religious and sociopolitical movements in Latin American countries. The inadequacy of many of the attempts to understand the orientation of Francis' papacy is due to neglect of these factors and may explain why some Catholics have been put off by the pope's criticism of social and economic structures.

Pastoral Turn

The pope's trip to Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay in July 2015 marked an important development in our understanding of his pontificate. There Francis outlined his program for rescuing humankind from its present distress: a) avoiding "abstract spiritualism"—that is, thinking that we can have faith apart from our social context; b) rejecting "methodical functionalism"—that is, justifying the use of any means

to attain a determined end, like remaining in power; c) applying a critical hermeneutic to the "abstract ideologies" that reduce the Gospel and Christian praxis to empty principles; and d) dismantling "ecclesial clericalism and careerism," which are signs of an immature faith that fails to measure up to the Gospel.

In this vision for the church, we are beginning to see more clearly the connection between the theological and pastoral content of the pope's discourses and what is known as "theology of the people" (or sometimes called "theology of culture"). The pope's use of this branch of theology, which arose within the context of the assimilation and application of the Second Vatican Council by the Latin American church, makes it clear that he is proposing something more than a mere change of focus in the church's pastoral work. He is interested in doing more than refreshing the church's language or updating existing religious forms and practices. Pope Francis' aim is to establish a whole new way of being church, one that recognizes the serious effects of the present structural crisis and returns to the path traced out by the Second Vatican Council.

This new way of being church takes on a prophetic quality inspired by the theology of the people, which understands pastoral action in relation to the church's insertion in the reality of the poor and her appreciation of the values that emerge from the popular sectors. This new way of being church arises from a preferential option for those living on the margins and from a desire to make use of their ability to generate processes of conversion in all of us who belong to the church and the larger society.

This theological approach avoids the tendency to separate and isolate aspects of church life, with faith and scholarship on one side and social and pastoral involvement on the other. Such separation provokes a dysfunctional relationship between the academic world and the reality of the poor, as Pope Francis wrote in "Laudato Si":

Many professionals, opinion makers, communications media, and centers of power, being located in affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems. They live and reason from the comfortable position of a high level of development and a quality of life well beyond the

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HOUSE CALL. Pope Francis visits the Bañado Norte neighborhood, a slum in Asunción, Paraguay, July 12, 2015.

reach of the majority of the world's population. This lack of physical contact...can lead to a numbing of conscience (No. 49).

Conceiving the identity and the action of the church in this way is a consequence of Latin America's embrace of Vatican II, especially as interpreted by the bishops' conference at Medellín in 1968. While in Europe the council gave birth to the political theology of Johann Baptist Metz and Hans Küng, in Latin America it inspired the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez, Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino. In Argentina, however, still another understanding of the council emerged, and it was spelled out in the concluding document of the extraordinary assembly of the Argentine bishops at San Miguel in 1969.

The documents of Medellín and San Miguel were inspired, in part, by the proposals of St. John XXIII's "Mater et Magistra" (1961) and Blessed Paul VI's "Populorum Progressio" (1967). Both pontiffs were already calling for what St. John described as "a church of the poor" (his words in a September 1962 radio broadcast) and for recognition of "the face of Christ in every poor person, as his sacrament" (as Pope Paul VI said during his 1968 visit to Bogotá). Now

comes Francis, who wants "a poor church for the poor," drawing his inspiration from the so-called Pact of the Catacombs that was signed by 40 bishops, including Dom Hélder Câmara, at the conclusion of Vatican II in 1965. In the pact the bishops declared the need to return again to the ways of the historical Jesus by being "a poor servant church" that would be distinguished for its practice of "fraternity, justice, and compassion." This is the context in which the theological-pastoral option of Pope Francis developed.

Of the People

The theology of the people as a form of Latin American liberation theology was first elaborated as such by two priest-theologians, Lucio Gera and Rafael Tello, and then adopted by the Argentine bishops' conference in 1969. Its origins, however, can be traced back to 1966, when the bishops' pastoral commission defined "the people" in terms of "the existence of a common culture rooted in a common history and committed to the common good."

The theology of the people was given formal shape by Father Gera in his paper "The Meaning of the Christian Message in the Context of Poverty and Oppression." For him this theology does not advocate changing social and

political structures just for the sake of change; rather, it seeks to discern the mission and identity of the church on the basis of its option of the poor. Such an option fosters sociopolitical dialogue and promotes pastoral ministry inspired by the ideal of social justice to be found concretely in the “faithful people.”

This theological-pastoral option does not rely on the Marxist analysis of social and economic conditions that was found in other kinds of liberation theology. Father Gera held that its starting point should be direct connection with the people and serious study of the people’s common culture and ethos. Such an effort makes it possible to discover what is actually obstructing the people’s socioeconomic, political and religious development and it helps to preserve the people’s positive identity against external influences that attempt to impose an alien ideology.

For, as Pope Francis said in Bolivia, “a people that forgets its past and its historical roots has no future”; that is why “the church makes an option to watch over those who are today discarded and to preserve their precious culture.” Accordingly, the theology of the people is a type of liberation theology that pays special attention to evangelizing the culture by means of social, political and religious transformation. The people’s transformation comes about through integral development of the human person, promotion of sociopolitical dialogue and the practice of social justice.

Already in the 1970s Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J., had a

clear vision of what the political stance of Christians and the pastoral action of the church should be. In a discourse addressed to a Jesuit assembly in 1974, he explained that Christian practice—both religious and political—should be centered on fraternity, solidarity, social justice and the common good rather than on notions like homeland, revolution and the opposition between conservatives and liberals. He criticized “the fruitless confrontations with the hierarchy and the draining conflicts between ‘progressive’ and ‘reactionary’ wings within the church, which end up giving more importance to the parts than to the whole.”

Justice in Action

To counter institutional polarization and ideological division in today’s church, Pope Francis has proposed some principles of discernment that are partly inspired by Juan Manuel de Rosas, who was governor of Buenos Aires at the end of the 19th century. The principles are “unity over conflict” in the face of polarized institutional realities and “realities over ideas” in the face of attempts to make the Gospel message into ideology (see “The Joy of the Gospel,” Nos. 217–37).


Speaking in Paraguay in July, the pope declared that the principal priorities of the Christian community should be “becoming inserted and incarnated in the experience of the common people and discerning the shape of the church’s liberating, salvific action from the perspective of the people and

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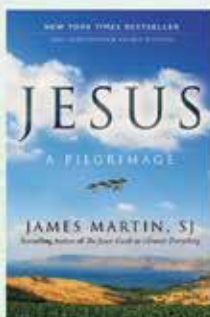
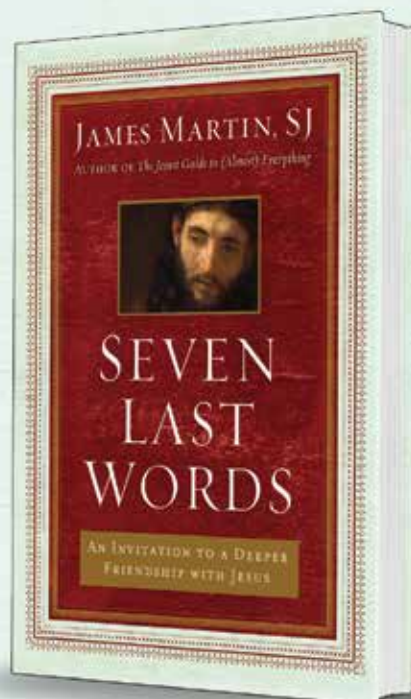
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their concerns.” Otherwise, he stated, the ideologies will gain ground, as has been the case recently in South America, “and they will be no help at all because the ideologies, since they do not start with the people, have an incomplete, unhealthy, or harmful relationship with the people.”

