

America

The background of the cover is a photograph of a balcony railing. Two flags are draped over the railing: the Cuban flag on the left and the United States flag on the right. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting daylight.

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 21, 2015 \$4.99

A Tale of Two Countries

POPE FRANCIS VISITS 'NUESTRA AMERICA'

MIGUEL H. DÍAZ

HELEN ALVARÉ ON
HAVING 'THE GOD TALK'



OF MANY THINGS

‘O ut of our memory of the Holocaust,” said President Jimmy Carter in 1979, “we must forge an unshakable oath with all civilized people that never again will the world stand silent, never again will the world...fail to act in time to prevent this terrible crime of genocide.” President Carter made those remarks as he received the official report of the presidential commission on the Holocaust, or Shoah, the deliberate and singularly horrific mass murder of millions during the Second World War, most of them European Jews. It is worth remembering this pledge now, as the plight of Christians in the Middle East makes “again” terrifyingly nearer.

Last spring Sister Diana Momeka, of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena from Mosul, Iraq, appeared before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The following is an excerpt from her testimony.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

In November 2009, a bomb was detonated at our convent in Mosul. Five sisters were in the building at the time and they were lucky to have escaped unharmed. Our Prioress, Sister Maria Hanna, asked for protection from local civilian authorities but the pleas went unanswered. As such, she had no choice but to move us to Qaraqosh. On June 10, 2014, the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, invaded the Nineveh Plain, which is where Qaraqosh is located. Starting with the city of Mosul, ISIS overran one city and town after another....

As this horror spread throughout the Nineveh Plain, Nineveh was emptied of Christians, and sadly, for the first time since the seventh century A.D., no church bells rang for Mass in the Plain of Nineveh.... To add insult to injury, the initiatives and actions of both the Iraqi and Kurdish

governments were at best modest and slow. Apart from allowing Christians to enter their region, the Kurdish government did not offer any aid either financial or material.... Thankfully, the Church in the Kurdistan region stepped forward and cared for the displaced Christians, doing her very best to handle the disaster. Church buildings were opened to accommodate the people; food and non-food items were provided to meet the immediate needs of the people; and medical health services were also provided. Moreover, the Church put out a call and many humanitarian organizations answered with aid for the thousands of people in need....

But the current persecution that our community is facing is the most brutal in our history. Not only have we been robbed of our homes, property and land, but our heritage is being destroyed as well. ISIS has been and continues to demolish and bomb our churches, cultural artifacts and sacred places. Uprooted and forcefully displaced, we have realized that ISIS’ plan is to evacuate the land of Christians and wipe the earth clean of any evidence that we ever existed. This is cultural and human genocide. The only Christians that remain in the Plain of Nineveh are those who are held as hostages.

I am but one, small person—a victim myself of ISIS and all of its brutality. Coming here has been difficult for me—as a religious sister I am not comfortable with the media and so much attention. But I am here, and I am here to ask you, to implore you for the sake of our common humanity, to help us. Stand with us as we, as Christians, have stood with all the people of the world and help us. We want nothing more than to go back to our lives; we want nothing more than to go home.

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Cover: The Cuban and U.S. flags are displayed on the front of a residence in Havana on Aug. 14, the day the U.S. Embassy in Cuba reopened. CNS photo/Enrique De La Osa, Reuters

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ON THE WEB

Mayor Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans, right, talks about Hurricane Katrina and the city's resurgence, and Rhona Tarrant begins the "America News Brief" on "The Catholic Channel" on SiriusXM. Full digital highlights on page 29 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



Micro-Accord

A statement of regret from a political leader may seem like a minor diplomatic breakthrough, but when the country in question is the autocratic and nuclear-armed North Korea, it is cause for tentative hope. After a tense few days in August, in which North and South Korea were threatening aggression following the maiming of two South Korean soldiers by a land mine, the two sides agreed on a brief accord that ended the crisis. After over 40 hours of negotiations, the South promised to end its propaganda broadcasts directed at the North, while Pyongyang issued its statement of regret.

How long the hard-won truce will last is unclear. The two sides have been fighting for so long that it does not take much to reignite tensions. Already North Korea is complaining that its statement has been reported as an apology. One piece of good news is that both sides continue to work together to facilitate the reunification of families divided by the Korean War. The current president of South Korea, Park Geun-hye, also remains committed to better relations with the North.

President Park is hopeful that the latest accord can serve as the start of fruitful dialogue. Perhaps; but the issues the two Koreas face are challenging, to say the least. The six-nation talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear program are officially on hold, and the United States has been reluctant to engage with North Korea on this issue. Iran is now the focus of U.S. nuclear negotiations, but North Korea should not be forgotten. It reportedly has the capacity to launch a warhead that could reach the United Kingdom. The accord with South Korea may be a small victory, but it would be foolish not to try to build on it.

Women Leading Worldwide

In 1995, at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, world leaders set a goal: In 20 years women would make up 30 percent of national legislatures. Two decades have now passed, but the hoped-for results have yet to be achieved. A report issued by the Inter-Parliamentary Union has found that only 44 legislatures were able to reach the goal. The United States is among the 146 nations that did not. This failure comes in the midst of a call for better representation of women at the United Nations. Many member states have pushed to appoint a woman to the role of secretary general, which would be a first for the intergovernmental organization. A female secretary general could offer the perspective and priorities needed to encourage more nations to embrace female leadership.

The 30 percent goal is not a random one. Sociologists

say that is the percentage needed for a minority group to truly play a role in relation to the majority. Gender-based quotas have helped many nations to achieve greater parity in their legislatures. Such quotas seem unlikely to be embraced in the United States, but other solutions are possible.

Encouraging political participation and activism among girls at a young age through programs like Model Senate, Mock Trial and the Model United Nations can help spark an early interest in politics and law. But supporting female politicians is even more vital, especially at the local level. Studies have shown that women are less likely to have the connections needed to raise campaign funds quickly, and many may be discouraged by the cutthroat nature of campaigns. Greater public funding for local campaigns and grassroots support for female candidates could help women get the footing they need to make a difference.

Overexposed

On Aug. 26, Vester Flanagan shot and killed a reporter and a cameraman, Alison Parker and Adam Ward, during a live local news broadcast in Virginia. A video of the shooting was immediately shown on major news networks and various social media platforms. Facebook and Twitter accounts allegedly belonging to Mr. Flanagan showed video from the shooter's point of view. How do journalists and audiences cope with exposure to such traumatic news and footage?

A study in the United Kingdom found that out of 189 men and women exposed to violent media images, like videos of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, and school shootings, over 20 percent were negatively affected. Percentages were higher among reporters. Gene Demby, the lead blogger for NPR's Code Switch blog and an African-American, recently wrote about the effect on black reporters of reporting on black deaths. Demby describes reporting as extremely stressful. He writes, "We don't stop being black people when we're working as black reporters."

It is difficult to censor these images, especially in the age of social media, where trigger warnings are provided as small courtesies. While the trauma of watching and reporting on news events can be overwhelming, it has proven crucial for social justice movements in the 21st century. The Black Lives Matter movement, for example, has been able to draw attention to the growing number of deaths of unarmed African-Americans at the hands of police officers, like the deaths of Samuel DuBose, Walter Scott and Eric Garner. Footage recorded by bystanders and circulated on social media platforms can stir consciences and call viewers to action, even if that action is nothing more than a retweet.

The Refugee Crisis

International news in recent months has brought a steady stream of stories about migrants and refugees—their struggles to reach safety in Europe and their struggles after they get there. They leave their homes out of fear for their lives or at least in the hope of providing a future for their families. They put themselves in the hands of human traffickers at the cost of their meager financial assets, of their human dignity and even of their lives. They crowd into unsafe boats to cross the Mediterranean or into overcrowded trucks for long road trips.

For a while attention focused on Calais in France, where thousands gathered hoping to grab a ride in a truck through the tunnel to England, visible across the English Channel. It moved to Germany, where right-wing groups started harassing the newcomers. Attention moved to the Greek island of Kos, a short distance from Turkey. Most shocking was an abandoned truck discovered near Vienna that held 71 decomposing bodies. Accompanying photos were compelling: angry protesters in England or Germany; a small group huddled at a Hungarian border crossing with a police car close by. Then there was the Turkish officer lifting the body of a drowned Syrian boy from the sea.

The influx of newcomers is testing the European Union's open borders. At the urging of Germany, France and Britain, the interior and justice ministers of the European Union were due to meet on Sept. 14 to address the issue. They planned to discuss building reception centers for new arrivals where they could determine which of them are properly called refugees, whose home countries are not safe, and which are migrants, who simply want to build a new life. This distinction affects the legal responsibilities of the receiving countries.

The newcomers to Europe come from a number of countries in Africa and the Middle East. In the Middle East in particular, violence, persecution and political unrest make life unbearable for millions. A great number of the refugees are from Syria, where the situation is desperate.

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad is a ruthless tyrant who resorted to massive violence during the Syrian civil war in 2011. Many countries have called on him to resign, but they have no way to make this happen. Since 2010, according to a United Nations report, over half the population of Syria has been internally displaced or has fled the country.

Mr. Assad controls only a fraction of Syria. A small territory is under the control of the Free Syria Army, formed by military officers during the civil war. But the Islamic

State (ISIS) controls much of the country. Particularly in his war against ISIS, Mr. Assad drops barrel bombs, which have killed and maimed thousands of civilians.

The situation of the mass migration to Europe has two major factors. One is the plight of those who make it to a receiving country. The other is the situation that forces or at least urges them to leave their homes hoping to find a better future. The European Union is attempting to address the first of these issues. But the second remains intractable.

The meeting of E.U. ministers is a welcome first step, and it may lead to a follow-up meeting of the leaders of the E.U. member states. This would be another welcome development. Welcome too is the move among E.U. states and others to set quotas for new arrivals, though this is stirring up resistance. But still more is needed.

Economic development in many countries in the Middle East and in Africa would stop some of the migration flow, and world leaders have to look at new ways to foster this. This is a long-term project.

The violence in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, demands immediate attention. But can anything be done? Muslim leaders have spoken out against President Assad, but they have no authority to force anything on him. Members of the Arab League have spoken out too, but Mr. Assad ignores them. Few would suggest a massive military invasion; the cost would be far too high and the chance of success low. The Free Syria Army seems to be the most reasonable of the three power groups; it is also the smallest.

One suggestion has been to enforce a no-fly zone over Syria. This could stop the indiscriminate carnage from the barrel bombs, which are dropped from helicopters. Another would be the creation of a free zone along the border with Turkey, where Syrians fleeing violence could find at least temporary safety. This would follow up on an agreement last summer between Turkey and the United States to create an ISIS-free zone along that same border.

These are not permanent solutions, but they would save lives today. The long-term solution demands international cooperation and good will, not easy to come by but nonetheless crucial. Perhaps the intense international energy that produced the successful Iranian nuclear deal could now be devoted to this pressing crisis.



REPLY ALL

Taste, See, Touch

Tears came to my eyes on reading “Making Room for All at Mass,” by Judith Valente (8/17). I attempted teaching 12 young men with multiple handicaps at a state institution in Lincoln, Ill. I don’t know what they learned, but they responded best to touch, taste, smell and music. Thank you, Ms. Valente! Maybe we are also ready to welcome to full participation those whose only handicap is their gender.

PETER V. KUHLMAN
San Antonio, Tex.

Pain and Profits

Re “Economy for the People” (Editorial, 8/3): As I read Pope Francis’ messages, he is not looking for a debate about capitalism versus socialism but is urging a conversion of hearts, a new prioritization wherein profits are not the sole priority. We might advance more quickly if we put aside the clichés that inevitably creep into our conversations. Here, the editors say the hardline stances of European leaders toward Greece “encourage a world in which the expected returns of the banks are given more weight than the expectations of the individuals.” It is easy to infer that banks and their profits are involved in the recent Greek crisis. But that is not the case.

After the last Greek crisis in 2010,

it was clear that banks could not again put their depositors’ money at risk on new loans, even at high interest rates. So European governments created a special rescue organization to refinance Greek debt. If Greece defaults now, or if the European rescue entity or European sovereign countries forgive all or some Greek debt, the pain shifts from Greek people to other European people, including many non-Germans. Importantly, no bank profit is involved except for some Greek banks that patriotically own Greek government bonds.

JOSEPH J. DUNN
Online Comment

Praying for Pastors

Re Of Many Things, by Matt Malone, S.J. (8/3): Thanks for the reminder of the humanity of “the bishops” and likening their experience to what the lay faithful have to experience in terms of choices and material luxuries. But I think Father Malone’s commentary remains disturbingly on the surface, which is quite uncharacteristic of **America**. I find it odd that he says “the bishops” do not exist and then fail to explain what exactly the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is and does, as many equate “the bishops” with that hierarchical body.

Most disturbing, however, is that despite all the visits described, there was not one mention from the author of the word *pastoral* in his impressions. That is

striking—and in my opinion so very revealing of the gap between church hierarchy and the faithful, despite the very valid points made about the lifetimes of service and humility of many individual men. I pray for the devotion of these leaders so that we can refer to them with gratitude and prayer as visible witnesses of compassionate service to others—especially the stranger and least among us—instead of praying with gratitude for performing these (arguably) “thankless and almost impossible jobs.”

ROBIN LARKINS
Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.

One Synodal Church

Re “Family Gathering,” by John W. O’Malley, S.J. (7/20): It is worth noting that for centuries the Ukrainian Catholic Church (along with its Orthodox counterparts) has used the word *sobornaya* (which means “synodal”) when reciting the Nicene Creed. In Ukrainian the faithful pray, “I believe in one, holy, synodal, and apostolic church.” Strangely, the English version of this same creed translates *sobornaya* as “Catholic.” However, at least in their origins, certain Eastern Catholic churches evince this synodal tradition and corroborate Pope Francis’ renewed attention to it.

Synodality, moreover, has ramifications, both for governance within the Roman Catholic communion of churches and for ecumenism. The real issue dividing (Eastern) Catholic and Orthodox Churches is not theology so much as it is ecclesiology: a monarchical, hierarchical form of governance in the former versus a collegial, synodal one in the latter. A central issue for Christ’s church in our time is realization of this synodality—the church’s authentic tradition, the promise of Vatican II and a touchstone of church unity.

PAUL BUMBAR
Online Comment

Music that Transforms

Re “Let Freedom Sing,” the book review by Kim R. Harris (7/20): Thanks



Letters to the editor may be sent to **America**’s editorial office (address on page 2) or letters@americamagazine.org. **America** will also consider the following for print publication: comments posted below articles on **America**’s website (americamagazine.org) and posts on Twitter and public Facebook pages. All correspondence may be edited for length.

f STATUS UPDATE

In “Subjects, Not Objects” (*The Word*, 8/17), John W. Martens explores the historical context and meaning of the household codes described in the Letter to the Ephesians, including the injunction, “Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord” (Eph 5:22). A reader responds.

