

# America



THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

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## We Hold These Truths?

WHAT JOHN COURTNEY  
MURRAY GOT WRONG

MICHAEL BAXTER

# OF MANY THINGS

Few chapters in *America's* long history are a source of greater pride for us than our decades-long association with John Courtney Murray, S.J.; and nothing in the present issue should be interpreted to the contrary. Father Murray was a friend, associate editor and contributor to this review for more than 20 years. In almost two dozen articles he explored the relationship between Catholicism and American democracy, seeking to show not "whether Catholicism is compatible with American democracy," a question that Murray considered "invalid as well as impertinent," but to show "that American democracy is compatible with Catholicism." Father Murray's most persuasive answer to the so-called compatibility question was *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition*, an essay collection he published in 1960.

Father Murray's work is lucid, imaginative, even daring. When one reads *We Hold These Truths*, one is reminded on nearly every page that a great mind is at work. That not even so great a mind as Murray's could solve the "problem" of "religion" and American public life suggests, however, that the problem was and remains misconceived. That, at least, is the substance of the critique by Michael Baxter that appears in this issue. Professor Baxter's work, as well as our decision to publish it, should be seen as part of a larger conversation among friends who are discerning how best to apply Father Murray's insights to the contemporary United States. There can be no question of ignoring Murray's work; he developed essential categories and valuable methods for the creative development of American Catholic thought. At the same time, we should consider what aspects of the Murray project, as he conceived it, are still viable. Those who knew him say that Father Murray would have welcomed this conversation; he himself was in the process of revisiting his earlier thought

when he died suddenly in the summer of 1967.

Contemporary critiques of the Murray project suggest that his answer was not necessarily wrong, but that the compatibility question itself is unanswerable, at least on the level at which Murray pursued it. An answer at that macro level requires so many levels of abstraction that the result is often an unwieldy historical, philosophical or theological superstructure that cannot support itself.

It is almost certain, moreover, that the answer to the compatibility question, even in its most general form, is neither "yes" nor "no," but somehow "both." There are important ways in which American life is and is not compatible with a Catholic faith. The current state of the question, then, calls for a new method of questioning, one that is narrower than Murray's: Which aspects of American life are compatible with Christian faith? Which are not? More important, is this particular historical event or choice justified in the light of Christian faith? Is the conduct of this institution, or the impact of that public policy, or the moral character of that market force, compatible with the principles of Catholic faith? Our contemporary questions, therefore, should be concerned with the lived experience of Americans.

Ultimately the compatibility question is not an intellectual exercise at all, but simply the work of Christian discipleship. "The things that we love," St. Thomas Aquinas says, "tell us what we are." So, whom do we love? Who or what, practically speaking, are the gods we worship? For what and for whom are we willing to die? Do we really live in the hope of heaven and with the possibility of hell? To put the question differently: What would our country look like after we have rendered "unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's"?

MATT MALONE, S.J.

# America

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### A Good Idea?

A slogan from the Vietnam War era, “It became necessary to destroy the town to save it,” has come to represent the folly of certain battlefield tactics and even of war itself. What looks like a good idea one day later undermines the war’s long-term strategy.

On Oct. 6, 2010, Lt. Col. David Flynn, convinced that all the villagers of Tarok Kolache, Afghanistan, had left but that the Taliban had seeded the houses and grounds with explosive traps, made the decision to level the village completely with rockets and bombs rather than risk injuring the soldiers who would have to clear the traps. In 2009 Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal told his troops that “destroying a home or property jeopardizes the livelihood of an entire family—and creates more insurgents. We sow the seeds of our own demise.” Nevertheless, the destruction of unoccupied towns and homes was common. The United States promised to rebuild the villagers’ homes and compensate them—at \$10,000 each—for their loss.