One year into his pontificate, Francis was asked about the slum priests who had been members of the Priests Movement for the Third World; one of them was the Rev. Carlos Mugica, who was killed in 1974. His response was: “They were not Communists. They were priests fighting for social justice.” Indeed, social justice is one of the most important themes in the pope’s theological-pastoral option. The world can be rehumanized and the common good secured only by uniting social justice, theology and pastoral action. As the pope declared in his discourse to the popular movements in Santa Cruz, “the dominant system continues to deny billions of our sisters and brothers the most elemental economic, social, and cultural rights. This system is an assault on the project of Jesus.”

Francis summons Catholics to live a prophetic Christianity that is able to discern the ethical validity and moral truth of the social and religious forces at work in society. Such discernment will determine the change of orientation needed both in a country’s political life and in ecclesial forms so that the church will recover credibility in the world of today. The pope describes the church’s

obligation to contribute to these processes of change in “*Evangelii Gaudium*”:

Together with the various sectors of society, she supports those programs which best respond to the dignity of each person and the common good. In doing this, she proposes in a clear way the fundamental values of human life and convictions which can then find expression in political activity” (No. 241).

In a homily in Quito, Ecuador, on July 7, Pope Francis challenged us to think in terms of a church that is called “to opt for the poor people” and “to resist the temptations of one-sided proposals that tend toward ideology, despotism, and sectarianism.” He called for a church that distances itself from elitism and engages directly with reality.” As he stated in 2001, when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires:

The principle anti-value of today, in my judgment, is the marketing of persons, that is, making people into merchandise. Men and women are converted into just another commodity for projects that come to us from somewhere else, that install themselves in our society and that diminish our human dignity. That is anti-value: the human person as merchandise in the dominant political, economic and social systems. A

The Merciful Father

Always ready to greet a prodigal son

BY PETER J. VAGHI

A striking element of the parable of the prodigal son, in the Gospel of Luke, is the father's festive and loving welcome of a returning son who had squandered his inheritance in a faraway country "on a life of dissipation." This story is also aptly called the parable of the "Merciful Father." It portrays and gives rich meaning to the word *mercy*—relevant in this Jubilee Year of Mercy called by Pope Francis.

The "Merciful Father" parable expresses the essence of mercy (although the word itself does not appear in the text) in a particularly clear and revealing way. It begins simply: "a man had two sons." After asking his father for his share of the estate, the younger son travels to a distant land, squandering all his property in a loose and empty life. A famine strikes that country, and he experiences dark days of exile and hunger. He feels humiliation and shame, then nostalgia for his own home, and gains the courage to return and speak to his father. While still far from home, he imagines the words he will say: "Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son. Treat me like one of your hired hands."

The father's welcome is at the heart of the parable, but we cannot simply pass over the

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"Return of the Prodigal Son," by Rembrandt, circa 1668

son's conversion experience, an experience that happens so often to each of us before we seek reconciliation. It is, after all, hard to seek forgiveness, to return home when we have been away, to seek the mercy of another—especially the mercy of God, who is rich in mercy.

A Difficult Journey

The journey home is often full of difficulties. One of the greatest challenges of the spiritual life is to be open to forgiveness. Sometimes it seems that we want to prove that even God cannot forgive us, as we perceive such a long distance between us and God.

In his acclaimed book *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Henri Nouwen, after contemplating Rembrandt's famous 17th-century painting of the prodigal son (exhibited in St. Petersburg at the Hermitage), reflects on the parable. Why did the son leave in the first place? In leaving with his inheritance in hand, Nouwen writes, the son had rejected all the values of his heritage, everything the father represented. You could say that he even wished him dead. Trying to understand the son's motivation in going to a distant country, Nouwen identifies with him and writes, "I am a prodigal son every time I search for unconditional love where it cannot be found." And: "I leave home every time I lose faith in the voice that calls me the Beloved and follow the voices that offer a great variety of ways to win the love I so much desire."

At a certain point, the son comes to his senses. Considering again the Rembrandt painting, Nouwen writes, "I now see how much more is taking place than a mere compassionate gesture toward a wayward child. The great event I see is the end of the great rebellion."

His father gave him the freedom to leave, but when the son comes to his senses, undergoing a conversion experience, he is welcomed with outstretched arms. Nouwen concludes, speaking of his own identification with the son, "the Father is always looking for me with outstretched arms to receive me back and whisper again in my ear: 'You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests.'" And that is true for each of us each and every day we grow distant from our Father, a Father rich in mercy.

Imagine yourself at the return, as described in the parable: "While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him." The son says to him, in his well rehearsed lines, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son." He could be referring as well to his heavenly Father.

Note that the father takes the initiative. He does not wait for the son to come to him, much less have him crawl to him. No, it is the father who makes the first move and runs a long way. Interestingly, the son calls him father—a sign of his conversion. In Rembrandt's painting, he is wearing simple underclothes and but one shoe, signals that remind us that most journeys seeking forgiveness and mercy are long and challenging.

But the father has not forgotten his son. He has kept unchanged his affection and esteem for him and has always wanted him to return. He reveals no anger or disappointment. Quite the opposite, he orders the finest robe for him, with a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. He orders a fattened calf to be slaughtered and calls for a celebration.

Our Journey Back

How often do we wait for someone who has hurt us or grown distant from us, perhaps a family member or friend, to take that first initiative? The parable of the prodigal son challenges us to behave like the merciful father and reach out first to those estranged from us—to go, in effect, the extra mile.

In addition to his actions, the depth of the father's feelings are found in his words: "This son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found." Even though the son has squandered his inheritance, his humanity has been saved by his father's love. The father is the human face of what we call mercy.

In reference to this parable, St. John Paul II wrote in his second encyclical letter, "Dives in Misericordia" ("On the Mercy of God"):

This love is able to reach down to every prodigal son, to every human misery, and above all to every form of moral misery, to sin. When this happens, the person who is the object of mercy does not feel humiliated, but rather found again and "restored to value" (No. 6).

Mercy is a restorative power. The prodigal son is restored to new life by the loving embrace and celebratory joy of his father.

When we hear the word *mercy*, we often wrongly think of an action that belittles someone. Mercy is often confused

**'God's compassion
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and to show the
same compassion
to others.'**

with pity. This could not be further from the truth. The parable demonstrates so clearly that mercy is the restorative power of God, revealed here in the father's initiative of love and welcome to his son. The prodigal son begins to see and experience himself as loved by his father, and his own conversion experience is ratified by the loving embrace of his father's love. This is another name for mercy.

As St. John Paul II wrote in his encyclical, "mercy is manifested in its true and proper aspect when it restores to value, promotes and draws good from all the forms of evil existing in the world and in man" (No. 6). He concludes by insisting that the face of mercy, the face demonstrated by the father in this parable, must be "ever revealed anew." For "understood in this way," the saint writes, "mercy constitutes the fundamental content of the messianic message of Christ and the constitutive power of his mission." (No. 6).

Each one of us can no doubt relate to this touching scene, one of the most beloved in the entire New Testament. We think of the excitement, the recognition of a loved one away for a long time, the tears of joy at the airport arrival section during a holiday season—or at any time of the year. Maybe it is a husband or wife, brother or sister, or child or grandchild returning from years overseas in the armed services or Peace Corps or seminary, as if he or she had been lost and now found.

But this parable is not simply about the return home of

a son and the joy it brings. Significantly it involves a particular type of return home, one triggered by a conversion of heart on the part of the son who knew his desolate life had to change. He gradually began to see the emptiness of his miserable life and longs to return home. Seen together with the powerful healing embrace of the father, it is rich and very moving. In all its complexity and details, the parable gives mercy a human and divine face.

The underlying challenge of this parable, and indeed this Year of Mercy, is to follow the exhortation of Jesus in his Sermon on the Plain, found in Lk 6:36, where he challenges each of us, to "be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful." Henri Nouwen, with reference to this passage, writes, "God's compassion is described by Jesus not simply to show me how willing God is to feel for me, or to forgive me my sins and offer me new life and happiness, but to invite me to become like God and to show the same compassion to others as he is showing to me."