Does this symbolic meaning really have any relevance to the average

churchgoer? Reaching it requires a level of textual analysis most people are not going to be doing at Mass and are not well enough aware of the cultural context or catechism to really understand. You cannot still include this reading in the Mass without offending most people with its outdated message or, worse, imparting a harmful misunderstanding about marriage. Some readings should be dropped. This is one of them. I have

read the theological reasons why it “isn’t what it seems on the surface” before, and frankly I am not sure I buy it. And they certainly don’t usually explain it afterward at most Masses to make it more palatable. What’s even worse is when priests go on to emphasize the surface level message. It is not pastorally responsible to still be dragging this reading out regularly.

TIM ROONEY

to Kim Harris for keeping the music alive! Her *Songs of the Underground Railroad* has been part of my public school music teaching curriculum for almost 25 years, from New York to California. Now *Welcome Table: A Mass of Spirituals* is loved by our choir kids in Los Angeles Central Juvenile Hall. These are the kids who say, “When I sing, I don’t feel like I’m in jail.” This music transforms. Her amazing work and dedication are transforming more lives than she will ever know. God bless her!

PAULA VAN HOUTEN
Online Comment

Report On Federal Detention Center Policy,” by Maurice Timothy Reidy (6/8): The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, signed by President Ronald Reagan, contained an amnesty provision that allowed 2.7 million undocumented immigrants to stay here and become part of American society legally. Immigration control is not a conservative versus liberal issue. It is, instead, one of Christian justice.

Had we turned immigrants away in previous generations, what would the country be like today? Would we be as great a nation if we’d rejected

those who came here seeking a better life, freedom from violence, poverty and despair? Sadly, the poor, Hispanic nature of today’s immigrants makes them an easy target for politicians advocating fear, individuals unwilling to contribute financially to the social justice we tout worldwide and, not least, those who fear being outvoted one day. To them, this is not, really, a justice issue at all; it’s one that resides closer to the pocketbook than to the heart.

MICHAEL MALAK
Online Comment

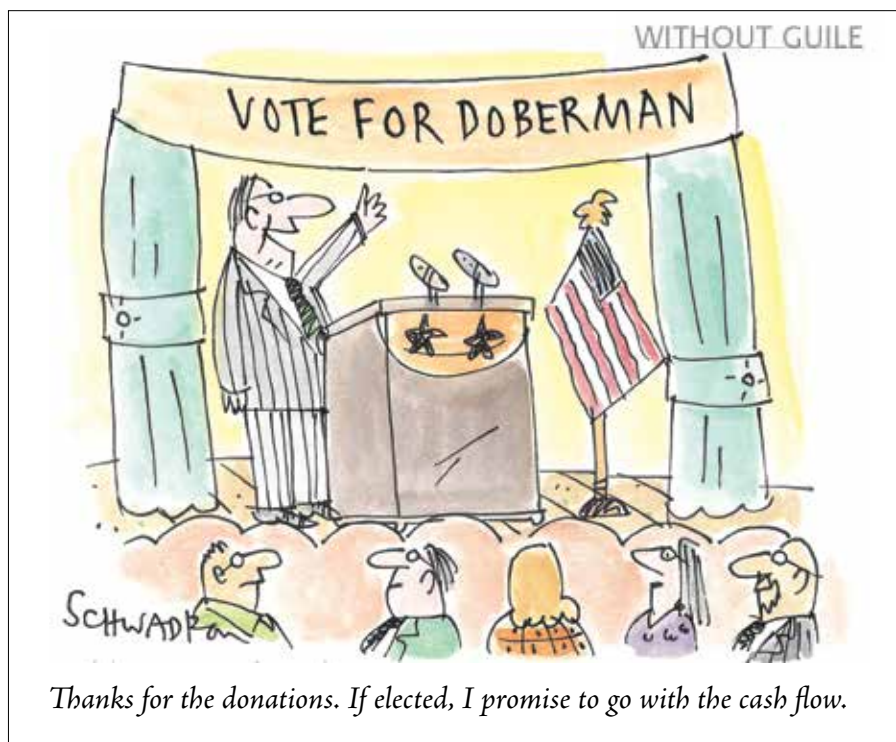
Future Threats

Re “Never Justifiable,” by Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M. (6/22): The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is quite clear that the death penalty is, practically speaking, never justifiable within our contemporary context. It stands for life. But it also wisely guards against future unknowns. What if there is a catastrophe that wipes out order as we know it, what if there is colonization of other planets, etc.? Perhaps those sound far-fetched to some, but the current wording is clear, pro-life and wise. To change the wording would be to pretend society will always be where we are today. Church teaching is never that near-sighted.

JENNIFER JONES
Online Comment

A Pocketbook Issue

Re “U.S. Bishops Issue Scathing



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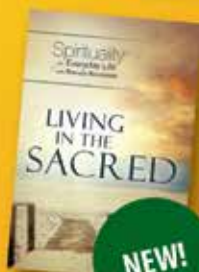
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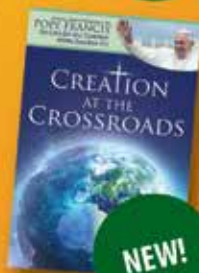


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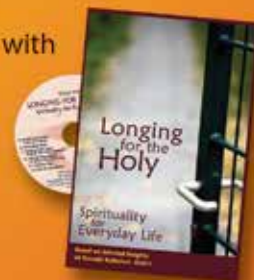
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MIGRATION

Death Toll Rises as Refugee Crisis Erupts on Outskirts of Europe



BORDER PRESS. Exhaustion at an attempted crossing between Macedonia and Greece, near the town of Gevgelija, Macedonia.

What has been described as the worst refugee crisis since the end of World War II reached a crescendo in early September as thousands of people fleeing Syria, Iraq and other Middle Eastern calamity zones piled up against hastily erected barricades on the outskirts of Europe. But European sentiment, which had been resisting the idea of accepting large numbers of Middle Eastern asylum seekers, shifted abruptly with the publication of desolate images of a drowning victim, 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi, lying face down in the surf on a beach in Bodrum, Turkey.

Not far from his lifeless body were the bodies of his brother and mother and nine other victims of a disastrous attempt on Sept. 2 to reach sanctuary on the Greek island of Kos. Pictures of little Aylan ignited a world-wide examination of conscience that by the end of the day led to the apparent reversal of positions on refugee resettlement among European Union leaders, including British Prime Minister David Cameron. The United Kingdom has so far accepted only a little over 200 Syrian refugees, but Cameron told reporters Great Britain would fulfill its “moral responsibilities to refugees” and now accept thousands more.

The International Organization for Migration reports that more than 350,000 people have crossed Mediterranean so far this year, substantially more than the 219,000 estimated for all of 2014. The number of migrant people lost at sea this year is far outpacing the 2,081 who had died by this point in 2014, with 2,664

deaths so far.

Dino Mujanovic, country representative for Catholic Relief Services in Serbia, told *America* that C.R.S. has for weeks been responding to the crisis. “At this moment there is a huge humanitarian failure in treating the refugee crisis,” he said. “Those numbers are increasing day by day; people are coming, desperate, exhausted, robbed on the way, seeking shelter in Western Europe.”

Cut off because of their undocumented status from normal modes of transportation, many have crossed the continent almost entirely on foot, Mujanovic said. He estimates that most refugees—his preferred term, in light of the circumstances of their flight—are coming from Syria, but many are emerging out of Iraq also. “These are not economic migrants,” he stressed, noting the “strong” reasons many have to leave conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, escaping ISIS, the Assad regime or both.

“They need help, they need shelter, they need respite and they need to return and repossess their dignity.

“We should all show the solidarity and act with compassion with and for these people,” he said. “I am afraid, what the winter will bring and hope this will be handled properly. I mean that the influx will be at least decreased, if not stopped, and that refugees will be sheltered adequately and in countries where they want to be. We do not want camps, and we want them treated with respect and dignity—that is our human responsibility, as well as the legal obligation.”

C.R.S. officials report that the agency is scaling up its response to the crisis in the Balkans, working with its church partners in Greece, Albania, Macedonia and Serbia to provide immediate assistance, including food, water, access to sanitation, medical care and legal

services. C.R.S. officials called on the United States to expand humanitarian assistance to countries in the Middle East and Turkey that have for years been sheltering the largest number of Syrians and Iraqis, as well as to countries burdened by this new migration. Most important, C.R.S. officials say the United States should lead concerted diplomatic efforts to end the fighting in Syria.

European leaders plan to meet in mid-September to hash out a response to the crisis, and Mujanovic said he is hopeful that will mean a comprehensive plan based on a shared commitment. Given the huge human press he is witnessing, Mujanovic was not en-

couraged by the small numbers some European leaders have said they are willing to accept for resettlement. He is hoping that more realistic figures will emerge during the summit discussion.

"The stories I have heard are horrible," said Mujanovic, remembering one woman refugee who clung to one surviving child in a camp being served by C.R.S. She had been traveling with her husband and twins "who lost their lives between Turkey and the island of Kos." The woman simply pressed on alone into Europe with the remnant of her family, too afraid to remain behind even just long enough to bury her dead.

KEVIN CLARKE

of religion research and co-author of the survey. Given that obstacle, "it's no surprise their Mass attendance is low," said Smith. Only one in four of those Catholics say they attend once a week, while 41 percent of Catholics overall say they attend weekly.

Catholics often disagree with—even defy—church teachings on faith and practice, according to the report. About four in 10 of those Catholics who are not eligible to receive Communion say they still seek the Eucharist when they do attend Mass, Smith said. The survey found that 76 percent of Catholics—including 65 percent of Catholics who attend Mass once a week—say their church should allow them to use artificial birth control.

Although the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has spent a decade battling the legalization of same-sex marriage, Catholics are split: 46 percent say the church should recognize the marriages of gay and lesbian couples—and exactly the same percentage say no.

The study finds that the church's share of the religious marketplace is down from 23.9 percent in 2007 to 20 percent in the new survey, conducted in May and June of 2015. But Pew found that 8 percent of non-Catholics feel an

U.S. CATHOLICS

At Peace With the 'Nontraditional'

The four major themes of Pope Francis' visit to the United States—social and economic justice, environmental stewardship, immigration and the value of the traditional family—will resonate with many U.S. Catholics, but not all. That's according to a new survey by Pew Research which reports that Catholics are evenly divided over whether it is sinful to spend money on luxuries without also giving to the poor. The study finds that a minority of Catholics see addressing climate change (29 percent) or opposing abortion (33 percent) as "essential" to their Catholic identity.

The survey, released on Sept. 2, finds that nontraditional family arrangements are fine with many U.S. Catholics. That may be because many are already familiar with those family structures: 25 percent of Pew's respondents have gone through a divorce, and 9 percent of those who divorced have remarried. Forty-four percent say they have lived with a romantic partner out-

side of marriage at some point in their lives, and 9 percent still do.

The survey asked which family structures are acceptable and as good as any other for rearing children. It found: 87 percent say a single parent is acceptable; 84 percent say the same for unmarried parents living together; and 83 percent say the same for divorced parents. Sixty-six percent of Catholics say gay or lesbian couples are acceptable for rearing children. That includes 43 percent who say this arrangement is as good as any other family structure.

Cohabiting couples and divorced Catholics who remarried without a Catholic annulment are not eligible to receive Communion, and Pew found that "15 percent of Catholics are currently in one of those situations," said Greg Smith, director

FAMILY GATHERING. A Pew study finds that U.S. Catholics have a high level of acceptance for "nontraditional" family arrangements.



affinity to the Catholic Church without affiliating, and 9 percent of U.S. adults are “cultural Catholics.” Pew identified 9 percent of Americans as ex-Catholics—also known as “lapsed” or “fallen-away” Catholics.

“We see enormous differences between cultural Catholics and ex-Catholics,” said Smith. “Cultural Catholics exhibit a significant degree of openness to the church,” he said, “whereas ex-Catholics have cut their ties. Asked directly, ‘Could you see yourself ever returning’ to a Catholic religious identity, four in 10 cultural Catholics say yes, but 90 percent of ex-Catholics say no,” Smith said.

Many cultural Catholics are still within reach of the church. One in three say they attend Mass once or twice a year or practiced some observance for Lent. One Pew survey number should give Francis hope as his visit concludes on Sept. 27: seven in 10 U.S. Catholics say they cannot ever imagine leaving the Catholic Church, no matter what.

Broadened Absolution

Pope Francis’ announcement on Sept. 1 that priests worldwide will be able to absolve women for the sin of abortion will have little effect on pastoral practices in the United States and Canada. “It is my understanding that the faculty [authorization] for the priest to lift the *latae sententiae* excommunication for abortion is almost universally granted in North America,” said Don Clemmer, interim director of media relations for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Latae sententiae* is a Latin term in canon law that means excommunication for certain crimes is automatic. Clemmer said it is “the fiat of the local bishop” whether to allow the priests in his diocese to absolve those sins. Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger

NEWS BRIEFS

The Michigan Catholic Conference sent letters to more than 10,000 employees in late August warning them about possible identity theft after a **cyber attack on an employee database**. • Cardinal John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan of Abuja, Nigeria, joined the members of the #BringBackOurGirls movement on Aug. 27 to mark 500 days since **more than 200 Chibok schoolgirls** were abducted by Boko Haram. •

The Vatican reports that the autopsy of former archbishop **Jozef Wesolowski**, who had been awaiting trial on sexual offenses, indicates he died on Aug. 27 of a “cardiac incident.” • The Catholic Church in India expressed its support for some **150 million workers** on a nationwide strike that shut down factories, banks, traffic and government offices across India on Sept. 2. • Eleven cardinals, at least four of whom will participate in the meeting of the Synod of Bishops on the family in October, have urged fellow church leaders to **maintain the church’s rules regarding marriage** in a book to be published in mid-September. • The United Nations reported on Sept. 2 that because of widespread damage to infrastructure during the 2014 Israeli military assault, overcrowding and the continuing Israel blockade, the **Gaza Strip “could be uninhabitable by 2020.”**



India on strike

of Albany, N.Y., confirmed that “the priests of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany and throughout the United States have...had the faculties to lift the sanction of excommunication for the sin of abortion for more than 30 years.” He said, “Any woman who has had an abortion, any person who has been involved in an abortion in any way, can always seek God’s forgiveness through the sacrament of reconciliation.”

Work and the Dignity of Families

Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami cited the importance of work in supporting families in the U.S. bishops’ 2015 Labor Day statement, which drew on Pope Francis’ June encyclical on ecology, “*Laudato Si*.” Archbishop Wenski said, “We must not resign ourselves to a ‘new normal’ with an economy that does

not provide stable work at a living wage for too many men and women.... We are in need of a profound conversion of heart at all levels of our lives.” The archbishop explained, “Wage stagnation has increased pressures on families, as the costs of food, housing, transportation, and education continue to pile up.” He added that “the violation of human dignity is evident in exploited workers, trafficked women and children, and a broken immigration system that fails people and families desperate for decent work and a better life.” Archbishop Wenski said that in “*Laudato Si*” Pope Francis challenges people to see the connections between human labor, care for creation and honoring the dignity of the “universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect.”