Kevin Sieff, of *The Washington Post*, reported (8/26) on his recent visit to the scene—now mostly sand, rocks, ruins of 100-year-old dwellings and empty space. Some U.S.-built concrete buildings in which the former villagers refused to live had already begun to crack. Naiz Mohammad, the district police chief and one of the few to return, said of the residents: “After the bombing, they’ve become pro-Talib. They’re the strongest Taliban supporters in Arghandab.” Colonel Flynn, now in Oklahoma, still thinks what he did was a good idea. Some day, he says, he will revisit the village site and join its residents for tea.

### Twitter Trolling

Caroline Criado-Perez, a feminist activist and journalist in the United Kingdom, has recently been making headlines—but not for the reasons she had hoped. Back in July, Criado-Perez successfully campaigned for the inclusion of Jane Austen on the English banknote. The decision, however, has engendered hostile responses from the general public. The journalist has received hundreds of hateful messages, most of them online, since the Bank of England’s decision, including threats of rape and death. She reports that the threats have left her “sick...and horrified.”

Threats like these are part of a larger Internet phenomenon known as “trolling,” in which a person writes an online comment designed to elicit an incendiary response from a targeted person or group. Trolling is one of the many controversial ways to attract attention on Twitter. With its quick, snappy updates and apparent user

anonymity, the site too often becomes a way for “trolls” to harass others blatantly, as in Criado-Perez’s case. How does Twitter handle such abuse?

According to Twitter’s rules and regulations, “Users may not make direct, specific threats of violence against others.” Someone who is being harassed can file a report with information like the abuser’s Twitter name, a link and a description of the threat. After the Criado-Perez incident, Twitter released a statement condemning sexual harassment and created a “Report Abuse” button. These, however, are not enough. Offenders should be subject to arrest and punishment, and Twitter must continue to be vigilant, carefully monitoring the effectiveness of these improvements and implementing further safeguards as necessary.

### Cardinal on Colbert

Stephen Colbert, who portrays a right-wing blowhard as host of the satirical “Colbert Report” on Comedy Central, is well known for brandishing his Catholic identity. In 2006, in order to disclose his bias toward religion, he recited the entire Nicene Creed on air. In a video on YouTube that has received nearly a quarter million hits, Mr. Colbert does an epic (and hilariously exhausting) liturgical dance to “King of Glory.” On his show he has interviewed prominent Catholics like Garry Wills, Bill Donohue, Simone Campbell, S.S.S., Andrew Sullivan and, of course, **America’s** own James Martin, S.J., the show’s “official chaplain.”

In Mr. Colbert’s rare moments out of character, however, it is clear that his faith is no joke. A year ago he appeared onstage at Fordham University with Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York and Father Martin for a serious conversation about joy and humor in the spiritual life. At the event, Mr. Colbert said there are flaws in the church but also “great beauty.”

It seemed only a matter of time until Cardinal Dolan would appear on Mr. Colbert’s stage, which finally happened Sept. 3. The host and guest delivered, exchanging quips and generating roars of laughter throughout. There were moments, however, when the conversation went deeper. Cardinal Dolan spoke persuasively about the role of prayer in electing a new pope and the difference between judging people and judging actions. Most notable, perhaps, is where this conversation took place: a venue, outside church walls, where 1.9 million viewers gather each night. At World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Pope Francis implored, “I want the church to be in the streets,” not “closed and turned within.” Mr. Colbert and Cardinal Dolan are helping us meet that challenge.

# Whistleblower Ethics

The cases of Pfc. Bradley Manning, who prefers to be known as Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden raise acute issues about the role of confidentiality in our society and the responsibilities of individuals who encounter disturbing information that they consider damaging to national security. In each case, an individual chose to divulge classified information even though confidentiality agreements forbade it. Both Private Manning and Mr. Snowden claim they were acting in the national interest. They both chose to violate their obligations: Private Manning to the U.S. military, Mr. Snowden to a private government contractor. They have been called both traitors and heroes, and the debate about their actions promises to continue for some time.

One question worth focusing on is the moral legitimacy of their choices. At a time when more and more government information is designated as classified, and when employees of all stripes are required to keep information secret, when is it justifiable for an individual to go public with certain information? The question extends beyond debates about national security to the actions of financial institutions, for example. Could the financial collapse of 2008 have been averted if more conscientious bankers had stepped forward?