The return to the Father is ultimately the challenge to become like the Father in everything we say, to be rich in compassion and mercy to each and every person we meet, especially to those distant from us. Each one of us is challenged anew in this Jubilee Year of Mercy to be men and women who encourage homecoming—no matter how distant we, or others, are from home! The merciful Father is always there to embrace and kiss us. So should we be. **A**

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Interreligious Leaders

Last November three Argentine friends of Pope Francis—a rabbi, a Muslim leader and a Catholic priest—traveled from Buenos Aires to the Vatican to discuss with him a project to promote interreligious dialogue throughout the Americas, north and south.

The three—Rabbi Daniel Goldman, the Islamic Center director Omar Abboud and the Rev. Guillermo Marco (the pope’s former press officer)—had worked closely with the pope in the field of interreligious dialogue since 2001, when the three established the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue in the Argentine metropolis. They did so at one of the most difficult periods in the country’s history, as political leadership failed, the economy collapsed and the state, once one of the world’s richest, fell into default.

Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, then an archbishop, gave his full support. He agreed with them that it is vitally important, indeed necessary, for religious leaders from the different faith communities to work together for peace and social harmony.

That need for interreligious dialogue became clear to everyone with the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on Sept. 11, 2001, which changed the history of the world. That attack also brought Cardinal Bergoglio onto the radar screen as *papabile*. Because of the attack, Cardinal Egan of New York, who had been serving as chief rapporteur at a meeting of the Synod

of Bishops in the Vatican, had to return to his archdiocese, and Cardinal Bergoglio replaced him in this role at the synod. He did the task so well that many cardinals then identified him as a possible successor to John Paul II.

When he was elected pope nearly 12 years later, Francis continued his commitment to interreligious dialogue. This led him to invite another rabbi, Abraham Skorka, and the Muslim leader Omar Abboud to accompany him on his visit to the Holy Land in 2014. In Jerusalem, at the Western Wall of the last Temple, the three embraced each other in a powerful testimony to the entire Middle East, and also to the rest of the world, that Jews, Christians and Muslims can live together in peace and friendship. On that visit too, Francis invited the presidents of Israel and Palestine, together with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, to join him in the Vatican in a prayer service for peace. That historic event took place on June 8.

Since becoming pope, Francis has kept up his friendship with the three founders of the I.D.I., and in February 2014 he received them in the Vatican together with 42 other Argentinians from the three religious communities. They visited him at the end of their interreligious pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where they had gone to promote a message of peace and harmony and to remind Israelis and Palestinians alike that Jews, Christians and Muslims can live together in peace and harmony, as happens today in Argentina. It was the clearest evidence that the institute was

still very much alive after 15 years and had become known internationally.

Then, some months ago, the Organization of American States contacted I.D.I. and invited it to be the promoter of a continental project called America in Dialogue. It proposed that the project be based on the spirit of the encyclical “*Laudato Si*,” which offers a vision for the care of and responsibility for planet Earth,

a concern shared by all religious traditions.

The three I.D.I. founders explained the project to Pope Francis over lunch in Santa Marta and obtained his wholehearted support. Some days later, the secretary general of the O.A.S., Luis Almagro, visited the pope and likewise received backing for this initiative.

At I.D.I.’s request, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue will host a day of reflection in the Vatican later this year to deepen the proposals and insights of the encyclical. It aims to bring together the secretaries for religious affairs in governments and representatives of the different religious communities from every country on the American continent.

Ever an advocate of the culture of dialogue, Francis is convinced that America, north and south, can make an important contribution to the resolution of many of the world’s problems through an interreligious dialogue that involves not just words, but also actions. For this reason he is supporting the O.A.S. proposal.

GERARD O’CONNELL

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

Interfaith Encounters

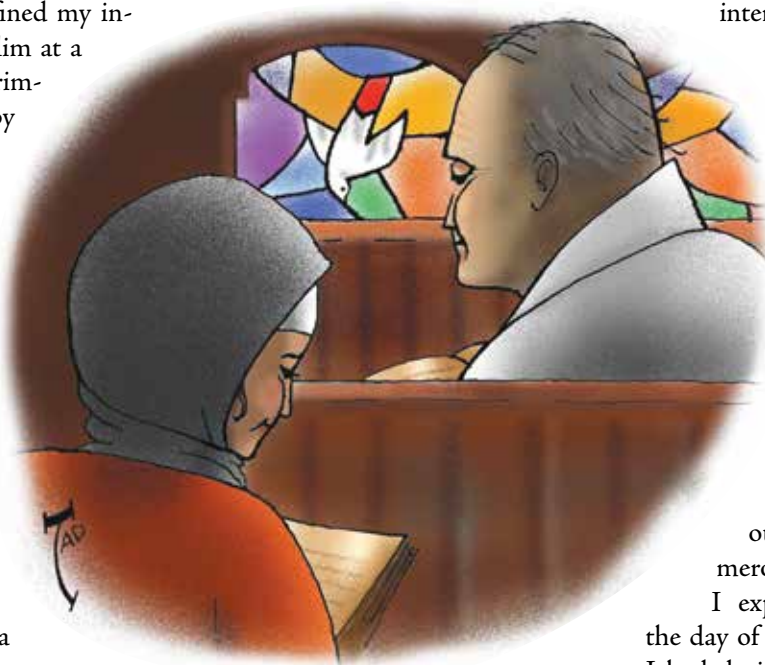
Living as a Muslim at a Catholic college

BY SAADIA AHMAD

We are able to borrow traditions from other religions without compromising our own. This insight defined my interfaith journey as a Muslim at a Catholic college. My pilgrimage was set into motion by an invitation from the college's chaplain to attend a Sunday worship service at the beginning of my freshman year. That single act of outreach and goodwill sparked a period of intensive spiritual growth and development during my undergraduate career. This interreligious journey continues today and has allowed me to grow as a Muslim to a degree that would have been difficult if I were limited to my own religious practice.

My immersion in Catholic life in college took many forms. I regularly attended Catholic worship services, learned about Catholic traditions in the classroom and participated in many events sponsored by the office of campus ministry, even serving on its pastoral council. Some of the most powerful, humbling moments I experienced at prayer took place in a side

room of the on-campus chapel where I performed the traditional five daily



Muslim prayers. The gentle presence of music or choir rehearsal in the background served as a tangible reminder of God's everlasting and intimate presence near us and within us, closer to each of us than we are to ourselves, as both religions remind us. The Muslim prayer beads that hang from my waist, which I hold onto and pray with at various parts of the day, is an idea I adopted from those worn by the priests as they walk about the campus of the college in their prominent white habits. I am a more prayerful, conscious and reflective Muslim by following their example.

At times, however, the religious

diversity I embraced and represented made some people nervous, even hostile. At this same college where positive interfaith interactions abounded, I also encountered a few individuals who consistently would not return my sign of peace, in the literal sense during Mass, and symbolically—to whom I represented “the other.” In this, I realized that each of us can find scriptural or theological reinforcements to promote unity or division. An examination of our world today provides numerous examples of both.

I experienced this tension on the day of my departure from college. I had decided to attend the morning prayer services at the priory chapel, feeling that it would be a fitting conclusion to my undergraduate life. After the service concluded and most people had filed out, one of the priests whom I am blessed to have come to know well approached me and told me that he offered Mass for me that morning, knowing it was the day of my departure and that I might be anxious. I was very grateful for his solicitude. I then went to a corner of the chapel, out of the way, and performed my own Islamic prayers. As I finished, I noticed another priest had lingered and, watching very intently, told me that what I was doing is “very strange” and “extreme” before storming off and

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ART: TAO DUNNE

slamming the door to the sacristy behind him.

In my final moments on campus, I directly experienced two very different but representative manifestations of religious practice in relation to religious diversity. One individual offered me the gifts and beauty of his tradition while respecting my own religious standing; the other reacted to my presence with discomfort and fear. I imagine that both priests felt they were acting in accordance with the teachings of their faith. The intentions behind such actions are well beyond my right to judge, but what I can speak to are the effects of these actions on their recipient. One left me hopeful, the other distressed.