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

DISPATCH | LONDON

The Human Face of Migration

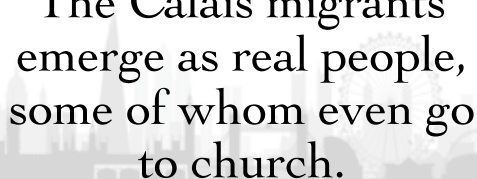
As new dimensions and the widening scale of the European refugee catastrophe emerge, a deeper significance has begun to surface, beyond the scope of our imagination until very recently. The more we are learning about this movement of people across at least one continent, the more we understand its deeper realities. And these realities are polarizing commentary and opinion here in Britain.

We might not have realized this until the BBC made an editorial decision to film a religious program in the Calais migrant camp. There several thousand people, travelers from countries like Syria, Libya and Eritrea, have gathered in a camp known as the “Calais Jungle,” hoping to make it to Britain. This program caused great controversy in some sections of British media and society even as it served to reveal the deep faith of many of the migrants. It reminded viewers that the people knocking on the United Kingdom’s doors are real human beings, with faith, hope and fears—far from evil would-be invaders threatening our country and our culture. It is no longer so easy to deny that some of these itinerants are fleeing religious persecution in their countries of origin. To the horror of certain observers, the Calais migrants emerge as real people, some of whom even go to church.

What caught many people by surprise is news footage showing that some of the migrants in the Calais camp had constructed a chapel. Ethiopian and Eritrean worshippers built St. Michael’s Church out of whatever materials came to hand. Nearby, there was an equally

makeshift mosque, built also by refugees themselves. The U.K. national broadcaster, the BBC, had been filming in St. Michael’s for a recently broadcast episode of its “Songs of Praise” program, said to be the longest-running religious television program in the world.

The camp’s church is the third such improvised Christian structure. The first lasted until the camp was moved; the second was burned down after a



The Calais migrants
emerge as real people,
some of whom even go
to church.

candle was accidentally dropped. The realization that some of these people, like some of us in the United Kingdom, are Christians who take their faith seriously has defied their demonization in some sections of our media and our government.

One U.K. daily, in a spittle-specked fury of indignation, demanded to know why taxpayers’ money was being wasted in this way (the BBC carries no advertising domestically but gets its money from a government-imposed tax commonly known as the TV license). Another, the Murdoch-owned Sun, raging about “Hymnigrants,” likened the BBC’s decision to “something from Monty Python.” Responding, the BBC’s head of religion and ethics, Aaqil Ahmed, wrote in a blog post, “The knowledge that the migrants had built a makeshift church is exactly the kind of action that Christian communities everywhere will relate to.” He denied making any political statement or judgment on migration.

David Cameron, the U.K. prime minister, has refused to compromise on his much-criticized “swarms” description of the refugees. His cabinet colleague, Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond, led a line-up of Tory members of Parliament in condemning the program. He chose even stronger language than Cameron. In his view, “millions of marauding African migrants pose a threat to the European Union’s standard of living and social structure” while maintaining the Tory government’s line that these are economic migrants, not refugees escaping persecution. Government statements, so far, have refused to acknowledge that several other E.U. states have accepted many more refugees than Britain—and made them welcome.

Europe’s troubles deepen each day. The migrant emergency on its southern shores gets worse with no solution in sight as fresh news of human suffering horrifies the continent. The latest developments include yet more capsizings of overfilled vessels and emerging news of chaotic scenes on three Greek islands that were wholly incapable of receiving refugees yet faced record numbers of arrivals. It is only now emerging that large numbers of people are arriving not only in Greece but also in Bulgaria and Hungary, countries whose resources are already thin.

What we are seeing is a humanitarian disaster on a much larger scale than previously thought, of which the Calais standoff is numerically only one small part. In the pictures and stories from the Calais church, we saw and heard real people and were reminded of the real human tragedy extending from our continent’s southern to northern shores. Real people, fleeing from real persecution, real danger. This is our 21st century Exodus.

DAVID STEWART

DAVID STEWART, S.J., is *America’s* London correspondent.



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Lena Liu



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Having the God Talk

I would guess that most Catholics, old and young, are struggling to attain the “personal encounter with Jesus Christ” that Pope Francis repeatedly preaches. Me too. So what am I to do to facilitate “introducing” my kids to Jesus Christ, when my own spiritual life is so often dry? And how do I approach such a task from the right “platform”?

It cannot be a platform of: “This is a test of my parenting persuasion skills.” It should even less be: “Are you kidding me? I’m going to end up a statistic? Another baby boomer whose children left the faith?” It should rather be: “This is the place—at the feet of Jesus Christ, by his side, in his arms—I want my child to be in order to know reality, freedom and the words of everlasting life.”

Never have I wanted anything so badly, and never have I felt so badly equipped to make it happen. I confided this once to a brilliant parish priest—who had seen a lot of life before he got to the seminary. He replied abruptly, “So there is nothing left for God to do in this elaborate program you are formulating for your son?” He had a point. It turned into my Step 1: “Ask God every day to give my son the gift of faith.” But on the theory that God did not make me a hyper-problem-solving-type for nothing, I have been thinking a lot about Step 2 and beyond.

Maybe because I’ve always sensed that my Catholic vocation involves standing on the border/bridge/precipice

between the institutional church and the world beyond, my kids are plentifully out in the world. At the same time, they are about 1,000 percent more likely (justifiably) to respond to any conversation we’re having with the question, “How did we get to the subject of God, again?”

Add to this that the son in question at the moment is an artistically gifted teenager, sensitive to the material world, visual culture and music. I have anecdotally noticed that his world is populated by a higher than average number of people who feel out of sync with dominant social norms.

I have a chance—because he is giving it to me—to have a religious conversation with him four or five days a week for the next few years. What will I do? I have a few ideas but am always listening for good advice (hint).

I think first (after Step 1, of course) I will start with his own deep-seated longings for meaning and happiness—the longings manifest in every song, poem and drawing he creates. These include longings to be encountered with ordinary kindness and with at least some openness to his gifts, longings for a friend who listens and who shares self-revelation in return. I will start too with his appreciation for beauty.

I will explore with him where these longings came from and how they did not come “from nowhere.” How they appear to have a “divine” quality by themselves. They point toward a divine soul within him, which (as he’s already learned, I think) can’t be satisfied with

only material things. I will explore with him how these longings point also toward someone—a Creator who implanted these in his human heart. I will propose that this same Creator offered him a reply: Jesus Christ. Here I will be dipping heavily into Luigi Guissani’s *The Religious Sense* and *The Kingdom of God Is Like*, by Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O. Unlike his schools’ religion classes, I won’t be demanding a ton of reading and memorizing. But we’ll reflect together on the few paragraphs or pages we’ll read together each day.

I will further tap into his sympathy with the outsider. Knowing his sensitivity on this point, I’ve started in on this “lesson” already over the last few years. When we encounter someone

who seemingly doesn’t “fit,” I’ll make a point to tell him how much I love the Christian discipline, so gorgeously articulated by Pope Benedict XVI in “God Is Love,” to give each person “the look of love which they crave” (No. 18). It reminds us of our radical equality with everyone we meet and invites us to encounter them with that mind. My son and I will also be reading parts of that document and reflecting on what it means for God’s love for him too.

There’s a great deal more I have to think through, especially respecting a balanced approach to material culture and respect for the girls he’s meeting—so many of whom have too little respect for themselves already. But the school year is just beginning, and I’m full of hopes and plans.

What am I
to do
to introduce
my kids
to Jesus
Christ?

HELEN ALVARÉ is a professor of law at George Mason University, where she teaches law and religion and family law. She is also a consultant to the Pontifical Council for the Laity.



A Cuban-American reflects on the pope's journey to 'nuestra América'.

A Tale of Two Countries

BY MIGUEL H. DÍAZ

I remember the beginnings of my hyphenated identity, the Cuban-American way of being human. As a little Cuban child, I spent the last few hours before leaving Havana in *la pecera*, the room in the airport referred to as the “fish tank,” where Cuban exiles waited before boarding a plane to leave the tropical island. I stood next to *mami* and *papi* as I prayed that Cuban authorities would not prevent us from departing at the last minute. I carried my Mickey Mouse toy into the Iberian Airlines plane on the long trip across the ocean with my parents. After the plane landed in Madrid, Cuban exiles kissed the ground, unaware of the personal revolution that was about to begin in the lives of all of us.

When my family arrived in Madrid, we carried all our possessions in our suitcases. On that first cold night after our arrival, we went to a tiny room in a rooming house where all three of us huddled together and slept till we were awakened by sounds of El Rastro de Madrid, the Spanish flea market. I looked out at all the food and wanted to eat the chocolates

OUR MAN IN HAVANA.
A banner in Havana
advertises Pope Francis'
September visit to Cuba.

MIGUEL H. DÍAZ holds the John Courtney Murray University Chair in Public Service at Loyola University Chicago and is a former U.S. ambassador to the Holy See.

REUTERS/ALEXANDRE MENEGHINI

I saw, the uncured Spanish hams (*jamón Serranos*), the candies—these and more I wanted to eat. I still hold close to my heart my father's words: "My son, as soon as I begin to work and have some money to spare, we will be able to buy some of those goodies." I remember this traumatic relocation, my trip back across the ocean two years later, and my arrival in Miami. This exile experience opened up a space for mercy in my life. Life-on-the-hyphen, the Cuban-American way, has remained the space from which I have encountered the rich diversity that has shaped who I have become, and the rich diversity that has shaped the persons I have encountered.

From this space, I offer these reflections as someone who deeply loves and cares for both the country of his birth and the country I now claim as my home. Pope Francis' invitation to embody God's mercy in an increasingly globalized world of human indifference and his relentless affirmation of the preferential option for poor, marginalized and oppressed people presents a valuable challenge to Cuban and American societies. As *pontifex maximus*, the greatest of bridge-builders, Pope Francis comes to the United States and Cuba ready to usher in a new spring in human relations within and between these two nations, which have been sociopolitically separated by more than a mere 90 miles.

Remembering Mercy

On March 17, 2013, Pope Francis wrote: "I think we too are the people who, on the one hand, want to listen to Jesus, but on the other hand, at times, like to find a stick to beat others with, to condemn others. And Jesus has this message for us: mercy. I think—and I say it with humility—that this is the Lord's most powerful message: mercy."

Pope Francis is the prophet of mercy. Mercy, Cardinal Walter Kasper rightly argues, mirrors the very nature of what Christians understand as the mystery of God. Because God is love, God acts mercifully in history. Because we have been created in God's image, we become Godlike when we act mercifully toward our neighbor. Mercy rather than judgment, sympathy rather than apathy—these values become guiding principles in personal, communal and national relations. To see as God sees requires a shift in perception, a faith-filled sight that enables us to "always consider the person." As the pope underscored in reference to gay persons: "Here we enter into the mystery of the human being. In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation. It is necessary to accompany them with mercy."

Mercy redirects our vision to see as God sees and to see God in all persons, even in those who have wronged us. Mercy, as the "mirror" of God's Trinitarian life, enables human beings, communities and nations to exist for and from each other. All too often we objectify persons and treat them as disposable. We condemn others, we misunderstand them,

we falsely accuse them of wrongdoing, we judge them and we demonize them. Mercy provides an antidote to all of these actions, enabling us to gaze into the concrete situation of another person with compassion. Mercy enables us to see others as reflections and refractions of the one human family God has called into existence. Mercy creates and multiplies hyphens between persons and all creatures of God. Mercy realizes what in Spanish we would call an authentic community of *nosotros* (the Spanish word for *we* that literally means "we-other").

Remembering injustice can lead to violence and retribution. Cubans, Americans and Cuban-Americans know all too well that this injustice has been part of their communal past. Tragically, violence continues to prevail in many of our cities here in the United States. We have all witnessed on our media screens the injustices related to racism and the human indifference that has characterized the treatment of certain persons based on the color of their skin or other human characteristics. But as Pope Francis suggests, mercy makes possible the awareness and acceptance of human differences. Mercy overcomes what the pope has termed "the globalization of indifference." Indifference oftentimes comes about from the misuse or abuse of power and privilege. Indifference engenders prejudice and exclusion based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-political affiliation, physical ability and immigration status, to name but a few of its consequences. An indifferent society is a society that has failed to embrace human differences and refuses to respect and care for the most vulnerable of its citizens.

In his book *Diálogos Entre Juan Pablo II y Fidel Castro*, Pope Francis argues that "pluralism is one of the fundamental characteristics of the Church, since the respect and acceptance of others, of otherness, is a long standing principle in Christian doctrine." What the pope argues with respect to Cuba in terms of its rich religious, cultural and racial differences can be equally argued with respect to the United States. Human differences must be affirmed, respected and empowered. The people of Cuba and the United States have much work to do opening up and reconciling, first and foremost, internally as nations and subsequently to each other and the nations that surround them. Each of them must embrace Pope Francis' culture of encounter. Perhaps what is most needed at this time to transform these societies is the kind of "popular diplomacy" that relies on people-to-people human encounters. Such encounters may enable accompaniment of diverse persons in their concrete human situation and provide the recipe needed to overcome the human indifference in each of these nations.

Liberty and Justice for All

The globalization of human indifference, as the pope's recent encyclical "Laudato Si'" makes clear, extends to the in-

difference we humans practice toward our earth. “In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters” (“*Laudato Si*,” No. 158).

The pope challenges throwaway and consumer driven cultures that devalue and kill life, embracing instead an integral ecology that respects and promotes all life and the interdependence of all creatures. The health of this integral ecology pivots upon the preferential care of our increasingly impoverished earth and the poor, the marginalized and all who suffered within our lands. The earth’s life matters. Black lives matter. Brown lives matter. Undocumented lives matter. Imprisoned lives matter. Dissident lives matter. All lives inside our biological wombs and social wombs matter.

In the United States, 48 million Americans live below the poverty line, more than 600,000 homeless people roam our streets (Black, Latino/a and L.G.B.T. youth represent a large percentage of the homeless in our cities), numerous persons lack adequate housing, and over 11 million live among us as undocumented persons. Every year the United States generates approximately 230 million tons of trash, with little recycling, and most of it ends up in landfills. On average the United States consumes about 19 million barrels of petroleum a day, and although we make up 4.5 percent of the world’s population, we consume approximately 20 percent of its energy. How might we respond here in the United States to Pope Francis’ challenge to promote an integral ecology in the face of such facts?