In the 1970s Daniel Ellsberg, an employee at the Rand Corporation, was publicly castigated for leaking classified information about U.S. policy in Vietnam. Today there are whistleblowers in all industries. Before their actions are judged traitorous or heroic, it is worth revisiting certain moral categories. The Catholic moral tradition offers a number of principles that can help guide those who face this moral challenge.

*Conscience.* The Catholic tradition strongly emphasizes the inviolability of conscience. Yet an individual must engage in a serious process of formation before taking actions based on its demands. "Following an unformed conscience is simply an act of recklessness," the Jesuit ethicist James F. Keenan told *America*. Individuals must consider their role within society and how it relates to the common good. For Private Manning and Mr. Snowden, their roles required a high level of confidentiality; so to be legitimate, their decision to release documents should have been a last resort. At a time when it is increasingly easy to share data digitally, it can be tempting to pass on sensitive information without sufficient deliberation. Employees must consider whether there are other ways to address their concerns, like going through official channels before divulging

sensitive information to the media. An individual must also be aware that the decision to leak documents could lead to imprisonment. Willingness to accept legal punishment for one's actions is a sign that an act of disobedience is sincere.

*Prudence.* Two principles stand in tension when considering whether to make information public: the public's right to know and the right to secrecy. Both of these virtues are important, yet neither is absolute. Some information is damaging to national security and should be kept secret; at other times the government's claims for secrecy are overblown. Weighing and balancing these considerations is an exercise in prudence. Prudence also requires that individuals understand their competence to evaluate the material at hand. This calculus must also take into account the integrity of the person or institution with which the material is being shared. In the case of the Pentagon Papers, Mr. Ellsberg was working with respected news operations, with their own set of professional standards.

*Justice and fidelity.* Our society could not function if individuals routinely broke their agreements. Employees of all types owe fidelity to their employers, if not to a professional code of conduct. This is especially true of members of the military or people in public service. Yet it is these same people who are privy to information of national interest. At times, claims of justice may supersede the claims of fidelity. For government workers, one's professional duty sometimes includes a legal and moral duty to report violations of international law, especially if the violations are being covered up.

When Mr. Ellsberg copied top-secret documents and circulated them to reporters, he was a veteran of public service who made a deliberate act based on his gradual disillusionment with the Vietnam War. Today, with more private contractors taking over the work of national security, more individuals have access to classified information. Meanwhile our government continues to press for secrecy on mundane as well as sensitive matters. In this environment it is inevitable that there will be more whistleblowers, who for reasons both selfish and noble will divulge all sorts of information to an increasingly confused public. The manner in which these individuals choose to act, and how our government chooses to treat them, depends in large measure on the public conversation we are now having.



## REPLY ALL

### Safety and Forgiveness

Re “Children First,” by Deacon Bernard Nojadera (8/12): In 1992 a priest I knew and loved was charged with the sexual abuse of two boys. I was in disbelief. He was a gifted teacher and writer. He was my friend. He was found guilty and incarcerated for some time. When he got out, he told us that he was, in fact, guilty.

Eight years earlier I had been in his office on a Friday, late in the afternoon. Two boys were sitting on their sleeping bags in the waiting area. They told me they were going camping with Father as soon as he could finish his work. An alarm bell went off in my head, but it was muted by my admiration and friendship for this man. I dismissed the thought until 1992. Had I received safe-environment training, I probably would have heeded the bell.

Many questions remain to this day. What happens long-term to priests guilty of abuse? How can we apply our theology of restorative justice? Must we throw the whole man away because of his very serious crime and/or illness? Is there not some way in which he can still use his gifts to help build the reign of God?

JEANETTE ARNQUIST  
*Tucson, Ariz.*

### Well Received

“Upholding Vatican II?” (Signs of the Times, 8/12) covered only the press conference of the Rev. Helmut

Schüller in Washington, D.C. He spoke at venues in 15 U.S. cities. He was enthusiastically received wherever he went, attracting large crowds, who listened intently to his message of reform and renewal in the Catholic Church, a church we all love and want to make better.