This is the choice we face as a society today, with interfaith harmony as one possibility and religious intolerance as another. We can engage and appreciate our brothers and sisters of other faiths, or we can pull away in fear. We can either work to transform our world through religious understanding or

slide further down the path of discord and division.


My interfaith experience is not extensive, nor are my years on this earth many. But all that I have come to know through my interfaith way of life compels me to a truth that I believe transcends my age and experience. I believe that it is God's intention to will the diversity of his children in religious belief, tradition and practice. Chapter 5, verse 48 of the holy Quran—one of my favorite Quranic verses, taught to me by a professor of Catholic theology—speaks to this providential plan:

To each among you, We have prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but His plan is to test you in what He has given you: so strive as one race in all virtues. The goal of all of you is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you dispute.

A similar theme was introduced to me by the priest who offered Mass for me on the day of my departure. He pointed me to Jn 10:16, which reads, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this flock; them, too, I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd."

I see this message reflected in a recent photo of Pope Francis with Rabbi Abraham Skorka and Imam Omar Abboud at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Here is a representation of unity amid religious diversity. I feel an urgent need for this diversity when I hear about Christians and other religious minorities traumatized by oppression and violence committed in the name of religion. Their healing requires not merely tolerance and resolution, a negative peace, but appreciation and reconciliation, a positive peace. In the verses of holy Scripture, I find my personal call to pursue interfaith dialogue, to always and everywhere respect every person, because they are unique and belong to our one human family, regardless of how different they seem from myself. For diversity is indeed included in God's test for us.


I trust Islam's message to be universal, speaking to those who "think, reflect and do good." These terms are used in the Quran to speak to all of humanity rather than just those who profess and practice the Islamic faith. It is my hope to introduce to people of all religions and belief systems the promise of personal and collective growth that awaits us through appreciative interfaith relations beyond mere tolerance. Such a shift in our perspective would replace the distress and trauma we all too often hear of—and, for some of us, experience—as a result of negative encounters among people of different faiths. Whether or not we choose to act upon this particular message of embracing religious diversity is our own free choice, but the fate is shared by us all.



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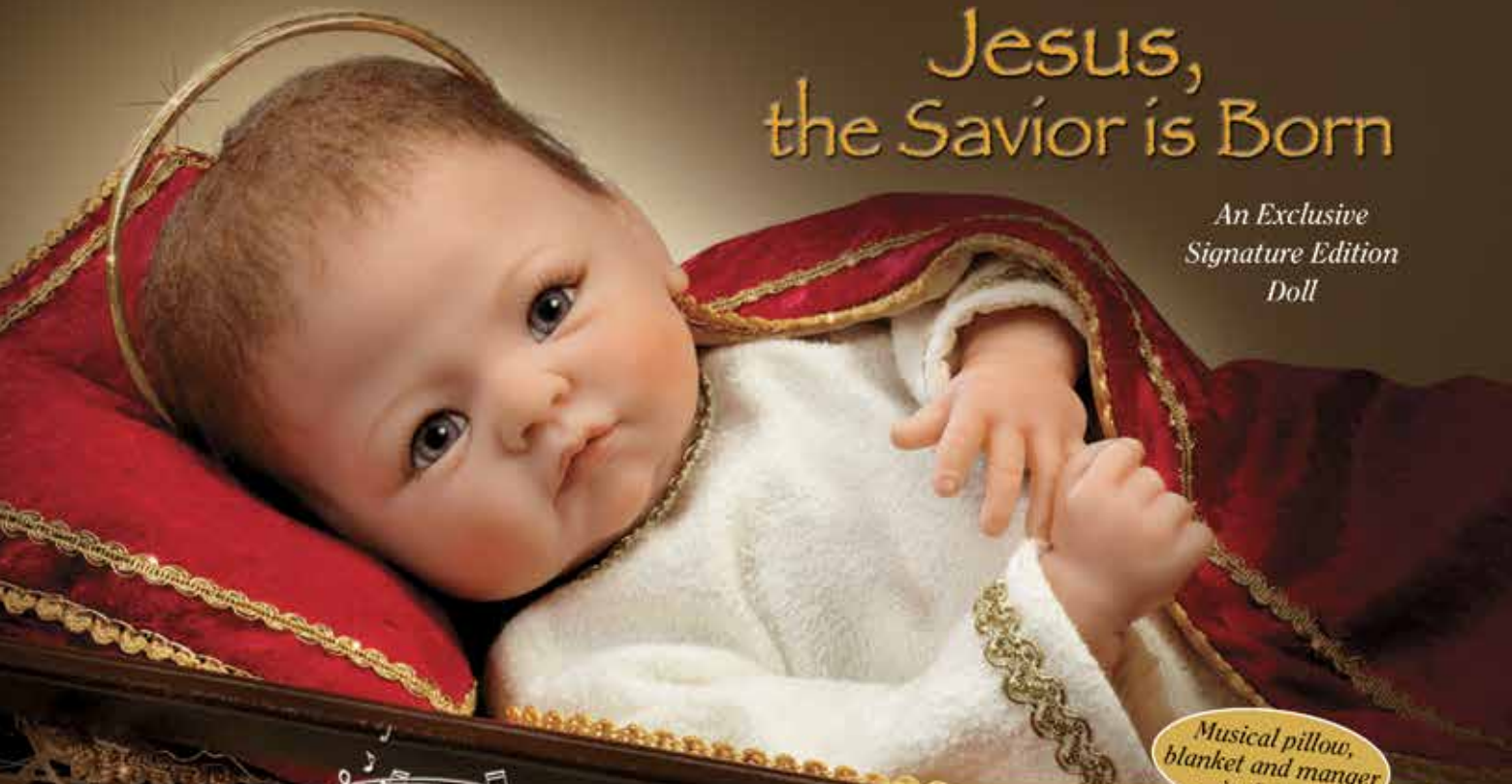


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Ethics of Curiosity

The annual convention of the American Philosophical Association could rarely be described as a festive affair. Thousands of anxious philosophy professors descend on a hotel to give papers on obscure topics as graduate students grimly run the gantlet of hiring committees in a windowless ballroom trying to capture the rare tenure-track job. Despite the encircling gloom, the A.P.A. convention is a good venue to detect current trends in the profession. At this year's conference in January in Washington, D.C., several sessions featured a promising trend: the ethics of curiosity. One session cheerfully provided bumper stickers: "Curiosity may have killed the cat but surely it was a noble death."

One of the architects of the new interest in curiosity is Ernest Sosa of Rutgers. A leading proponent of virtue epistemology, Sosa argues that to understand human knowledge we have to delineate the intellectual habits (virtues) that permit a human being to qualify as a responsible thinker (or, in wooden epistemological jargon, as a good cognizer). Sosa and his disciples have long emphasized the importance of consistency, logic, respect for evidence and critical scrutiny as appropriate virtues for the mature thinker. But the new emphasis on curiosity as a noetic virtue adds a note of transcendence to the portrait of the ideal thinker. Responsible thinking cannot remain limited to the mastery of one discipline or to engagement with one

narrow vector of human experience. An ardent curiosity about languages one does not speak, countries one has never visited and the new neighbors down the block is now a trait of the excellence in thinking that virtue-epistemologists have labored to sketch. A new ecstasy has entered the noetic mix.

A blogger going by the pseudonym of Green Whale perfectly illustrates this noetic curiosity: "I want to know about imaginary numbers, Saturn-shaped black holes in interstellar space, the Pueblo Indians, differential equations, Norse mythology, chaos theory, cytology, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, women in the medieval ages, how to read music, the habits of orangutans in the rain forests of Sumatra, Sanskrit, syllogisms, illuminated manuscripts, and how the first Encyclopedia came to be published. Not least, I want to know why I want to know all these things, what the fire is that burns in my belly."