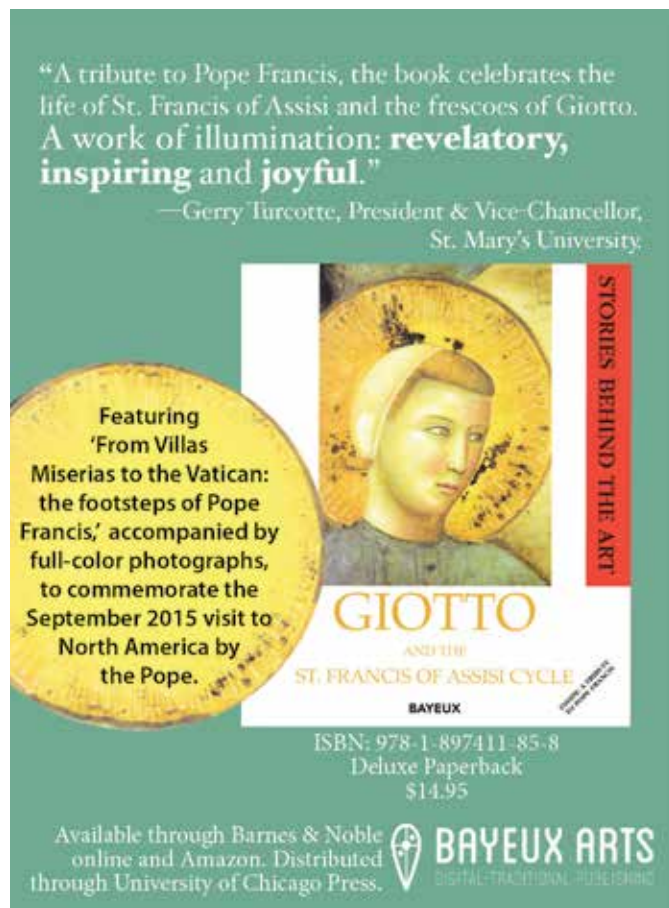
In Cuba, while most of its citizens may not pay for rent, education and health care, economic and sociocultural inequality prevails and creates two contrasting societies where a great number of Cubans suffer marginalization, especially on the basis of race, religion or sexual orientation. The 2015 Human Rights Watch annual report concluded: “The Cuban government continues to repress dissent and discourage public criticism,” turning to “short-term arbitrary arrests of human rights defenders, independent journalists” and uses other repressive tactics that “include beatings, public acts of shaming, and the termination of employment.” How might Cuban society respond to Pope Francis’ message about listening to the voices of the marginalized and oppressed in light of this ongoing silencing of human rights voices? Whether in the U.S. or in Cuba, freedom and justice truly matter!

A Space for Mercy

I remember growing up on the hyphen in Miami—I am Cuban-American. Indeed, I have lived all my life on this

hyphen, resisting the temptation to choose either of these aspects of my humanity, but welcoming both black beans and rice and burgers and fries, bridging manifold human differences and “languages” and living this creative tension day in and day out of my life. This way of being human has opened up for me a space of mercy in my life. But perhaps it has been God’s mercy all along that has willed and graced this space. Cuban-Americans might be able to offer this human experience as a way to herald mercy, reject human indifference and foster liberty and justice for all. Surely, life on the hyphen, the Cuban-American way, resists the practice of indifference, for this kind of daily living makes us keenly aware of our God-given connection to others and their distinct otherness. This mode of being human invites U.S. and Cuban leaders to revise laws, policies and institutions so as to “cut loose the shackles of the past” and enable these two nations to bridge their differences.

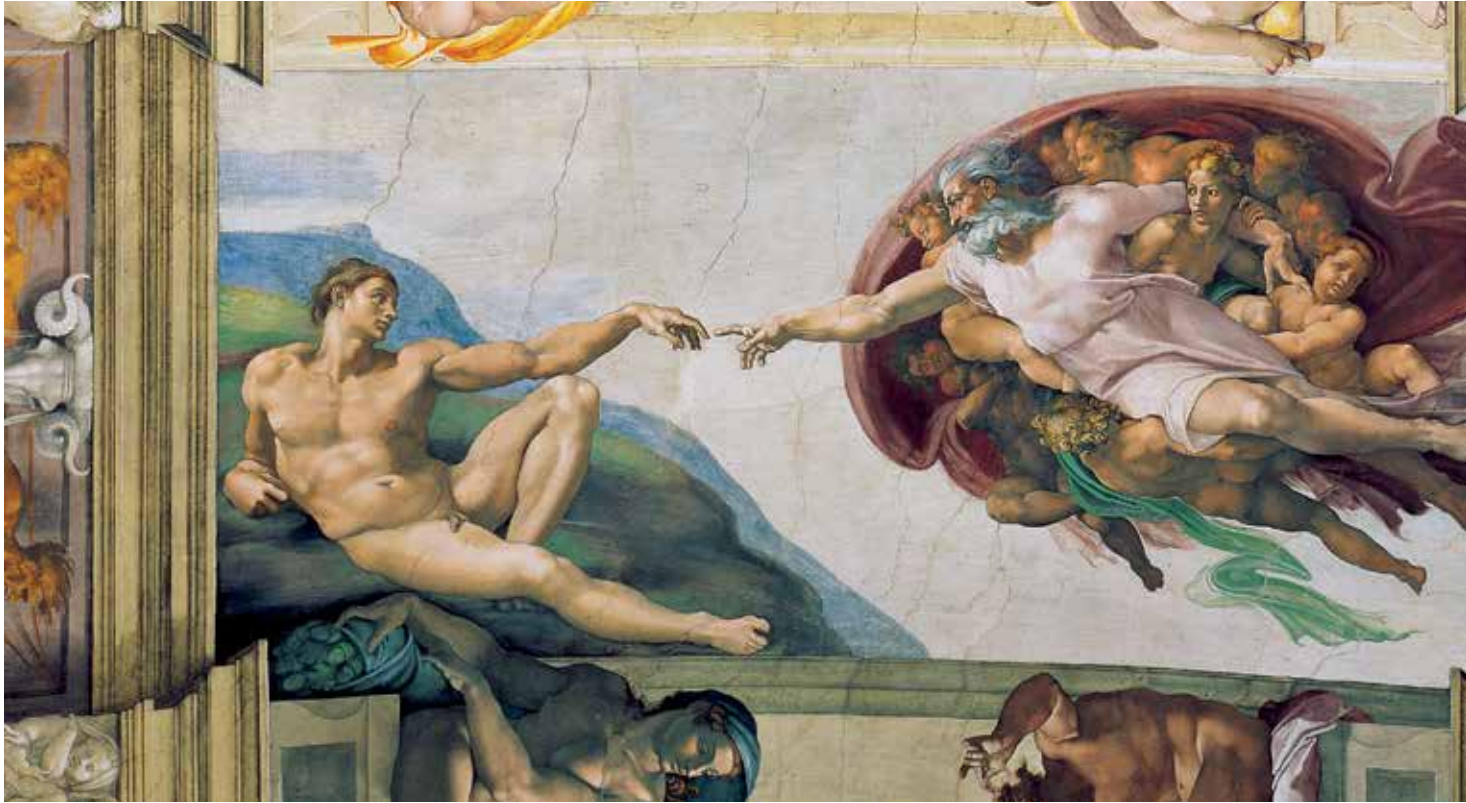
To practice mercy as the pope has invited us to do, we must overcome human indifference and train our eyes to see God in all persons, especially and preferentially in the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed. God’s option becomes our only human option to advance liberty and justice for all. I remember mercifully the beginning of my hyphen, and I pray for mercy and Pope Francis’ success in *nuestra America*. ▲



Scripture and Our Selves

Reflections on the Bible and the body

BY M. SHAWN COPELAND



From the risk of creation in Genesis through the startling visions of Revelation, the physical human body commands the Bible's narrative. God makes the earth creature (*adama*) in the divine image and likeness, makes them male and female, animates the body with divine breath and deems the body—and all creation—*very good* (Gn 1:26–27, 31; 2:7). Thus, the essential corporeality of human existence emerges in the very act of creation. The divine affirmation of matter, of flesh, contradicts any assertion that the body might be inferior to spirit or soul, that flesh is so much dross or an impediment. The body is God's gracious gift and delight; it must never be treated with contempt or disrespect. We humans are body-persons: we do not possess bodies, we *are* bodies, and as body-persons we encounter, express and engage the world, others and God. Indeed, the divine affirmation of flesh invests the body with

honor, exuberance and grace.

The Hebrew Bible or Old Testament bursts with sheer astonishment and gratitude at the physical body (Ps 139:14–16), records its attractiveness (1 Sm 16:12), observes physical differences (Gn 27: 22–24) and relishes its prowess and skill (1 Sm 17: 48–49). Chosen, protected and redeemed from the cruelty of bodily enslavement, the ancient Israelite people were instructed to circumcise the male body as a sign of communal fidelity to the Covenant (Gn 17:9–14; Lv 12:3). Further, the men of the community were enjoined to wear bodily reminders (phylacteries) of the discipline and law of monotheistic worship (Dt 6:8, 11:18; Ex 13: 9, 16). During the 40-year sojourn in the desert, God fed the Israelites with manna until they reached Canaan (Jos 5:13). What food the people might eat was strictly regulated and categorized either as clean or unclean: fish with fins and scales were designated clean but shellfish unclean; lamb was clean but rabbit unclean (Lv 11:46, 20:25). Leviticus and Deuteronomy regulated and organized much more than the consumption of food. The laws and codes of these books

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"THE CREATION OF ADAM," BY MICHELANGELO PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/ARTWORKSFOREVER

governed ritual, dispensed tribal responsibilities, delineated marriage and sexual intercourse, and regulated male and female roles in the community. Finally, minute rules required close attention to the appearance of skin diseases, bodily defects, disfigurement or mutilation that rendered the body unclean. These rules, Mary Douglas observes, “stem from a concern for wholeness,” for purity in Israelite worship.



The divine affirmation of flesh invests the body with honor, exuberance and grace.

The Body of Jesus

The incarnation crowns God’s affirmation of the physical body (Mt 1:20–25; Lk 1:26–35; Jn 1:14; Rom 1:3). The body of Jesus, as Tertullian suggests, is the “hinge of salvation”; without the enfleshing of the Word, divine redemptive activity in the world would be precluded. Through disobedience, Adam and Eve had disrupted the harmonious relationship among transcendent, personal, interpersonal and cosmic orders. The friendship between God and humans was broken; the unity of spiritual and physical being left us out of sync with our bodies, ourselves and one another and disturbed the order of nature. Redemption, then, must encompass the reclamation and reconciliation of the entire created order—the redemption of matter, of flesh, of the body (Col 1: 19; Eph 1:10).

The Jewish body of Jesus of Nazareth presents a crucial entry point in both ancient and postmodern understandings of particularity and universality. His body is marked with particularities of race, sex, sexuality, gender and cultural mores. It is open to and turned toward radically different

others to the point of self-transcending love (Mt 15: 26–27) and teaches the universal meaning of being a body-person. In Christian theology, the body of Jesus functions as temple, sacrifice and pledge (Mk 14:22; Lk 22:19; John; Rom 3:24–25). The enfleshed Word manifests the shining glory of his God and Father; his crucified body constitutes an exacting wisdom for living and a sacrifice that heals the breach between God and creation. Jesus Christ is “the firstborn” of the dead; his raised and exalted body betokens a pledge of resurrection life to come for all believers (Col 15: 20–23; 1 Cor 15:20).

Writing to believers scattered around the Mediterranean world, Paul deploys the metaphor of the body to elucidate the meaning of “new life” in Christ. His usage is neither theoretical nor systematic; rather he grapples to sketch out the difference the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ *and* the presence of the Spirit makes. Only through the power of the Spirit may women and men confess Jesus as Lord. The Spirit creates those believers as a living body whose life, individually and corporately, witnesses to the mercy and loving kindness of God (Rom 12:4; 1 Cor 12). Christ is the head of this body; believers individually are members of it (Gal 2:20; 1 Cor 12:27). Thus, the individual body is a temple of the Spirit, and members are to glorify God in their bodies (1 Cor 6:19–20). For as Paul insists, we body-persons are made for God and life with God.

For all the accounts of miracles, marvels and mercies, the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—inspires caution as well as confidence. Lust, incest and murder damage a father and his sons, devastate a married woman and traumatize a virgin (2 Sm 11–13); a warrior’s reckless vow sends his daughter to death (Jgs 11:1–11, 29–33); and those who would cheat the common good or blackmail and extort

come to no good end (Acts 5:1–11; Daniel 13). These stories teach important if obvious lessons: there is no necessity to carry out every bodily impulse, every sexual urge; rash promises can miscarry; and cheating and extortion may prove fatal. Yet, reversals and surprise also shape the biblical narrative. Hospitality to unexpected travelers results in great joy (Gn 18: 1–9); the lowly and foreign-born become great (Ruth); and those who flout the law against others get their comeuppance (Jn 8: 1–11).

Jewish and Christian Views

The religious and theological reflection of Judaism, unlike that of its daughter, Christianity, exhibits little, if any, negativity toward the body. The body is not intrinsically impure or unclean; sex is a natural act celebrated in erotic lyricism in the Song of Songs. The Jewish rabbinical scholar and philosopher Maimonides declared proper nourishment, care



and appropriate adornment of the body a religious duty. Decades later, St. Thomas Aquinas would write encouragingly: “We ought to cherish the body. Our body’s substance is not from an evil principle, as the Manicheans imagine, but from God. And therefore we ought to cherish the body by the friendship of love, by which we love God.”

Yet Christian reflection continues to wrestle to comprehend and speak meaningfully about the body. On the one hand, theology, catechism and sermon are eager to honor the body’s goodness and grace, yet just as eager to discredit bodily pleasures like food or drink or sex. Further, Christian discourse has constructed a gendered binary between a masculine God and a feminine creation, thus influencing religious, cultural and social roles of male dominance and female subservience. Yet, at its best, Christian discourse about the body insists that body-persons have a unique capacity for communion with God—the *imago Dei*; indeed, the body constitutes a site of divine revelation. Thus the body is a basic human sacrament.

What follows is one way of expressing theologically a few lessons the Bible teaches us about the body:

1. *The body shapes human existence as relational and social.* Whether the reader of Genesis gives primacy to the first (Gn 1:27) or the second (Gn 2:21–23) account of the creation of humankind, the need for relationship with God, with other body-persons and with creation is obvious. Only as body-persons can human creatures praise and worship, sing and dance friendship with God. Only as body-persons can we fulfill the divine commands to care for creation and to reproduce. Only as body-persons can we befriend one another, build and organize towns and cities, invent tools and transport, pursue agriculture and commerce.

2. *Divine creativity manifests love for body-persons through manifold created particularity.* As an embattled minority, the ancient Israelite people placed great emphasis on bodily and genealogical integrity; exogamy or marriage outside the community was forbidden. The ancient people were often at odds with foreigners and waged war to establish and defend the borders of the land that, although promised and entrusted to them, belonged only to God (Lv 25:23). Certainly, the people were to deal with other Israelites fairly, justly and compassionately; at the same time, covenantal stipulations directed them not to oppress strangers, to treat these “others” with respect, even to show regard for endangered animals belonging to an enemy (Ex 22: 21–27). Through adherence to these and similar provisions, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks argues, the people were to realize *tzedekah*, or “social justice” in the concrete. “The Israelites were charged with creating [a society] in which everyone has a basic right to a dignified life and to be equal citizens in the covenantal community under the sovereignty of God.”