The group he founded, the Priests’ Initiative, is now 400 strong in Austria and is spreading across Europe. Perhaps it might be a good idea to discuss in a future article some of his proposals and the way we can start a dialogue, which would be a very healthy thing for our beloved church.

PATRICIA S. PAONE  
*Manhasset, N.Y.*

### Greater Awareness

“The Root of Evil,” by William T. Cavanaugh (7/29), profoundly moved me. He gave words to vague ideas and impressions I’ve had, and he helped make me aware of cultural norms I unconsciously have transformed into alleged truths. I plan to share the article with a Muslim colleague and, hopefully, continue to grow. Thank you!

PAT RIZZUTO  
*Alexandria, Va.*

### Useful Work

Re “Worse Than Death” (Reply All, 7/29): The Rev. John Koelsch advocates a 30-year prison sentence over death or life imprisonment. A humane, reasonable third way is work under supervision to benefit the world: reforestation, clearing roadside trash, developing dairy industries in arid

trespassing and so on. Then there are those violations that primarily affect the poor: having an overgrown yard, having too many people in one dwelling, not having an auto inspection sticker, prostitution. Forgiveness is not part of the equation for the poor and marginalized.

RACHEL JENNINGS

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third-world countries that now eat cattle and goats, working to improve trash disposal.

Stop feeding, clothing and lodging people free on my tax dollars. Instead have them do useful work for decent wages.

JOAN HUBER  
*Allison Park, Pa.*

### Spread the Word

“Revolutionary Mercy,” by William O’Brien (7/15), touched my heart deeply, because it cut to the core of what is wrong with our society and our world. If only the content of this article could be shared with the wider community!

On the other hand, we hear the call of Jesus every Sunday, and then too often totally ignore his call during the week. Sadly, that is also true of our legal and criminal justice system, our political system and even our ecclesiastical system. We hear, “You broke the rules” or “We have to go by the rules; here’s the penalty. We can’t show you any mercy.”

It’s time to practice what we preach and what we hear preached to us! Thank you for this awesome article.

RICHARD HORWITT  
*Eldersburg, Md.*

### What Is Known?

Re “Justices Issue Seminal Decisions on Marriage, Voting Rights” (Signs of the Times, 7/15) and Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone’s comments on the court’s decision on California Proposition 8: I wonder how likely it is that we are seeing in our time what was seen at the time of Galileo and Pope Urban VIII. The bishops can claim to have deep and thorough knowledge of many things, but what can they know of the experience of any two persons who deeply love and feel committed to each other? How would the bishops know if what they believe is wrong?

GUY THELLIAN  
*Cleveland, Ohio*

### STATUS UPDATE

A response to “Revolutionary Mercy,” by William O’Brien (7/15):

What would Jesus think of our unforgiving penal system? Think of the violations connected to being homeless: “camping,” lying down in public, urinating in public (having no toilet), loitering, panhandling,



## Critical Thinking

In "Another Diversity" (7/15), John J. Conley, S.J., expresses a desire for his diversity workshops to discuss diverse ideas. He says, "The celebration and testing of such dueling ideas through vigorous debate is the very reason for the university's existence." I would concur with that thinking, but it seems that such debate will exist in the church only if it falls within the parameters of what Rome will allow. For example, some very pertinent current issues within the church today are women priests, priestly celibacy, homosexuality and bishop accountability. These issues are very real for the young people of today.

The Rev. Helmut Schüller, a priest in good standing in Vienna, Austria, spoke about some of those issues on his recent tour through the United States. But not one Catholic bishop would meet with him, and they would not allow him to speak in Catholic facilities. So much for open discussion. The elephants in the living room remain.

Since when is conversation heretical? As Catholic school students, we were taught the art of critical thinking as well as proper conscience formation. Are those subjects now off the agenda? My granddaughter attends Loyola University Maryland, and I hope she is "testing dueling ideas through vigorous debate." Good luck, Father Conley.