In many ways this new emphasis on the virtue of curiosity only continues the revival of Aristotle that has marked important sectors of ethics and epistemology in Anglophone philosophy over the past decades. For Aristotle, virtue was not confined to the moral habits of justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance. The intellect required its own habits to recognize truth successfully. Hence the Aristotelian intellectual virtues of science, understanding and wisdom. In their catalogue of noetic virtues many virtue-epistemologists have come up

with a similar list. But Aristotle also insisted that philosophical reflection was impossible without an antecedent wonder concerning existence itself. It is this primordial awe at the existence and nature of the world that permits the thinking process to progress with metaphysical depth. The new emphasis on curiosity also carries echoes of the Romantics and their cult of artistic and scientific creativity. The intellectual restlessness of an Einstein or a Picasso is the paradigm of curiosity working at white heat.

As critics of the ethics of curiosity have argued, there is a dark noetic side to curiosity. Many curious people master trivia and exhibit little depth. The National Enquirer certainly piques the curiosity of "inquiring minds," but this curiosity has little to do with theoretical physics. The gossip manipulates curiosity to destroy privacy. Many of the worst abuses in medicine were committed by scientists who sincerely wanted to push back the borders of knowledge but who misused other human beings as a means to an end in the process. In the figures of Eve and Pandora, both the Bible and Greek mythology begin with cautionary tales on the dangers of curiosity allied to idolatry. But the abuses of curiosity do not destroy its dynamic luster when allied to the search for truth in depth. The new ethics of curiosity is part of the re-enchantment of contemporary philosophy.

'I want to know why I want to know all these things.'

JOHN J. CONLEY

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ALTERNATE REALITY

The dystopian world of 'The Man in the High Castle'

It is safe to say that if your last, best hope for avoiding nuclear war is the continued survival of Adolf Hitler, then you live in a dystopia. Such is the setting for the original series **The Man in the High Castle**, released on Amazon in November. Based on a Philip K. Dick novel, the series takes place in 1962 in a United States that lost World War II and is now occupied by Germany and Japan.

A political crisis is brewing, however, as a white-haired Hitler is rumored to be gravely ill. The Führer is satisfied with controlling the Eastern United States, but his apparent successors

want more. The Japanese, who occupy the Pacific states but lack nuclear weapons, fear war with Germany.

At the outset of the series, viewers are meant to identify with young Americans who never knew freedom, but whose patriotism awakens as they are subjected to the occupation's paranoid brutality and as they encounter contraband films that depict the world we know, in which the United States won the war.

Pursuit of these films drives the plot early on in the series. The San Francisco native and aikido student Juliana Crain (Alexa Davolos) en-

counters her sister, Trudy, on a dark street. Trudy passes Juliana a film, which she later learns is important to the American resistance and must get to the mysterious man in the high castle. Trudy runs, but the Japanese secret police catch up and kill her.

Juliana watches the film over and over, seeing images of the D-Day invasion and the meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin at the Yalta Conference. Does she see a parallel, potential universe, or real events that were somehow forgotten? Juliana begins to believe in these possibilities and becomes determined to get the film into the right hands.

The series offers much imaginative pleasure and horror. The production design team, led by Drew Boughton, creates a world in which Ma Bell is a Nazi corporation and New York City's U-Bahn, a monorail, presum-

TIME-CROSSED. Alexa Davolos and Luke Kleintank in "The Man in the High Castle"



PHOTOS: AMAZON STUDIOS



NAZI HUNTER. Rufus Sewell in "The Man in the High Castle"

ably runs on time. SS officers in black, silver-buttoned jackets and jodhpurs manage the Greater Nazi Reich from a monstrous skyscraper adorned with eagles. At home, one of them, the *obergruppenführer* and family man John Smith (Rufus Sewell), receives a middle-of-the-night call from an agent; one half-expects his bathrobe to be accented with clanking medals. (Too bad; it's not.)

In telling the counterfactual backstory, the series creator and "X-Files" veteran Frank Spotnitz explores the wide gap between the ease of conquest (a "Heisenberg device" leveled Washington, D.C., prompting a surrender commemorated annually on V-A Day) and the difficulty of state-building. Our foreign affairs today are marked by the inability to imagine productive ways to bridge that gap, and so ISIS and the Taliban have space to grow.

In the series, there is a large geographic gap between the German and Japanese occupations, as a lawless neutral zone populated by racial refugees spans the Rocky Mountains. This is where Juliana takes the film, and it is where she encounters the dashing

stranger Joe Blake (Luke Kleintank) who, it turns out, also has a film. Convention demands that Joe also have secrets; his concern the true nature of his mission.

The crucial but thin relationship between Juliana and Joe exemplifies the weak points of the writing in "High Castle." Chase scenes involving a cartoonish bounty hunter seem to take away time better spent on developing Juliana's personal attachments to her family and to her crypto-Jewish boyfriend Frank (Rupert Evans), and clarifying her political motives. Joe's own ties go only as far as a brief mention of a father nostalgic for freedom and a short appearance by Joe's girlfriend and her son. None of this illuminates his loyalties.

Without fully developed heroes to root for, viewers' interest easily shifts to the bureaucrats who run the occupation. *Obergruppenführer* Smith is an American traitor and a torturer, but his conflicts with the Reich make him a figure of sympathy. The best character, in every sense of "best," is the Japanese trade minister Tagomi (Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa), who broods behind thick-rimmed glasses, consults the *I Ching* to read the dire signs of the times and appreciates the rare and accidental beauty of nature and artifice. He radiates dignity, elevating every functionary who passes through the sliding *shōji* doors of his office. He also knows the cost of war—it is written in the deep lines of his face—and collaborates with a disaffected German officer to forestall it.

Assassination attempts, police investigations and betrayals ensue, but the series keeps returning to the mystery surrounding the films. The power of their images, though, is lost on the hapless resistance—and on Spotnitz, too. While Juliana, Frank and Joe scurry around, momentous events are steered by the men in tall buildings. The series ends with a chilling, if unintended, answer to the question of how

to wring complicity from an occupied populace: distract them. In obsessing over the films, the resistance occupies itself. All the SS and Kempeitai need do is maintain a murderous charade of pursuing the films, too. They can pacify everyone else through a grim normalcy. Flakes of ash fall from the crematorium every Tuesday; the children need help reading Beowulf for their Aryan literature homework.

Fascism has been in the news lately, and some commentators have speculated about whether "The Man in the High Castle" presents a version of America that may yet come to be. That seems like a stretch. Even so, the series, despite itself, asks us what tiny battles American social movements wage, and what Pyrrhic victories they celebrate, while the power elite consolidates control over everything that matters.

JONATHAN MALESIC teaches theology at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Twitter: @jonmalesic.



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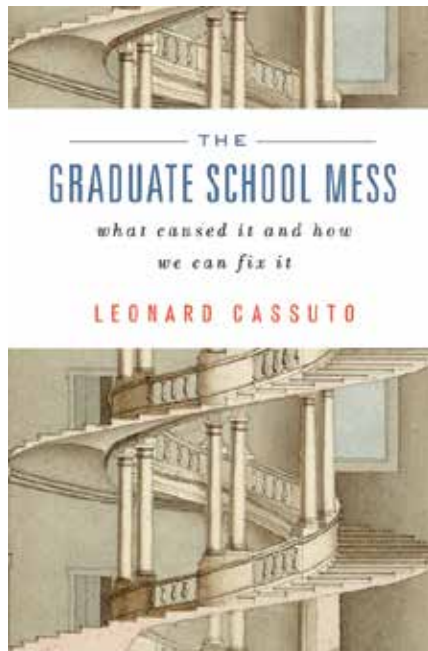
By Leonard Cassuto
Harvard University Press. 320p \$29.95

The “mess” in question in the title of this book is not actually the graduate school; the real mess is the market. By and large, graduate schools do what graduate schools are supposed to do: train new professors to replace old professors. Unfortunately, producing professors is woefully out of sync with the demand for Ph.D.'s in the academic market place. Positions for newly minted Ph.D.'s in four year colleges and universities have been declining since the mid-1970s and in some fields are now virtually nonexistent. Professor Leonard Cassuto in *The Graduate School Mess* sharply criticizes the self-replicating model of graduate education. He offers a host of valuable suggestions for changing both graduate education and the market. The book should be read by every university president, graduate dean and professor.