3. *Solidarity and loyalty to God emerge in body practices.*

Love of God and love of neighbor formed the key covenantal demand, one that the prophets and Jesus after them reiterated frequently. Like the prophets, Jesus read the “signs of the times,” critiquing hypocritical piety (Lk 6:6–11; 18: 9–14) and challenging abuse of the poor and outcast (Mic 3:1–3; Amos 5:6–15; 6:1, 3–6; Lk 6:20–26). With acts of healing, stories, parables and sermons, Jesus advanced a distinctive prophetic praxis on behalf of the reign of God. He concretized body practices of solidarity: feeding hungry bodies, clothing naked ones, tending sick bodies and visiting imprisoned ones (Mt 25:31–46). In this way, he upended the usual ways of thinking and acting toward others, urging followers to open their hearts and minds, to give without expectation of reciprocity (Lk 10:29–37), to commit themselves to genuine conversion of life. Moreover, Jesus took the poor and vulnerable as priorities. These included not only children, women and men who were materially impoverished but also people who were socially outcast and physically disabled (those afflicted with blindness, paralysis, deafness and leprosy), those who were oppressed or displaced through political occupation or religious corruption, those who were broken in spirit from isolation and persecution (Lk 7:22, 14:13, 21; Mt 5:3–6, 11). These body practices of solidarity urge us in the here-and-now to active recognition and regard for exploited, despised and vulnerable body-persons. Solidarity costs, but it affirms the universality of divine love without compromising its preference for those in greatest need. Thus, the Creator is worshiped, bodies are honored and particularity engaged and valued.

4. *The Eucharist orders and transforms our bodies as the body of Christ.* “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you...for my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed” (Jn 6:53, 54). Jesus’ assertion scandalized his first-century hearers; it ought, at least, to startle us. This is his promise of the nourishing sacrificial gift of his own body. His gracious, gratuitous, unmerited gift is of immeasurable value. Jean-Luc Marion captures its most concentrated power: “The Eucharistic gift consists in the fact that in it love forms one body with our body.”

Through the compassionate love of the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit, the body is made present with us and to us. In sacramental reception, Jesus’ self-gift of his own body nourishes, strengthens and orders us as we make his body visible through our body practices of solidarity. The Eucharist signifies and makes visible the body raised up by Christ for himself within the body of humanity, the “mystical body” through which the body of Jesus is extended through time and space as a countersign to the reign of sin. In the fullness of time this body will restore the original image of creation, where there are no longer Gentile and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but “Christ is all and in all” (Col 3:10–11). ■

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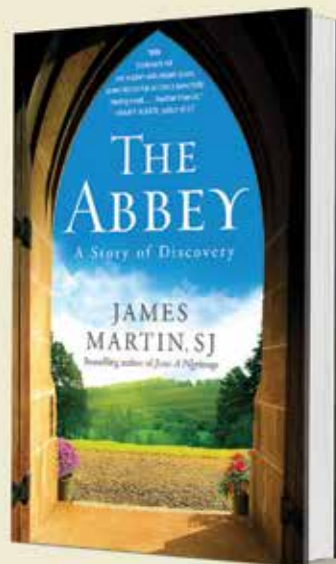
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Living for the City

Spiritual exercises from Detroit

BY DAVID NANTAIS

Utility workers in Detroit erected a streetlight in front of my house this past March. It is one of 65,000 lights that Mayor Mike Duggan has promised will be up and on by December of 2016. While watching two men guide the light pole into the ground, I felt a combination of relief, joy and cautiousness. Since purchasing a 100-year-old house in 2010, I have been frustrated by stolen front porch furniture and two car break-ins.

City living can be tough. And yet, more and more people are choosing this lifestyle, either out of necessity or to gain certain cultural amenities. According to the United Nations, 54 percent of the world's population lived in cities in 2014. Whether one lives in an urban environment that could grace the front cover of a Condé Nast periodical or in a struggling, post-industrial, rustbelt metropolis, urban living offers a wide variety of blessings, challenges and opportunities.

This light was a blessing. It offered me hope that petty crime might cease on the block. Could it also be a sign, I wondered, that our city, recently mired in the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history, might be on the path to functionality? My emotions, however, were shrouded in cautiousness. Detroiters have experienced more broken promises from local government than just about anyone. It is important to me that my cautiousness does not slip into despair or cynicism, so as of late I have been reflecting on how to practice a spirituality of urban living.

This is not a novel concept. I have discovered the work of several scholars who have done some serious thinking about urban spirituality from a Christian perspective. Two people whose insights I have found particularly helpful are Philip Sheldrake from the Cambridge Theological Federation and Chad Thralls, a teaching fellow at Seton Hall University. Both look at the city as the site for daily human interaction and emphasize the importance of cultivating particular spiritual disciplines for healthy city life. Professor Sheldrake insists that solidarity is a key virtue for urban living, to ensure concern for the common good. Mr. Thralls, drawing upon the wisdom of St. Ignatius Loyola, suggests that a daily examen focused on city life experiences can help one grow in

self-awareness and love of neighbor. These are important ideas for city dwellers who are concerned about cultivating spirituality within a daily existence that can often seem chaotic.

Pope Francis, too, addresses urban life in his encyclical "Laudato Si," stating that city dwellers should feel connected to one another, be concerned about the common good and think of the entire cityscape as their home, rather than confining themselves to one neighborhood. In this way, "Others will then no longer be seen as strangers, but as part of a 'we' which all of us are working to create" (No. 151).

My own reflections on this topic are grounded in over 10 years of living in the city of Detroit. I propose three characteristics of a robust and nourishing spirituality of urban living: 1) Attempt mightily to find beauty in desolation; 2) Move from helping others to sharing aims; and 3) Allow deep joy and grief to affect your soul.

These themes are not meant to be exhaustive, and I do not want to imply that I have mastered them or that I ever will. They can, however, help guide decision-making in the face of the gritty realities of urban life and give one the perspective to pursue a rich sense of meaning and avoid dark cynicism.

A Deeper Beauty

Detroit, like many large cities, has an overabundance of burned out buildings and homes, overgrown vacant lots and desolate landscapes. In the midst of these sad sights, however, it is possible to locate suppleness and beauty. This takes the form of wild flowers, the return of some animals, like pheasants, to the urban prairie or the sun playing off a broken window at dusk. But the search for beauty in desolation needs to progress deeper than this, lest it romanticize the real human pain that these settings can represent.

A spiritual exercise I employ is attempting to imagine who occupied a particular space in the past. Many fellow human travelers set foot on these spaces, and for some the ground was holy. A particular abandoned lot could easily have been the location of a home or a small business or an athletic field where neighbors gathered to celebrate life—and perhaps, with some imagination and care, it could become a garden or park for a new generation. The late rapper Tupac Shakur proposed a beautiful image in his lyrics of "the rose that grew from concrete." This is a very urban symbol that represents hope and life conquering all odds.

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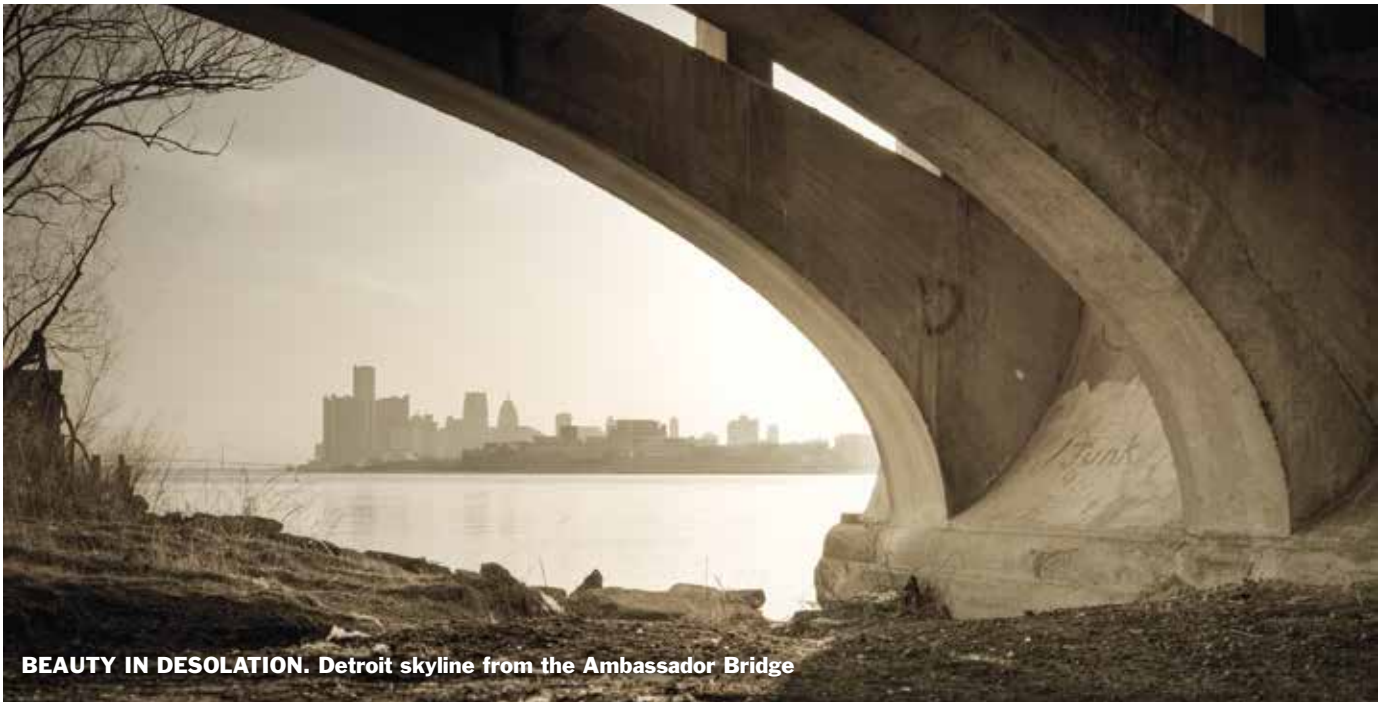


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BEAUTY IN DESOLATION. Detroit skyline from the Ambassador Bridge

The possibility of finding splendor among the ruins should not absolve us of considering the reasons why devastation is so rampant in our cities. Globalization, unhealthy forms of capitalism, racism and a lack of concern for the common good all play a role in this heart-wrenchingly bleak situation. But just as a healthy sense of our own personal sinfulness can generate from within a desire to do better, a realistic understanding of our societal role in creating and sustaining these problems can encourage a personal commitment to becoming an agent of change. Cultivating the habit of seeing beauty in what popular trends deem ugly or unworthy can help us see potential in people and neighborhoods that are commonly written off as insignificant and even dangerous.

Shared Struggle

When I moved into Detroit I thought I was doing something helpful. Sure, the gorgeous architecture I enjoyed in my apartment, located in a late 19th-century Victorian mansion in the middle of the cultural district, was personally gratifying. But I hoped that being an employed, tax-paying resident who cared about the city would somehow translate into support for the nascent “comeback” that Detroit seemed to be mounting. The more I learned about the city and conversed with its longtime residents, however, the more I realized that I needed to revise my personal narrative of being the social justice-minded person who was going to reach down to assist the struggling urban population. I needed to start to understand myself as a fellow resident without the condescending agenda. It is humbling to do this, but very necessary, especially in a city with a history of racial tension like Detroit. As a Caucasian moving into a predominantly African-American

city, it was vital to not be perceived as—or to be—a do-gooder trying to save what did not need saving.

Putting down roots by investing in a home has helped. With a good job and many resources I am still in a position of privilege, but now my struggles and my neighbors’ struggles are much more similar. I do still try to help folks, but I am also the beneficiary of aid from others. Residents, black and white, in my neighborhood have helped push one another’s cars out of the snow when the city does not plow the side streets (not an uncommon occurrence), and some have kept a watchful eye on our two boys, who tend to bolt down the street when my wife or I momentarily turn our heads. A group of us cleaned up an illegal dump site and boarded up abandoned homes in our neighborhood to keep scappers away and protect the growing population of young children. These are small efforts, but they build trust and form bonds with people whom I would have once labeled needy or helpless, and I hope that over time friendships, based on mutual-ity and solidarity, will result.

Front Porch Spirituality

A neighbor and good friend down the block works as a handyman and I have rarely seen a person put such care into his work and take so much satisfaction from it. The projects he has completed on our house have helped transform it into a home. He and his spouse have become dear friends, often joining us for holidays or evenings sipping wine on our front porches. When our friend’s van, containing all the tools of his trade, was stolen from the street in front of his house, my wife and I were angry and heartbroken.

Events like this, all too common in Detroit, spark within

me an “urban-living theodicy”—the question, why do good people, who are generous neighbors, have to become the victims of crime? Crime is a reality in urban America, and one cannot naïvely ignore that fact; but a violation of this magnitude is often the last straw for those with the means to move to the suburbs. We prayed this would not be the case for our neighbors. My wife made our friends dinner and walked down the block, bottle of wine in hand, to commiserate. Our 5-year-old son drew a picture to help “Mr. Dan” feel better about losing his tools. Eight months later the family has somewhat recovered, and they still live on our street. I hope they stay, but I also realize the enormous cost of doing so.

Sharing in the griefs and joys of neighbors and friends is a formidable spiritual exercise. It can be emotionally exhausting and requires patience, hospitality and a deep well of compassion. I admit that I do not possess these qualities in abundance and would sometimes rather bury my head in my own concerns and anxieties. But city life offers many avenues to transcend and avoid wallowing in one’s own inner turmoil. Front porches, which are very common in our neighborhood but are rarely seen on newer homes, are wonderful vehicles for sharing and conversing with neighbors. In our neighborhood folks are encouraged to stop and chat with fellow residents, whether they are longtime friends or unfamiliar faces.

Front porches are also places to which panhandlers come

begging for money and food. This is a reality of urban life. One comes face to face with suffering people; these are fellow city dwellers and many struggle mightily with addictions, homelessness and poverty. In *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Thomas Merton writes, “The more you try to avoid suffering, the more you suffer, because smaller and more insignificant things begin to torture you, in proportion to your fear of being hurt.” City life does not easily accommodate isolationism or suffering avoidance. One is often encountering others, hearing about the vibrant spectrum of human behavior and experiences and attempting to either deflect or integrate these experiences. It is by doing the latter that one can experience spiritual growth.

Five months after our block was illuminated, the city is ahead of schedule on its promise to turn on the lights in Detroit. Several neighborhoods, even some of the most neglected, are reaping the benefits of this basic service that folks in other places usually take for granted. It is too early to tell if this effort will deter crime citywide, but I imagine that my fellow Detroiters feel a sense of ease after the sun goes down that some have not felt in decades. Numerous challenges remain, however, awaiting creative solutions. And as urban dwellers everywhere work to transform our cities, we might just find the city is changing us, too, opening our hearts to the people and places that make up our common home. A

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They Know the Suffering Christ

Why we need a church that is poor and for the poor

BY STEPHEN P. WHITE

Jorge Mario Bergoglio had been pope for only three days when he first uttered a phrase that has since become a refrain for his papacy. Speaking to a large gathering of journalists, the new bishop of Rome explained how he came to choose the name Francis:

And those words came to me: the poor, the poor. Then, right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi.... He is the man who gives us this spirit of peace, the poor man.... How I would like a church that is poor and for the poor!