ANNE KERRIGAN  
West Islip, N.Y.

## Nothing to Fear

Re "A New Breed" (Vantage Point, 7/1): When I read the Rev. Andrew M. Greeley's article almost 50 years ago as an Extension volunteer in a barren and desolate dust bowl town in southern Colorado, I remember being puzzled. I did not understand why he was worried about graduates in the 1960s who were so concerned with honest, authentic, open discussion and

questioning of authority. This is what we were taught to do. John XXIII was our pope, and I had been empowered by Ursuline teachers at the College of New Rochelle.

As Father Greeley wrote, we had been told "You are the church" so often that we did believe it. I still believe it. At my 50th college reunion, I met classmates who continue to serve with the same spirit. While I have had my ups and downs with the institutional church and have been disappointed in the lack of equality for women, I have experienced a church that is relevant to the needs of its people and have known leaders whom I admire and love. So I cannot give up hope.

Rest in peace, Father Greeley. There was really nothing to worry about. We just wish we could have done more.

TERRY DWYER O'LEARY  
New York, N.Y.

## Not 'All Right'

Re "The 'Nones' Are Alright," by Kaya Oakes (6/17): Am I so lost back in the 20th century that I missed *alright* entering the dictionary of accepted spelling? As I read tens of thousands of students' papers from 1952 to 2010, I tried to get it across to generations of young Americans that there is no word in the English language called "alright." There are two words: "all" and "right."

Did I miss something? Was the copy editor asleep? Or is it a Generation X or millennial joke, in keeping with the way the "nones" spell these days? Oi vey!

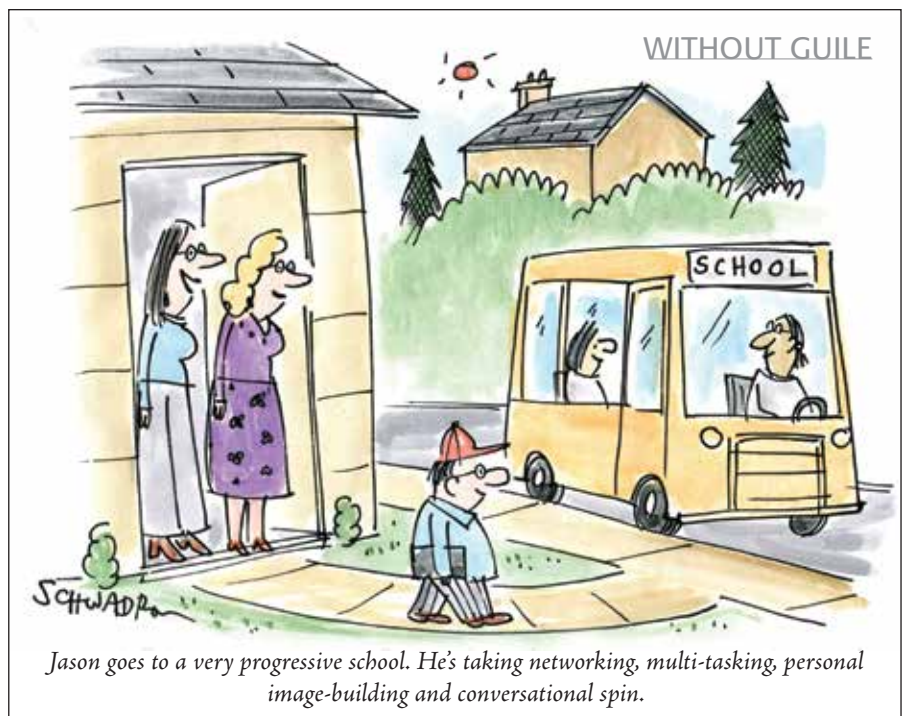
MARGERY SMITH, C.S.J.  
Saint Paul, Minn.