So much for the book's basic thesis—now for the essential qualification. As I worked on this review, I sipped coffee from a mug manufactured by—so the logo on the bottom indicates—“The Unemployed Philosophers Guild.” The mismatch of graduate training and market is, as Cassuto clearly indicates, largely confined to the humanities. Not all graduate education is “out of market”: Ph.D.'s in science, engineering and the hard-nosed social sciences find employment, but not necessarily in colleges and universities. Scientists get jobs at high-tech companies and economics Ph.D.'s can migrate to Wall Street. Cassuto thinks that graduate education in philosophy and the like

needs to follow the pattern of the sciences, pointing humanities Ph.D.'s toward appointments outside the academy. He labels this the “alt-ac” (alternate academic) pathway.

The problem with alt-ac is the institutional drive for academic prestige.



A glance at self-promotion ads in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* suggests that every university is now moving to a “higher level.” “Higher level” is defined by measures like selectivity of students, size of the endowment, outside research funding and faculty reputation. Graduate education conforms to the prestige gradient. Ideally, your Ph.D.'s will be placed high in the prestige ranking of universities and colleges. It is this “drive to the top” that Cassuto questions. Not every institution should be Harvard; not every graduate student should pine for an appointment to Stanford. Cassuto offers detailed suggestions for changing graduate education to diversify worthy careers. He covers the graduate school world from

admissions through classwork, comprehensive exams, advising, degrees and professional placement.

Admissions. The growth of graduate education has transformed admission to graduate school from a careful negotiation between professors about worthy students to full bureaucratization with graduate deans, admission committees and G.R.E. tests designed to restrict admissions. Why? To improve “quality.” Cassuto illustrates the downside of this graduate race to the top by the decision in 2013 of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York to reduce graduate admissions and increase fellowships to “bring its policies in line with more elite institutions.” Cassuto wonders whether upping the academic ante is consistent with CUNY’s mission “to serve New York’s citizens more broadly.”

Classwork. The research model shapes graduate education to the internal demands of the discipline. Cassuto argues that the first concern should be students. What do they hope to achieve through graduate study, and how should they be taught to realize that end?

The Comprehensive Exam. Passage of the “comp” is generally understood as qualification for a dissertation. Comps date back only to the 1930s; they proliferated after World War II as a means for separating the Ph.D. sheep from the M.A. goats. (In many programs the M.A. has become a consolation prize for those sent along and out.) Cassuto criticizes the comp-as-qualifier and suggests it should emulate the practice of science programs, in which the comp is often a defense of a student’s research proposal or vocational direction.

Advising. Faculty need to advise the student, not the dissertation. The aims and interests of individuals within a graduate program are often varied and, given the job market, should be expanded. Cassuto is proud to recount advising a student whose aim was to teach at a community college. Her experience in

that setting had been so transformative that she wanted to make her career in such a setting. Her decision to teach “down-market” needs to be honored fully. Women and minorities often have personal needs or vocational aims that run counter to the time table or placement goals of the normal doctoral program.

Degrees. The average time to a Ph.D. degree is now nine years. The press toward prestige can distort the time line. The Ford Foundation decided that if students were not burdened by financial concerns they would finish earlier. Generous stipends were offered to students at 18 leading universities. The result was that students took *longer* to finish in order to burnish their dissertations. As Cassuto notes, they chose “completion with distinction over completion with alacrity.”

Prestige focus on the research Ph.D. fails to reflect the variation in skills attained and career prospects sought by graduate students. An example of a successful alt-ac track occurred in the mid-1990s. Science-based industries were seeking “T” shaped graduates who understood business and enough science to fit the corporate culture. With the help of the Sloan Foundation, various universities created the P.S.M. (Professional Science Master) degree. Some 120 programs were set up and the P.S.M. degree has prospered. Not so the P.M.A. (Professional Master of Arts) degree. Funded for a time by the Ford Foundation, it did not gain traction before the funding ran out.

I suspect that there was more than lack of funding that defeated the P.M.A. degree. Why is it that alt-ac works in science and not the humanities? Alt-ac works for the natural sciences and the “hard” social sciences because out-placements often return the discipline to its historic home. The modern research university developed by the incorporation and professionalization of skills that previously existed largely outside the academic study. A

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successful chemical industry existed before chemistry Ph.D.'s. Sociology as an academic study is an off-shoot from social reform movements at the end of the 19th century. When philosophy moves into its historic home base, it is back with Socrates in the public *agora*. Socrates offers a bad career choice; he charged no fees and came to a bad end.

If the name of the academic game is "prestige," the *fundamental* problem for the humanities today is its low prestige rating. In his last chapter, "In Search of an Ethic," Cassuto applauds former Fordham dean Nancy Busch's suggestion that the history of higher education be required in the core curriculum for graduate study. A great idea! If one looks at the history of American higher education, the prestige of the humanities may become clear. College education *before* the research university revolution was all humanities. Today that curriculum may seem to be only a quaint combination of classical

texts and Christian piety, but its advocates thought it had great prestige and practical utility. Lawrence Cremin, in his monumental study of higher education in the early days of the republic, *American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876*, spells out what educators hoped humanistic education in the classics would achieve:

In a torrent of sermons, tracts, learned disquisitions and utopian proposals [preachers and educators] attempted to determine the moral substance of American citizenship and to devise educa-

tional arrangements that would prepare a responsible citizenry.

Where in the current college curriculum do we educate students in "the moral substance of American citizenship"? In what alt-ac jobs in society is that goal pursued? The humanities are the curriculum for citizenship. It doesn't seem too radical to suggest that the plight of the humanities has become the plight of our politics.

DENNIS O'BRIEN is a philosopher, author of several books and former president of the University of Rochester.

MARK J. DAVIS

WHEN PEACE SEEMED PLAUSIBLE

KILLING A KING

The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the Remaking of Israel

By Dan Ephron
W. W. Norton & Co. 290p \$27.95

Two decades ago Israel stood on the verge of completing a peace process that promised to end years of fighting with its neighbors and the Palestinians. But the prospect of exchanging land for peace deeply divided Israel into two roughly equal camps pulling in opposite directions—one secular, the other religious. As Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who commanded the army that brought Gaza and the West Bank under Israel's control in the 1967 Six Day War, had the prestige and the commitment in 1993 to implement the Oslo Accords, which promised the Palestinians a measure of self-

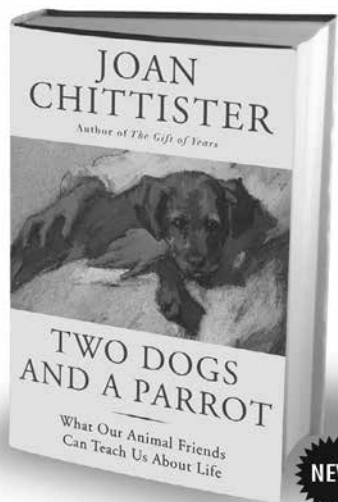
rule in these occupied territories. But Rabin was killed by an assassin's bullet two years later, the right-wing Likud party won a close election to choose his successor and the peace process never recovered.

Dan Ephron, who reported on these events 20 years ago, returned to the region in 2010 as Newsweek's Jerusalem bureau chief. In *Killing a King*, Ephron presents a compelling portrait of the Rabin era, the last time that peace in Israel seemed plausible. Since then, Rabin's legacy has largely evaporated, and right-wing and religious parties opposed to ceding territory have attained, according to Ephron, "something akin to a permanent majority."