A church that is poor and for the poor—these words evoke the simplicity of the Poverello, the radical detachment of St. Ignatius, and echo the Magnificat. But beyond their lyricism and beauty, what, exactly, do these words mean?

We can identify two ways that the church is for the poor. The first is that the church seeks to provide for the needs of the materially and spiritually poor. We typically associate this first way of being for the poor with works of mercy. The 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel sets forth our obligations to the "least of these": feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned. The church traditionally adds a seventh, bury the dead. There are also, of course,

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HUMANE TOUCH. Pope Francis with people of Bañado Norte, a poor neighborhood in Asuncion, Paraguay, July 12.



the spiritual works of mercy: instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, admonish sinners, suffer wrongs with patience, forgive willingly, comfort the afflicted and pray for the living and dead. These are concrete ways in which the church can be for the poor, providing material and spiritual goods that are otherwise lacking.

Now the body of Christ, the church, does all these things and more, even if individual members do not. If the Gospel is to be believed, we will be judged on our care for the "least

CNS PHOTO/PAUL HARING

of these.” And it is this reality—that we stand under God’s judgment—that underscores the ultimate inadequacy of our own works of mercy. The only mercy we can offer the world, or one another, is temporary and incomplete. Our mercy, without God’s mercy, is vain.

This brings us to the second way in which the church is for the poor: the church is for the poor in that we, the members of the body of Christ, are all afflicted by sin and the poverty of our fallen condition. God’s perfect response to our most profound poverty is his mercy, and the Catholic Church, founded by Jesus Christ, is the privileged conduit of that mercy—the very sacrament of our salvation. God forgives sins. He saves. He grants eternal life. Whatever temporary good we may accomplish by our own works of mercy, they can never replace that divine mercy, but instead serve as its heralds. That is not to denigrate our works of mercy but to insist on their inadequacy to the poverty of sin. When our labors on behalf of the poor—our works of mercy—are cut off from the proclamation of the One Who Saves, our work remains sterile, merely human.

In his first homily as pope, Francis made this point in the starkest terms: “We can walk as much as we want, we can build many things, but if we do not profess Jesus Christ, things go wrong. We may become a charitable N.G.O., but not the church, the bride of the Lord.”

The point is that a church that is truly for the poor must concern itself with temporal needs but must also offer something eternal that exceeds the limits of mere human agency. The church is for the poor in the most profound sense when it acts as a channel for God’s saving grace and becomes an instrument of his mercy.

This is why, in Catholic social teaching, the preferential option for the poor is to be understood primarily in terms of the saving action of Christ in and through his church.

In his apostolic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel,” Pope Francis observed how grossly undervalued the church’s preferential option for the poor becomes when it is understood principally as a social or political directive, though it certainly serves those roles as well (No. 198). He writes:

For the church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor “his first mercy.”... This option—as Benedict XVI has taught—“is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty” (No. 198).

God’s improbable mercy was made available to us in an equally improbable way, through God’s own poverty. In taking on our humanity, God chose to share in our poverty and used that poverty to accomplish our salvation:

But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life (Ti 3:4-7).

God chose to open the font of his divine mercy in the most acute moment of his own poverty upon the cross.

So a “church for the poor” directs us to the work of mercy, which points ultimately to God’s mercy, by way of his chosen poverty. And this is where we come to see fully what Pope Francis means by “a church that is poor.” Following Christ’s example, a church that is for the poor in the way Christ is for the poor must, in some important sense, also be poor itself.

If Christ identifies himself with the poor in a special way—“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me”—and became poor himself, how can the church, the body of Christ, do otherwise?

In our society, we conceive of our obligation to the poor almost exclusively as a function of distribution, of moving goods from those who have to those who have not. The upshot is that our discussions of poverty tend to be overtly materialistic, focusing on the efficiency and efficacy of public versus private means of redistribution, the comparative importance of economic growth versus economic stability and so on. Such questions are far from unimportant, but they touch on only one dimension (not the most important dimension) of the church’s option for the poor.

Such a truncated view of things can lead us to confuse justice and charity (by treating as charity what are, in fact, matters of “mere” justice) while simultaneously obscuring the truth that love finds its fullest expression in mutuality and reciprocity. So while our affluent society finds it comparatively easy to think about distributing goods to the poor, it never seems to occur to most of us that we might view the poor as more than receptacles for our beneficence, still less that those poorer than ourselves might possess something that we lack and need. Rather than take the risk of being receptive and vulnerable to them, we allow them to remain strangers, alienated and excluded.

How different from the example Christ gives! We see this most dramatically in his Passion. The word itself—*passion*—points to an “undergoing.” He endures pain and suffers death for our sake. But even before his final suffering, he “undergoes” and “endures”—he suffers—our very humanity by taking it upon himself in the Incarnation.

God, who is the fullness of being, lacking in nothing, takes on our nature and opens himself to receive our love—not as a master receiving the obeisance of a slave but as father receiving his son and as brother receiving brother. God be-

came poor so that we, who are infinitely beneath him, could love him like family; dare I say it, like equals. He submits himself to our friendship; he suffers us to love him.

How shocking—almost blasphemous—that God permits us to love him this way!

God became poor to enrich us by his poverty. The option for the poor, then, arises from the very heart of the mission of the church because it is central to the saving mission of Christ. In his love and mercy he treats us, lowly sinners that we are, as though we have something to offer him. He loves us and lets us love him. When we approach the poor and suffering with this same humility, we discover a privileged place of encounter with Christ, who is already there amongst his beloved poor who know and experience his suffering in a special way.

And this, finally, is why Pope Francis longs for a church that is poor and for the poor. He says so explicitly, immediately following the passage in “The Joy of the Gospel” cited above:

This is why I want a church that is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in

their lives and to put them at the center of the church’s pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.

Christ’s command to care for the poor is a call to charity, which always requires the humility which allows us to see the least of these as more than just recipients of our charity. “We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them.... We are called to find Christ in them.”

A church that is for the poor loves the poor and shows them mercy in body and soul. A church that is poor is humble before the poor and suffering, and so imitates Christ, who in his mercy opens himself to love and be loved even by sinners. A church that is poor and for the poor is a church that knows the depths of the mercy of God and so understands that ignorance of the poor is ignorance of Christ.

The Catholic Church, it bears repeating, is just such a church. Pope Francis’ wish is that it become ever more so, which is a great challenge to all of us who stand in need of God’s mercy: “For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). ▲

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America

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—MARTHA CORDERO, “No Surnames, Like the Saints”

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Francis in the U.S.A.

Pope Francis is now on his 10th foreign trip since his election in March 2013. This week-long journey (Sept. 21 to 27) takes him first to Cuba and then to the United States and the United Nations and is widely considered “the big one” of the year.

He began his global travel last January with a second trip to Asia, visiting Sri Lanka, a mostly Buddhist country, and the Philippines, the continent’s most populous Catholic country. In June he made a one-day visit to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a state on Europe’s periphery that is still recovering from war.

Then in July he returned to Latin America to visit three countries on its peripheries: Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay. At the end of November, he will go to Africa for the first time, to visit Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic.

This first pope from the Americas is universally recognized as a profoundly spiritual and humble man, a true follower of Jesus with unlimited love and passionate concern for the poor, the migrants, people who are suffering, those on the peripheries of society and the excluded.

In two and a half years as leader of the Catholic Church, he has shown such an extraordinary ability to express God’s love for people in concrete and original ways that he has inspired Catholics worldwide and gained the admiration and respect of millions of

followers of other religions and even of those who profess no faith. After two decades of experiencing dismay, shame and anger at the sexual abuse and other scandals in their church, Catholics are again feeling proud to belong to the church he leads, “a church that is poor and for the poor,” a nonjudgmental church that serves as a “field hospital.”

Recognized as the world’s leading moral authority, also because of the authenticity of his own life, Francis has become a powerful advocate for the countless millions of voiceless poor people on all continents and is taking prophetic stances on issues that directly touch their lives, like climate change, poverty, human trafficking, immigration, corruption, war and the arms trade. Moreover, he is emphasizing the urgent need for an economy that puts people, not profit, at the center, an economy with ethics that seeks to provide them with jobs and a dignified life.

He comes to the United States proclaiming that the poor are at the heart of the Gospel and affirming truths that are not only central to the church’s social teaching but are also an enduring part of the American heritage: devotion to the common good, religious liberty, freedom itself and economic vitality. But he also comes as one who challenges those elements of contemporary society that contradict Catholic social teaching and distort the best traditions of the nation’s heritage.

Pope Francis comes to embrace all the people of the United States and is likely to encourage them to renew

their devotion to family life and their understanding of the demands of solidarity as well as the responsible use of their global power.

As we have read in his programmatic document, “The Joy of the Gospel,” and as he spelled out clearly in the encyclical “Laudato Si’ on Care for Our Common Home,” this Jesuit pope from Argentina is calling Christians to a new simplicity of life and a depth

of spirit that replaces materialism, hyper-individualism and the pursuit of constant pleasure with an integrity that knows what it is to sacrifice, to live in compassion and solidarity, to work for the common good, to care for creation, to show mercy and to attempt to pattern our lives after Jesus himself. His radi-

cal message is clear, simple and firmly rooted in the Gospels, which he never tires of encouraging people to read.

The first Latin American pope is likely to communicate such concepts in his talk to Congress, when he addresses the representatives of the people of the United States, and in his address to the United Nations, where he will speak to the world’s leaders. And since every papal visit is first and foremost a visit to the local church, one can expect him to challenge the American church to be more missionary, to be a church that includes, not excludes people, to be a church that puts the poor at the center of its attention and knows how to show mercy, to be a church in which faith trumps ideology.

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: @gerryrome.

One in Spirit

Life between Catholic and Episcopal churches

BY GREGORY HILLIS

My parish is a short drive from the house. Every Sunday I see the same people at 8:30 a.m.: the older couples whose children are grown, the many young families with their children, the teenagers who came with their parents but who would rather be in bed. This is the Mass I almost always attend alone. There are a few others who are also alone, though not many.

I serve as an acolyte twice a month, and on these Sundays I sit up at the front beside the priest. On other Sundays, I sit near the front of the church with a family I know. Apart from them, I know the director of music and worship, the deacons and the priests. Others in the parish are mainly just familiar faces, although they are the people with whom I take Communion each and every week.

At the end of Mass, I drive home to pick up my wife, Kim, and our three boys for the 10 a.m. liturgy at the Episcopal parish we attend as a family. Like my Catholic parish, this church is thriving, filled with young and old from a variety of backgrounds. There are cradle Episcopalians, ex-evangelicals who found life in the beauty



of Episcopal liturgy and disaffected Roman Catholics. Because this is my family's parish, I know these parishioners more deeply than the ones at my Catholic parish. My children play with their children, and our families regularly hang out together. During the liturgy I sit with Kim and my oldest son while his two brothers are downstairs for Sunday school. When it comes time for the Communion, we process to the altar rail where my wife and my son take Communion together. I cross my arms and am blessed by the priest. Apart from a few children, I'm the only person who does this.

We became an interchurch family on Pentecost 2007. On that day, after a long period of personal and familial discernment, I was received into the Roman Catholic Church. This was not an easy step to take. Up until that point, Kim and I were active members of the Anglican Church of

Canada. In 2005, our first son was baptized in our Anglican parish, and as a lay reader commissioned by the bishop to preach, I was honored to give the homily. We loved our parish, and I loved the liturgical beauty of Anglicanism, as well as the richness and depth of its theological tradition.

The problem was that I had ceased to identify with the Anglican tradition.

In the years before my reception into the Roman Catholic Church, I gradually came to the realization that I was theologically, sacramentally, spiritually Roman Catholic. I thought for a while that I could remain part of the Anglican Church despite my leanings, but I found that this introduced an often intolerable tension between who I was inwardly and who I was outwardly. I longed to be in body what I already was in spirit.

The difficulty was that Kim did not, and she still doesn't feel any need to be anything other than what she is—a Christian in the Anglican tradition. For me to cross the Tiber would be to introduce an ecclesial disunion into our family that neither Kim nor I were sure we wanted. Yet Kim demonstrated unwavering understanding and love during this time of discernment, and we finally agreed that I should become a Roman Catholic, even if the rest

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BOB ECKSTEIN

of the family, including our three sons, remained Anglican. Practically speaking, this meant that I would become a Roman Catholic while still continuing to participate with my family in worship at their parish, and that they would participate monthly with me at my parish.

I don't mind attending church twice each Sunday. Nor do I mind belonging—albeit in different ways—to two communities of faith. When we moved to Louisville, our family found an Episcopal parish that has welcomed us, though some of its members are confused about why I don't take Communion, and I found a Roman Catholic parish that has been similarly welcoming.

But neither Kim nor I anticipated just how complicated and painful our situation would be. We both knew that my transition to Rome would put us in two different communions, but it was another thing entirely to experience this separation. And as our oldest child grew old enough to take Communion, a whole new level of complexity set in.

We want our children to be exposed to the fullness of the truth, goodness and beauty of each of our traditions, but this raises practical questions with no clear answers. Where should first Communion and confirmation take place for our children? Can they experience these sacraments in both traditions? Can our children participate in the sacramental life of the Roman Catholic Church in a way that still honors and respects their roots in the Anglican tradition, but also allows them to experience what it means to be Roman Catholic?

I strive to teach them about my faith, but don't want such teaching to be mere catechesis. Kim and I want to give them a full immersion into the Catholic faith, but it is hard to escape the feeling that my church prefers to keep them on the outside looking in until they're fully willing to commit to Rome.

In 1981, St. John Paul II wrote

that the growth of marriages between Catholic and non-Catholic Christians "calls for special pastoral attention" (*"Familiaris Consortio,"* No. 78). The 1993 *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, published by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, provided significant progress by opening the door to the possibility of eucharistic sharing between interchurch couples. Although the directory emphasizes that such sharing "can only be exceptional," the possibility of exceptions encouraged pastoral responses that went beyond rigid interpretations of canon law. Still, problems remain.


The ecumenical directory contains little guidance for eucharistic sharing for children in interchurch families, and this continues to be an acute pastoral need. Moreover, because there is not widespread familiarity with this directory, pastoral responses at the local level to interchurch families lack uniformity.

Those of us who were hoping that last October's meeting of the Synod of Bishops on the family would address more clearly the pastoral issues facing interchurch families, particularly in terms of intercommunion, were disappointed. The one reference to "mixed marriages" warned that people in such marriages are in "danger of relativism and indifference," and only then mentioned that they might have something to contribute ecumenically.

What is needed is a church that is willing to envision pastoral responses to interchurch families that move beyond the tired narrative that the choice is necessarily between a narrow reading of canon law and indifferentism. Neither of these options adequately addresses the communion that exists in my family and in families like mine. What we had prior to my conversion, we continue to have—a shared devotion to Christ and his church, a shared desire to raise our children to love the God who is love and a shared experience of prayer and worship.

Moreover, we strive as a family to be a mirror of the Trinitarian communion of persons, to model in our relationships the generous love whereby the persons of the Trinity share themselves so profoundly that multiplicity becomes unity. To cite the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," the family is the "domestic church," and in the domestic church that is my family, we experience and foster a profound communion of persons. It is a communion in which the clear differences that exist between our traditions are acknowledged and experienced, in which the ecclesial lines separating our traditions are not blurred but transcended.

It seems to me that families like mine are a tremendous gift to the church. We experience the unity for which Jesus prayed and therefore have something worthwhile to contribute to the church's ongoing ecumenical dialogue. To open the door to eucharistic sharing among those who experience a profound communion of persons in interchurch families acknowledges that such communion truly exists, and would provide a foretaste of the unity toward which we as Christians, and as Roman Catholics, strive.

The coming meeting of the Synod of Bishops on the family has many issues to discuss, a few of which will understandably dominate the conversation. However important these issues are, the synod needs also to acknowledge more thoroughly and positively than it did last October the gifts of interchurch families and to make more widely known and understood the pastoral opportunities for intercommunion between couples and families. More than this, I hope that the upcoming synod will recognize that the communion of persons that exists in families like mine, as well as the depth of our belief and practice, would be supported and nourished through common participation in the Eucharist. For families like mine long to be in body what we already are in spirit. 

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VOICES FROM THE MARGINS '15 SOCIAL JUSTICE SHORT FILM CONTEST



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'Tired of Living'

The Netherlands prides itself on pioneering medical euthanasia. In 2001 it became the first nation to legalize the practice. The campaign to introduce euthanasia featured images of serene cancer patients calmly bidding farewell to life, surrounded by adoring children, grandchildren and the occasional great-grandchild in a pinafore. But as the number of euthanasia deaths rose annually, psychological factors rather than physical pain became increasingly prominent as a justification for lethal injections.

Dedicated to expanding the reach of euthanasia, the Dutch Right to Die Society founded the End-of-Life Clinic in 2012. With typical Dutch efficiency, the clinic uses mobile medical units to visit the homes of citizens who are considering the euthanasia option. The housebound, the elderly and the disabled—anyone who might find it difficult to visit a medical office—can now have the benefits of euthanasia delivered on the living-room couch. In a society where physician house calls are rare, there is now one house call that is only a convenient phone call away.

Recently published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, "A Study of the First Year of the End-of-Life Clinic for Physician-Assisted Dying in the Netherlands" provides a disturbing portrait of the operation of the clinic in its first year (2012-13). The clinic gave lethal injections to 162 out of the 645 people who requested one. The majority of the euthanized suffered from physical diseases, but

not all were chronic. One otherwise healthy patient had tinnitus. A minority perished on other grounds. Six people were killed for psychological reasons; 21 for cognitive decline; 11 were killed simply because they were "tired of living." Many of those tagged with "cognitive decline" suffered from dementia, which raises the question how these patients could possibly have given informed consent. The new category of "tired of living" aroused the greatest alarm among the clinic's critics. Almost certainly, some of these patients suffered from unsuccessfully treated depression. *Ennui*, once a leitmotif in moody French novels, has suddenly become a ground for execution.

The End-of-Life Clinic's record reflected the broader national practice of euthanasia. According to official Dutch statistics, in 2013 there were 4,829 cases of legal euthanasia, of which 42 were due to psychological reasons and 97 to cognitive decline.

From a consumerist perspective, the clinic's euthanasia program has been a striking success. To meet demand, the clinic expanded its original 15 mobile units to 39. There is a waiting list of 100 patients requesting a lethal injection on psychological grounds alone.

Even erstwhile supporters of euthanasia were alarmed by the portrait of euthanasia practice sketched in the clinic report. A prominent supporter of the original 2001 law, the ethicist Theo Boer, now condemns the practice. He criticized the growing numbers of euthanasia cases and the standards used to implement it. "Cases have been

reported in which a large part of the suffering of those given euthanasia or assisted suicide consisted in being aged, lonely, or bereaved." Boer contests the illusion that this expanding recourse to euthanasia respects the patient's freedom. "Pressure from relatives, in combination with a patient's concern for the well-being of his or her loved ones, is in some cases an important factor behind the euthanasia request." Coercion now

extends to the medical profession itself. "A law that is now in the making obliges doctors who refuse to administer euthanasia to refer their patients to a willing colleague. Pressure on doctors to conform to patients' (and in some cases relatives') wishes can be intense."

Originally a call to compassion for patients

suffering intractable pain in the last days of a terminal disease, the euthanasia juggernaut has slowly become a eugenic campaign to eliminate the demented, the seriously disabled and the severely depressed. The burdensome are to be jettisoned, preferably through their own carefully solicited consent. As the clinic's brisk business indicates, the net for potential beneficiaries has now broadened to include those who are just "tired of living"—which could include many of us on a particularly grim day.

This is not about freedom. This is not about palliative care. It is about a steely utilitarianism and nihilism conquering the advanced outposts of ex-Christendom.

JOHN C. CONLEY

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THEATER | MICHAEL V. TUETH

CORRECTIVE ACTION

Profiling the lives of men in prison

Prisons have been very much in the news these days, with information about our country's enormous number of the incarcerated, the resulting overcrowding, the length of prison sentences for nonviolent crimes, the behavior of many of the prison staff, the overuse of solitary confinement, the predominance of African-American men in prison and so on. There's the hit television series, "Orange Is the New Black," which is set inside a women's prison. Now an off-Broadway play has opened that takes place in a prison as well. But

the purpose of the play, called **Whorl Inside a Loop**, is not to address these important questions directly but rather to present a picture of prisoners' experiences and sense of self. And it does so quite effectively.

The play is built on the real-life experience of the award-winning actress Sherie Rene Scott, best known among theater fans for her critically acclaimed and glamorous roles in several Broadway hits, like "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels," "The Little Mermaid" and "Aida."

In recent years Scott has moved

toward dramas based on her own life experiences, for which she serves as writer and leading actress. In 2009 she received considerable attention and awards for her play "Everyday Rapture," which chronicled her changing attitudes as she moved from her roots in a Mennonite family to pursue a career in New York theater. She next produced a more lighthearted piece about her conversion to vegetarianism with the cute title of "Piece of Meat." Her co-author of "Everyday Rapture," Dick Scanlan, a veteran of many Broadway and off-Broadway hits, has returned to serve as co-author of this piece as well.

Performing on a minimalist stage designed by the Tony winner Christine Jones, the actors chosen to play various roles begin with some

STAGE MOTHER. Ryan Quinn and Sherie Rene Scott in "Whorl Inside a Loop"



PHOTO: JOAN MARCOS

physical exercises and warm-ups typical of acting workshops. Scott, called "The Volunteer" in the cast listing and wearing minimal make-up and typical rehearsal clothes, based this play on her actual experience with Scanlan at the Woodburne Correctional Facility, a medium security prison in upstate New York, leading a one-day workshop on personal narratives. At the end of the day, some of the inmates asked them to come back; and the idea arose to transform these monologues into a show. The theater piece that emerged was then performed several times in the prison and now arrives at the distinguished off-Broadway house Second Stage Theater. (A percentage of the profits from the show are going to some of the men from the original workshop.)

The cast, Ms. Scott, who is white, and the six actors who played the inmates, all African-American, engage in various conversations and occasional confrontations that are built around

the monologues of the inmates. Interestingly, their stories do not serve as an attack on their imprisonment and its abuses. The speeches never include false claims from the men that they are innocent. They are all in prison for murder. Each of them admits that he made a "big mistake" and is now paying the price for it.

If anything, the message seems to be that convicted criminals may not be that different from people outside the prison walls. A couple of times in the play, a convict is described as having done an "unspeakable, unforgivable" act but he is "the nicest guy you'll ever meet." A couple of the inmates describe themselves as "someone who died but didn't die."

This is all reinforced by the scenes in which the actors play other parts (while still dressed in their prison garb), like the prison officials and especially as The Volunteer's friends in the outside world. The movements from scenes inside the prison to those in

the outside world are accomplished by the moving of chairs and tables in fluid transitions. One of the performers portrays a girlfriend of The Volunteer while wearing a cloth on his head but also sporting a beard. Another one of the six portrays Hillary Clinton, whom Ms. Scott actually met at a hair salon in 2013, where the two women had a discussion about rehabilitation and recidivism.

References to mothers come up often in the play, particularly in a poignant monologue by one of the prisoners about his mother's smile. The Volunteer herself occasionally mentions her own son and wonders whether he will ever make a "big mistake."

It is easy to see that, to some extent, The Volunteer becomes their mother-figure, a darker version, perhaps, of Peter Pan's Wendy, the "mother" to The Lost Boys in Neverland.

But this story is not about the white person who saves or rescues people of color. Their work on their stories may

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have given the inmates a better sense of their human dignity, but nothing is really resolved at the end of the play. No one gets a parole or a new trial. There is no climactic moment when everyone comes to some great realization. Instead, *The Volunteer* leaves them to return to her own world, perhaps never to return, and that lack of any sense of finality gives the impression that very little has actually changed in the prison system.

All in all, the play eventually turns into a meta-drama about putting on this play in a real theater instead of a workshop and the struggles involved in the move, giving it a Brechtian character. It offers a powerful example of how telling one's life story can bring a person some dignity and self-worth. And that in itself can feel like a victory.

One might complain about the title of the show, which describes an unusu-

al—and obscure—type of fingerprint pattern. I found it difficult to see the relevance of the title. Perhaps it simply represents the passport that someone needs to enter this world. Several excellent plays in recent years have had odd titles that seemed to have nothing to do with the story. There is no dog in Douglas Carter Beane's "The Little Dog Laughed" nor any oral problems in Terence McNally's "Lips Together, Teeth Apart."

Perhaps someone with a keener appreciation of symbolism could explain this play's title to me. In the meantime, I feel very much like *The Volunteer*, living in my own secure and happy world but undeniably changed by my visit to this prison.

MICHAEL V. TUETH, S.J., is emeritus professor of communication and media studies at Fordham University in New York.

probably anyone else to introduce contemporary Chinese writing to English speakers. (He recently finished an 11-year stint as professor of Chinese at the University of Notre Dame.)

Mo Yan's novel opens in a small country village in Shandong province in 1960, just as the greatest famine in recorded history (it killed perhaps 35 or 40 million people in two or three years) is beginning to let up. Wan Zu, nicknamed Tadpole, is a teenager at the time, and his narration carries the story into the first decade of our century today. It takes the form, in part at least, of an epistolary novel, set out in a series of letters from Tadpole, an aspiring playwright, to his Japanese teacher (whose father, during the war had jailed some of Tadpole's family).

Tadpole's dramatic subject is his aunt, Gugu (Wan Xin), a true believer in the Party and its doctrines, even when she herself is being persecuted during the Cultural Revolution of the mid-1960s. She is modern; she is scientifically trained as a midwife and obstetrician, proud to replace the dirty and superstitious practitioners of a prior generation. Though Chairman Mao had earlier argued for large families to raise China's national stature, by 1970 the one-child policy had arrived, and Gugu makes it her business to ensure that family planning, as the Party euphemistically calls it, is relentlessly carried out: forced abortions, forced sterilizations, persecution of those who try to slip through the net. Tadpole's wife herself is one of Gugu's victims. Having earlier borne a girl, she tries for a boy in a covert second pregnancy, and the late term abortion carried out by Gugu kills her (Tadpole himself reluctantly gives permission for the procedure in the belief that his position as army officer demands it).

Such policies have received a fair amount of press in the West. Just recently *Barefoot Lawyer* appeared, the record of Chen Guangcheng, a blind human rights activist (also from

BOOKS | NICHOLAS CLIFFORD

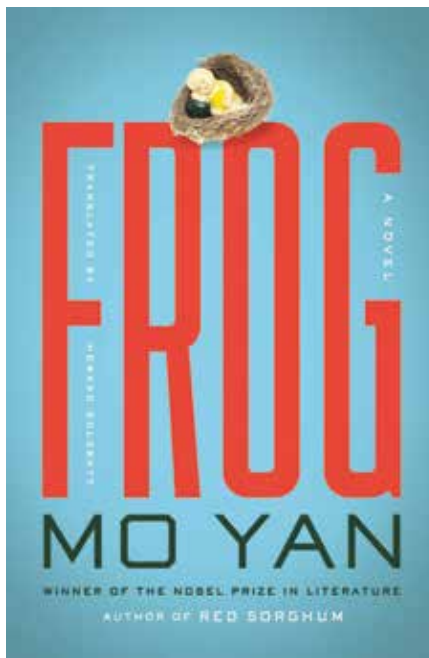
CHINA'S CHILDREN

FROG A Novel

By Mo Yan, translated by Howard Goldblatt
 Viking. 388 pp. \$27.95

When this magazine's literary editor asked me to take on *Frog*, I protested that I am simply a historian by trade, innocent of the entangling wiles and wherefores common in today's literary circles. But he insisted, and just as well, because I found this novel fascinating.

Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012, a choice that was controversial in many circles because of his unwillingness to raise his voice in support of dissidents like Liu Xiaobo, who, though jailed by Beijing, was awarded the Peace Prize in 2010. Mo Yan, in fact, means "Don't speak" and is the pen name of Guan Moye. *Frog* (*Wa* in Chinese) was published



in 2009 and has now been brilliantly brought into English by Howard Goldblatt, who has done more than

Shandong), whose activities trying to shield victims from the family planning enforcers led to him being jailed, his later escape from house arrest and his flight with his family to the United States a few years ago. But though Gugu's grim role remains central to *Frog*, there is much more going on in this novel. A Swiss scholar, Andrea Riemenschneider, has suggested that the book is, among other things, a critique of China's attempts to deal with modernity since the early 20th century, and that an uncritical embrace of what were seen as Enlightenment and scientific values led to such horrors as the enforced family planning campaign.

Back in 1918 the great writer Lu Xun (a communist literary hero, who died fortuitously in 1936 before the Party could see just how subversive he was) published his *Diary of a Madman*, a groundbreaking and highly influential story in the modernist style. "Save the children" is its last line.

But while a century ago, Lu Xun wanted to save the children from the iniquities and superstitions of what he and his advanced contemporaries saw as China's traditional Confucian culture, Mo Yan, though he doesn't use the phrase, may well be calling today for children to be saved from the kind of scientism that led, among other things, to the activities of Gugu and those like her under both Mao and his successor Deng Xiaoping. Now, in her old age, Gugu is at once proud of all the children her skills have brought into the world but tormented by the memory of all those (about a thousand) she zealously prevented from being born. Here Mo Yan, clearly enjoying himself, gives his readers a strong dose of magic realism, looking at Gugu who, now with the help of her husband (a maker of clay baby dolls) is able to see (or so she thinks, at any rate) that her victims can now be brought into the world through other mothers.