Killing a King tells the story on two

levels. It is a police procedural that explores the motive and tactics of Yigal Amir, the 25-year-old law student and

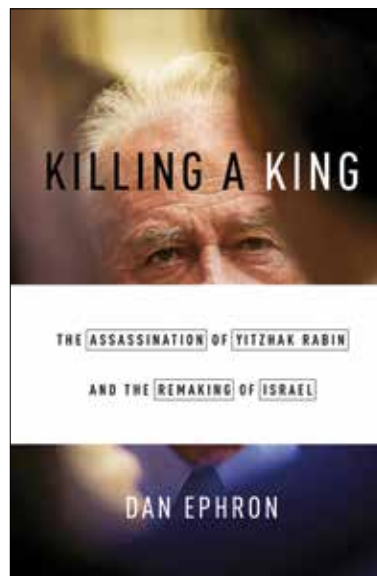
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religious extremist who plotted the assassination for two years and finally shot Rabin on Nov. 4, 1995, after a peace rally in Tel Aviv.

The book is also an analysis of the political firestorm created when Rabin and Yasir Arafat, chief of the Palestine Liberation Organization, shook hands on the White House lawn two years before. In affirming the Oslo process, the two leaders committed to Palestinian rule over Gaza and Jericho, one of seven cities in the West Bank. The agreement also set a goal of Palestinian autonomy in the occupied territories, without addressing how the relentless growth of Jewish settlements would affect the peace process.

By deferring a final agreement until later, the process gave opponents on both sides ample time to mobilize against it. Although a large majority of Israelis supported the agreement when Rabin returned from Washington, Rabin recognized that lone extremists—Palestinian or Israeli—could easily undermine the new relationship and the sense of security for Israelis on which the agreement depended. In fact, violence from Hamas and Israel settlers in the first year of the agreement did just that.

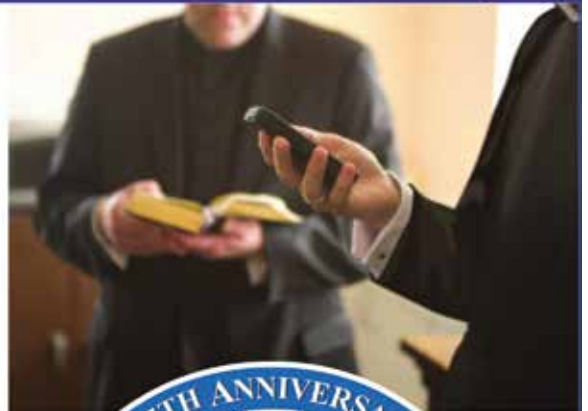
Rabin, described by a U.S. official as the most secular Israeli he had ever met, wrote in 1979 that the settlements were “a cancer on the body of Israeli democracy.” He regarded as obnoxious and reckless the settlers’ view that every inch of the conquered territories was sacred and could never be exchanged for peace.

Like most of the settlers, Amir believed that the agreement was a calamity for Israel and an act of treason by Rabin. Educated at Orthodox schools, Amir absorbed the views that every word of the Torah is divine truth and that Jews “must learn to fathom God’s will” and act accordingly. In this hothouse, messianic atmosphere, he found support for killing Rabin in the Talmudic principle of *rodef*, which

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permits a bystander to kill an aggressor who pursues someone with the intent to murder. Under this logic, Amir was the bystander who was compelled to kill Rabin, the *rodef*, or pursuer, who intended to murder the Jewish people. Emboldened by biblical sanction, Amir and his brother Hagai, an Army-trained munitions and explosive expert, organized a militia, led demonstrations against the peace agreement and eventually decided to kill Rabin.

In sober and dispassionate language, Ephron raises the issue of responsibility for Rabin's death. Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of the right-wing Likud party (and current prime minister), spoke at rallies where crowds branded Rabin a traitor, a murderer and a Nazi and consorted with rabbis who urged soldiers to disobey evacuation orders. According to Ephron, the ugly invective came not just from the margins, but from the upper echelons of the Likud party. Shabak, Israel's security agency, feared that physical violence against Rabin was just a matter of time and opportunity. However, as Ephron explains, Shabak made numerous colossal mis-

takes in its effort to protect Rabin.

In the immediate aftermath of Rabin's assassination, there was a tremendous wave of sympathy for Rabin and the peace process. Had Shimon Peres, Rabin's temporary successor, held immediate elections, he would have won and the peace process would have continued. However, in a withering portrait, Ephron shows how Peres bungled badly. Though both Labor Party members, Peres and Rabin had over the years cultivated a deep personal enmity. Rabin regarded Peres as manipulative and a schemer. In delaying elections, Peres wanted to create his own legacy that had nothing to do with Rabin. But as violence continued and Peres's attempt to forge a new relationship with Syria failed, Israeli voters forgot about Rabin and narrowly elected Netanyahu.

Twenty years later, Netanyahu is again prime minister, the settler movement has doubled in size and influence and the peace process is a distant memory.

MARK J. DAVIS is a retired attorney living in Santa Fe, N.M.

for a Catholic newspaper in Baltimore and worked for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. A "social justice advocate," he currently heads the Catholic program at the Faith in Public Life advocacy group in Washington, D.C.

Gehring delves extensively into the Catholic Church the pope has inherited in the United States. In Gehring's view, that church has been hijacked by a well-organized movement of right-wing institutions, think tanks and bishops who have abandoned the church's teachings on social justice. Instead, this movement focuses almost obsessively on the "culture wars" issues of abortion, same-sex marriage and contraception. Lost in the shuffle are the church's teachings on poverty, social justice and solidarity with the oppressed.

The church's right-wing movement is somewhat similar to the conservative wave that overtook Washington during the past few decades, starting in the 1980s under Ronald Reagan, at a time when well-financed and effective groups like the Heritage Foundation emerged and helped shift the country to the right.

Francis, of course, is turning all this on its head—or at least trying to—and Gehring meticulously documents what he is up against. He spends more than half the book examining the right-wing "hijacking" of the church, arguing that many bishops and Catholic groups are out of touch with Francis.

He tells the story of how eight months after Francis' shocking election as pope, the U.S. bishops gathered in Baltimore for the first time as a group since his elevation. Little seemed to have changed for them. The topics were the same: same-sex marriage, contraception, religious liberty. No formal discussion about unemployment, income inequality, poverty, attacks to workers' rights or the environment.

"It was business as usual taking place against the backdrop of a papacy redefining the Catholic narrative,"

BART JONES

A CHANGE IN DIRECTION

THE FRANCIS EFFECT A Radical Pope's Challenge to the American Catholic Church

By John Gehring
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 286p
\$32

A friend in Philadelphia who is a lapsed Catholic tells me that when Pope Francis paid a visit to her area in September, she spent most of the weekend crying because she was so moved. And she wasn't even at any of the events. She watched it all on television in her living room in the suburbs.

In New York, a Muslim woman

told a radio station that she had spent hours "praying to Allah" that she would catch just a glimpse of Francis as he drove through the city.

This is some of the effect Francis has on people—and not just devout Catholics. Part of the Francis phenomenon is how he is appealing to people outside the Catholic realm too. He is what John Gehring, in *The Francis Effect*, calls an "unlikely global rock star."

Gehring is a self-described cradle Catholic who attended Catholic schools from kindergarten through college, served as an altar boy, wrote

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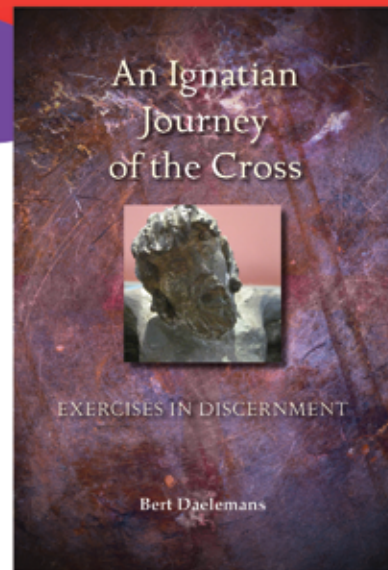
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Gehring writes. “The memo never made it to Baltimore.”

Gehring argues that some bishops also never got the memo about simple living and a “church that is poor and for the poor” that Francis announced during his first news conference as pontiff. Gehring holds up as one example Archbishop John Myers of Newark. He embarked on \$500,000 in “luxury renovations” to a five-bedroom, three-car-garage mansion that he was preparing as his retirement residence on eight acres of land.

In a clear sign of the tensions, some of the bishops have taken verbal shots at the pope. Gehring notes how Bishop Thomas Tobin of Providence, R.I., took to his diocesan newspaper to wonder why Francis hasn’t spoken more about abortion. He also expressed discomfort over the pope’s “free-wheeling style” and “off-the-cuff comments.”

Perhaps the biggest critic of Francis among America’s Catholic hierarchy has been Cardinal Raymond Burke, whom Francis removed from his post as head of the highest Vatican court. In now famous comments, Burke described the Francis-led church as a “ship without a rudder.”

Supplementing these efforts are think tanks, advocacy groups and intellectuals, Gehring asserts. He points to figures like William Donohue of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, who “plays the role of gloves-off street fighter” defending church orthodoxy.

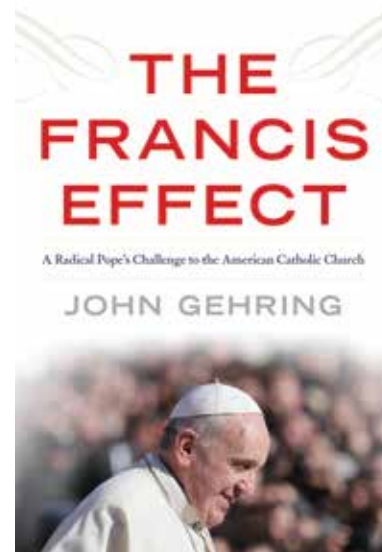
There are intellectuals, like Robert George of Princeton University, publications like *First Things*, wealthy chief executive officers like Tom Monaghan, the founder of Domino’s Pizza, and

think tanks like the Acton Institute, a free-market group based in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Now, arriving just in time, Gehring hopes, are the Francis-era troops. The “Francis era” here officially began with his surprise appointment of Blase Cupich as archbishop of Chicago, the third largest archdiocese in the nation. Cupich declined to live in luxurious quarters. He said no to a \$14 million mansion with 19 chimneys, Gehring notes.

Another Francis man, Cardinal Seán O’Malley, O.F.M.Cap., is the pontiff’s

top American advisor. O’Malley, who was brought in to clean up the sex abuse mess in Boston, is the kind of humble, transparent leader the pope is looking for. He wears a simple brown cassock and has been seen mowing his own lawn. On “60 Minutes” he called the Pope Benedict XVI-initiated investigation into U.S. nuns a “disaster.” Other Francis men are slowly being



put in place.

But as Gehring points out, it won’t be easy. Of 270 active bishops, 232 were appointed by John Paul II or Benedict XVI over nearly 35 years. Francis, already 78, will not serve anywhere near that long. “Change is not likely to come quickly,” Gehring writes.

Gehring’s book was published before Francis’ historic trip to the United States, so the impact of the visit is not assessed. Without a doubt, the pontiff’s unforgettable moments on the East Coast—from Congress to Madison Square Garden to Independence Hall—will help advance his imprint on the American church. His arresting mention of Dorothy Day during his address to Congress could not have laid

out more clearly what kind of church he envisions. Whether that will fully happen during his pontificate is difficult to say.

Gehring's book provides a valuable roadmap to the different forces at play. The book is populated by mini-vignettes of dozens of Catholics—well-

known and otherwise—who weigh in on Francis. Because there are so many, the names and stories can get lost in the shuffle, but they give a helpful panorama of the Catholic landscape according to Gehring.

Whether the American church will turn to the one Gehring pines for re-

mains to be seen. But clearly, the battle is on.

BART JONES is *Newsday's* religion writer. He traveled with the Vatican press corps aboard Pope Francis' plane for his Cuba-United States trip. Mr. Jones is also the author of *HUGO! The Hugo Chavez Story: From Mud Hut to Perpetual Revolution*.

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God Meets Us

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), FEB. 7, 2016

Readings: Is 6:1-8; Ps 138:1-8; 1 Cor 15:1-11; Lk 5:1-11

“Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” (Lk 5:8)

The prophet Isaiah’s call narrative is also a theophany, in which Isaiah perceives God on the heavenly throne. God’s majesty and transcendence overwhelm the prophet, and Isaiah’s descriptions of God by means of physical images—a vision of a high throne and the hem of a garment that fills the Temple—evoke God’s universal kingship and splendor.

In this divine vision, the seraphim minister to God, praising God’s holiness and the glory that fills the earth. The seraphim also prepare the prophet for his mission. In response to Isaiah’s claims that he is unworthy, “a man of unclean lips,” a seraph places a burning coal on Isaiah’s lips, purifying him. Isaiah is now prepared to carry God’s message to the people, since his “guilt has departed” and his “sin is blotted out.” The call narrative contrasts the majesty of God, holy, glorious and mighty, and the human ordinariness of Isaiah, who must be prepared to bear God’s message. Angels purify Isaiah so that he can prophesy for God.

The narrative also draws our attention to another reality. Most of us do not experience throne visions and theophanies that overwhelm us with God’s might and reflect God’s transcendence when we encounter God. Most of us experience God in the mundane experiences of daily life, in the ordinary

reality of doing our work, talking with friends, in the ups and downs of family life, walking the dog, seeing a movie, riding the subway or kayaking on a lake.

The ordinary work and leisure of everyday life are where God tends to reach out to meet us. God comes to us where we are, as we are.

Jesus met his first disciples and apostles at their work. When Simon, Andrew (unnamed in this account), James and John first meet Jesus in Luke’s Gospel, they were not overwhelmed by a vision but were fixed on their work. They were not expecting seraphim, let alone a theophany; they were washing their nets after a fruitless night of fishing.

Jesus, however, began to preach from Simon Peter’s boat, a powerful image for God’s presence in the ordinariness of human life. Not in the Temple or a synagogue, where Jesus could also be found, but in the boat of a few working men is where the encounter with the incarnate God took place. After Jesus finished speaking to the crowds, he turned to the work at hand, the work of fishing.

Jesus told Simon to “put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon was reluctant to start the process again, especially when they had caught nothing all night, but when he did put the nets back into the water the catch of fish was almost immediate, the nets straining with the bounty. There were so many fish that the nets began to break, they called for help to James

and John, and their boats began to sink.

It is in response to the overwhelming catch of fish that Simon Peter recognizes the presence of God in his fishing boat in the seemingly ordinary person of Jesus. Like Isaiah in God’s Temple, Simon’s sense of unworthiness in the presence of God overwhelms him: “He fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!’” A profound recognition of God incarnate took place not while Jesus was transfigured or enthroned in majesty, but in the casting and drawing up of their fishing nets.

In response to the miraculous catch of fish, Peter recognizes God with him. For Peter and the other fishermen, the encounter was a call to a new life—“Do not be afraid; from now on you



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Meditate on both Isaiah’s and Peter’s encounters with the divine. Which one speaks to you most deeply? Or do both of them express the reality of God’s presence to you? Where and when have you encountered God most fully?

will be catching people”—and they left their work to follow Jesus.

God met Peter, and God meets us, where we are. Like Isaiah, Peter initially felt unworthy, unready and unprepared for the encounter and for his new work, but God sees us and wants us for who we are and where we are. God will purify us, prepare us for our tasks and make us ready to do our work, however ordinary or exalted this work might be. But our ordinariness will always be a part of who we are, not a place absent from God but where God meets us every day.

JOHN W. MARTENS

JOHN W. MARTENS is a professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn. Twitter: @BibleJunkies.



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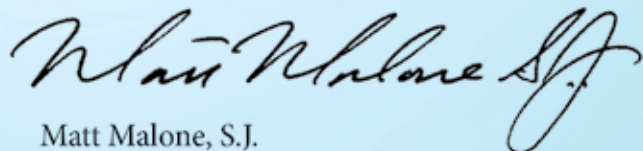
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