Mo Yan comes from the countryside and writes about the countryside.

As an ex-student of mine, himself a Beijing native, said to me, "He's not a Beijing snob—as I am!" Rural life, as Mo Yan sees it, has always been harsh, and still is. His Shandong people are not the movers and shakers of Chinese modernity; modernization is being done to them, not by them.

This is perhaps not a book for the

literal minded. But Mo Yan's writing is enormously lively. By all means, try it out. It's a wild ride.

NICHOLAS CLIFFORD, of Middlebury College, taught Chinese history before retirement. He is the author of *A Truthful Impression of the Country: British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949* (Univ. of Michigan Press, 2001).

TODD A. SALZMAN

A FALSE CHOICE

BEYOND THE ABORTION WARS

A Way Forward for a New Generation

By Charles C. Camosy
Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
221p \$22

For those who believe there is a "hopeless stalemate" in the abortion debate, Charles Camosy compellingly un-masks this "illusion" by exploring the historical, sociological, ethical and political dimensions of this debate, and by proposing legislation that seeks to substantially reduce the frequency of abortion. This proposal, the Mother and Prenatal Child Protection Act (M.P.C.P.A.), is grounded in a feminist, pro-life perspective that respects the human dignity of women and the prenatal child and confronts patriarchal structures that perpetuate abortion.

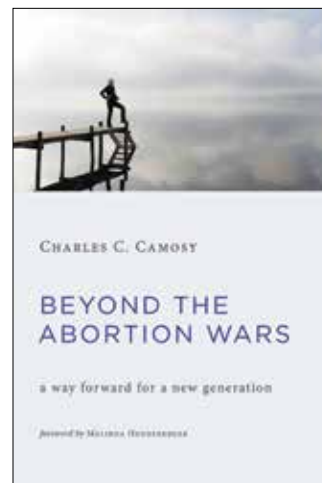
Camosy begins by pointing out the politically inconsistent positions on abortion, the "Costanza strategy," where people who identify with a particular political party actually support an ideology that is contrary to their political views. Many Democrats

support a "pro-choice" platform that fundamentally violates the rights of vulnerable prenatal children. Many Republicans support governmental intervention in the most intimate decision a woman can make. Historically, there is an evolution of this strategy that was solidified politically with the identification of Democrats as "pro-choice" and Republicans as "pro-life" and legislatively with the ruling of *Roe v. Wade*. These events have led to a radical polarization and oversimplification of the abortion debate, which does not

accurately represent the views of the majority of Americans.

Camosy's study makes extensive use of sociological data to justify four significant claims. First, most people, even those who identify as pro-choice, want greater restrictions on abortion than are currently in place. Second, most people, even those who identify as pro-life, want abortion

legal in cases of rape, incest or danger to the life of the mother. Third, the majority of millennials, Hispanics and women support greater restrictions on abortion. Fourth, laws are being passed in various states to limit abortion and to support women who choose to



have their babies (e.g., paid maternity leave). Combined, these claims provide an opening for constructive dialogue and policy development on abortion, and lay the groundwork for Camosy's investigation of four major issues surrounding the complex ethical arguments for and against abortion.

The first issue concerns the moral status of the fetus. While it is undeniably a human organism from a scientific perspective, this does not indicate how it should be treated from a moral perspective. Camosy explores a spectrum of moral arguments, from Peter Singer, who argues that personhood begins with "higher end" traits like rationality and self-awareness, to those who argue on the basis of the fetuses' "potential to become the kind of thing they already are." Camosy defends a hybrid of the two, "the natural potential for 'trait X'" and defends the moral value of the fetus.

Second, Camosy explores the morality of abortion relying on Catholic distinctions between direct/indirect

abortion and proportionate reason—that is, "the harm to be avoided must be proportionate with the harm caused." Direct abortion aims at the death of the fetus and is always wrong; indirect abortion does not aim at the death of the fetus but refuses or ceases to aid the fetus. For Camosy, a proportionate reason can justify indirect abortions in cases of rape and to protect the life of the mother.

Drawing upon the pro-life feminist Sidney Callahan, the third issue investigates women's freedom and argues that legal access to abortion and economic and social pressures on women to "be successful" reduce rather than increase women's freedom. These social pressures emanate largely from patriarchal structures that control women and pit them "against their own offspring." Revealing, critiquing and transforming social structures that perpetuate violations of human dignity and creating and financially supporting structures that facilitate human dignity, including prenatal care, daycare and

a just wage for women and men, are crucial to facilitate women's authentic freedom and choice.

Finally, Camosy explores the interrelationship between these ethical issues and evolving public policy and proposes a national abortion policy in light of the evolving legal, ethical and cultural perspectives on abortion. Evolution in law, for example, the shift from a woman's "privacy" in *Roe v. Wade* to "undue burden" in *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* and social and policy changes that have made the criteria for an "undue burden" harder to meet, such as the Affordable Care Act that provides the working poor access to health care, limit the legal and moral claims for an abortion. In light of these evolutions, Camosy proposes the M.P.C.P.A., which guarantees equal protection before the law for the prenatal child, women during pregnancy, support of mother and child during and after pregnancy, and justifies "refusal to aid," i.e., indirect abortion, "for a proportionately serious reason,"

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including saving the life of the mother, rape and a terminal diagnosis of the prenatal child. This legislation could save hundreds of thousands of lives a year, promote women's, men's and prenatal children's human dignity and facilitate attaining more just social structures.

Camosy turns to Catholic teaching on abortion throughout the book and claims that his argument is "consistent with defined Catholic doctrine." On the one hand, his citation that "faithful Catholics may support incremental legislative change if the political realities give you a proportionately serious reason to do so," reflected in the U.S. bishops' own support of the Hyde Amendment (which Camosy does not mention) that allows for abortions in the case of rape, incest and to save the life of the mother, are consistent with Catholic doctrine. On the other

hand, justifying indirect abortion in these cases is inconsistent with defined Catholic doctrine but is arguably a needed corrective to that doctrine. Also, Camosy's concern with orthodox Catholicism and deference to magisterial authority overlooks the polarizing role some bishops who exercise that authority have played in the abortion debate.

Camosy's book is accessible and a must-read for those who want to move beyond the abortion wars. A way forward that all reasonable people can embrace is to keep abortion legal but rare. The devil, as they say, is in the details, but we must resist demonizing those who attempt to work out those details.

TODD A. SALZMAN is a theologian at the Center for Health Policy and Ethics at Creighton University.

NATHANIEL PETERS

A POETRY OF CONFLICT

MUSIC AT MIDNIGHT

The Life and Poetry of George Herbert

By John Drury

University of Chicago Press. 416p \$35

John Drury has pulled off quite a feat. Where previous scholars of George Herbert have focused on literary criticism or the poet's place in history, Drury has combined the two to immerse his readers in Herbert's world and work.

This is difficult work for a number of reasons. First, history and literary criticism are distinct tasks with distinct tools, and one cannot unite them well if one confuses them. Second, the attempt to weave poems into their author's life easily produces anachronism or too much psychological speculation. Third, a book could become ponderous or scattered.

Drury avoids all of these pitfalls. He

weaves historical narrative and criticism seamlessly, without using one to do the other's work; he never over-psychologizes his subject; and his book is a pleasure to read (not to mention look at, given the interesting photographs, illustrations and maps). A chaplain and fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, Drury also does great justice to the theological content of Herbert's poetry. This is exactly the kind of book that lovers of history, theology or poetry will enjoy.

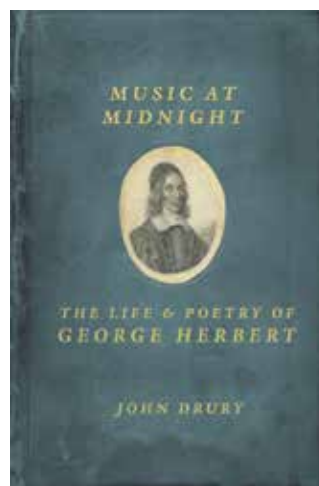
Herbert's English poetry is, as he himself put it, "a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that passed betwixt God and my soul." They are clear, intimate insights into the soul of one man as he goes

through life with its beauty and tragedy, one day proclaiming the greatness of the Lord and the next day lamenting his absence. But we can guess in only a few instances when exactly Herbert wrote his poems. Quite reasonably, therefore, Drury infers that they came out of the cycle of experiences that happen to us all—including the spiritual rhythms of the liturgical calendar—and connects his criticism of a particular poem to a suitable moment in Herbert's life.

That life was a quiet one, as Drury puts it, "with a crisis in the middle." George Herbert was born into a boisterous, hospitable family in 1593, near the end of the reign of Elizabeth I. His mother Magdalen had a great influence on him and introduced him to the literary and cultural elite of the day. John Donne was a close family friend; later in Herbert's life he would become close to Francis Bacon.

After growing up in Oxford and London, Herbert received a fine humanist education at the Westminster School, at the time under the great linguist and theologian Lancelot Andrews, who would go on to become a leading translator of the King James Bible. At Westminster he became steeped in Latin poetry, for which he was first to gain fame. A "priggish" and "immature" undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge, he grew in his literary skill. Disputations in Latin were an important part of college life, which, Drury notes, helps to explain why Herbert's poems frequently are structured as debates or dialogues.

After receiving his bachelor of arts degree, Herbert went on to become a fellow of Trinity College. He found himself caught between conflicting desires: to pursue theological study and ordination to the priesthood, and



to become the next orator of the university. The oratorship, a plum administrative post in which one composed speeches in Latin for grand occasions, frequently led to greater secular positions, including secretary of state. After a few public successes as a deputy orator, Herbert was chosen to assume the position. In his own time, he was better known for his Latin poetry and rhetoric, both of which are excellent though less studied today. At the height of his career, Herbert wearied of oratory and courtly life. He resigned the oratorship, married, became a priest and dutifully served his flock as a country parson for the rest of his days until his death in 1633, a month shy of 40.

Herbert's English poems remained intimate reflections on life and God, and were published only after his death. John Donne's poetry is grand, stormy and emotional, while Herbert valued lucidity and simplicity. The former is famous for "Batter my heart, three person'd God"; the latter for "Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back." When the young John Ruskin first traveled to Florence, he wrote that he became more pious because of reading Herbert first and secondarily from seeing Fra Angelico.

A comparison of the two is apt, for each creates a scene of quiet beauty that reflects theological truth. Fra Angelico's theology was that of late medieval Catholicism, while Herbert was a quintessential Anglican, keeping to the middle ground between Archbishop Laud and the Puritans. In his treatise on pastoral care, for instance, Herbert greatly valued traditional religious festivals, processions and blessings: "In the time of Popery, the Priest's Benedicite, and his holy water, were over highly valued; and now we are fallen to the clean contrary, even from superstition to coldness, and atheism." Remaining skeptical of speculative theology's ability to achieve clarity, he placed greater value on charity, intimacy with God through prayer and pastoral work than doctrinal

rectitude. Herbert sometimes seems so contemporary that if one were to make any criticism of the book, one might ask where Herbert's religion ends and Drury's begins. The sacraments and the person of Jesus, not to mention the realities of sin and atonement, seem more essential to Herbert's faith than perhaps Drury makes them out to be.

That question should not detract from Drury's achievement, however. Few critics could explain with sym-

pathy and accuracy the theological allusions and puns of "Matins" and "Evensong," Herbert's understanding of sin and evil in "Sin (II)" or how he articulates Augustine's theology of love as a weight in "The Pulley." For his careful, lucid and comprehensive work, scholars and armchair readers alike should give Drury great thanks.

NATHANIEL PETERS is a doctoral candidate in historical theology at Boston College.

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The Challenge of the Word

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), SEPT. 27, 2015

Readings: Nm 11:25–29; Ps 19:8–14; Jas 5:1–6; Mk 9:38–48

“Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!” (Nm 11:29)

Although a knowledge of history, ancient languages, and the culture and society of ancient Israel and the Roman Empire are helpful for biblical interpretation, ordinary readers, without any of these scholarly tools, sometimes get to the heart of the meaning of biblical passages far more quickly and acutely than experts.

The academic expertise necessary to study the Bible professionally—knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, archaeology, textual criticism and rabbinic Judaism—takes years to accumulate and can lead to profound insights into the Bible and the biblical world. So what holds expert readers of the Bible from understanding the Bible?

Bernard Lonergan, S.J., said that what was necessary for both professional and everyday readers to truly understand the Bible was conversion, by which he meant intellectual, moral and religious conversion. Religious conversion for readers of the Bible is, however, essential, for it is “the transition from the horizon of this-worldly commitments to the primacy in one’s life of the love of God” (Ben F. Meyer, *Critical Realism and the New Testament*, pg. 69). Unless an interpreter is “in tune” with the world of the text and in love with God, the tools of the expert do not always bear fruit.

Why does such an esoteric discussion matter? It matters because it is not truly an esoteric discussion. The Bible is not primarily a playground for profes-

sionals or experts but for disciples who want to guide their life according to its teachings, and it matters that every Christian reads the Bible “in tune” with God’s spirit.

Reading the Bible is the means by which we come to witness God’s activities among the Israelites and read of God’s Spirit working among them. We learn that Moses said, “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!” We learn, that is, that God’s spirit is not intended for a few members of the elite but for each woman, man and child.

We learn also of the false Gospel of current prosperity preachers from our encounter with James, who says: “Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten.” It challenges us not because the interpretation of the passage is difficult but because so many of us are rich and want to find a way to soften the clear message directed at us. True interpreters ask not to change the Bible to our liking, but to be transformed by God’s spirit challenging our ways.

God does not desire the proper academic curriculum vitae, but saving behavior, since “whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward. If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around

your neck and you were thrown into the sea.” We find in the Gospel that God wants us to care for the weak, to sustain the “little ones who believe in me,” to offer justice. God asks us to live our faith, to nurture the vulnerable, not just talk about the faith or interpret it.

And God promises, we learn in the Bible, that there are consequences for our behavior, a promise of judgment, where we will be called to give an account for our behavior, perhaps now or in the future, in a place called Gehenna, or as



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Sometimes we fall back on ways of understanding the Bible which are comfortable to us or do not challenge us. When you read the Bible, what passages challenge you the most? How is God troubling you to live your life according to the Gospel?

it is often translated into English, Hell.

For all of these reasons, biblical interpretation is too important to leave to the experts, though experts have much of value to say, because understanding the Bible concerns our eternity. Our ability to understand the truth of the Bible depends on our willingness to hear all of the Bible’s message, especially the passages that trouble and challenge us, because that is where conversion is often most necessary. Conversion turns us from being hearers of the Bible to doers, and from experts in interpretation to experts in hearing the voice of God in our daily lives.

JOHN W. MARTENS

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Pope Francis arrives to lead audience with children from Fabbbrica della Pace group at Vatican (Photo by Paul Haring, courtesy Catholic News Service) May 11, 2015.

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