*Editor's Note: You guessed it! It's an allusion, provided by our Gen-X headline writer, to a 1965 song by The Who, "The Kids Are Alright."*

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All correspondence may be edited for length and clarity.



# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

## VATICAN

### Pope Names Vatican Diplomat as Secretary of State

**P**ope Francis has appointed Archbishop Pietro Parolin, 58, a longtime official in the Vatican Secretariat of State and nuncio to Venezuela since 2009, to be his secretary of state.

Although Pope Francis has not been afraid to break with convention during his brief pontificate, the appointment of a seasoned member of the diplomatic corps signals a return to a longstanding tradition.

On Oct. 15 Archbishop Parolin will succeed Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, 78, who came to the post in 2006 after serving as archbishop of Genoa, Italy.

In the current Vatican organizational framework, the secretary of state is the pope's closest collaborator, the one who traditionally makes sure that the pope's policies and priorities become concrete in the work of Vatican offices. The secretary usually is very close to the pope and meets with him often. He coordinates the work of the entire Roman Curia, overseeing the operation of the Vatican press office and newspaper, coordinating the preparation and publication of papal documents, and supervising the work of Vatican nuncios both in their relations with the Catholic communities in individual countries and with their governments.

But in discussions about the reform and the reorganization of the Curia, many observers have mentioned the

possibility that the role of the secretary of state role may change. Because it is so broad—covering the internal

workings of the Vatican, international church affairs and foreign relations—Cardinal Bertone often was blamed,



**PAROLIN'S PROGRESS.** Archbishop Pietro Parolin, will succeed Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, 78.

## CIVIL RIGHTS

### Remembering the March on Washington and M.L.K.'s 'Dream'

**T**housands walked the National Mall and stood in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial in a pair of events on Aug. 24 and Aug. 28 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In 1963, those at the March on Washington were galvanized by the words of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., whose "I Have a Dream" speech electrified a nation and pushed it, sometimes against its will, to guarantee civil rights to all Americans.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic

Bishops' Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church released a statement marking the anniversary, which said the bishops "rejoice in the advances" of the past 50 years, yet "sadly acknowledge that much today remains to be accomplished." The bishops called for "positive action that seeks to end poverty, increase jobs, eliminate racial and class inequality, ensure voting rights, and that provides fair and just opportunities for all."

The presence of Catholic priests and religious was unmistakable at the first

March on Washington in 1963; their clerical collars and full religious habits stood out even among the black-and-white photographs of the day.

To mark this anniversary, the current archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl, participated in an interfaith prayer service on Aug. 28 at Washington's Shiloh Baptist Church. Recalling the words of Dr. King, Cardinal Wuerl told those gathered, "We have been invited to form one great human family that walks hand in hand." Noting that schools in the Archdiocese of Washington were integrated "before the Supreme Court got around to it," Cardinal Wuerl said that an academically excellent and morally based education will help future gener-





at least by the press, when things went wrong during the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI.

The appointment of then-Archbishop Bertone as secretary of state in 2006 raised some eyebrows because most of the time until then—although not always—the position had been held by a prelate who had come up through the ranks of the Vatican diplomatic corps. Cardinal Bertone had a background as a Salesian pastor, archbishop and Vatican official dealing with doctrinal matters.

Archbishop Parolin was born Jan. 17, 1955, in Schiavon, Italy, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1980. He studied at the Vatican diplomatic academy and in 1986 began working at Vatican embassies, serving in Nigeria and in Mexico before moving to the offices of the Vatican Secretariat of State. He was named undersecretary for foreign relations in 2002.

For years, Archbishop Parolin led annual Vatican delegations to Vietnam to discuss church-state issues with the country's Communist government, a process that eventually

led to Vietnam's acceptance of a non-resident papal representative to the country. The move is seen as a step toward establishing full diplomatic relations.

While at the Vatican, Archbishop Parolin also represented the Vatican at a variety of international conferences on climate change, human trafficking and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including leading the Vatican delegation to the Middle East peace conference in Annapolis, Md., in 2007.

At a press conference in 2006, Archbishop Parolin said Vatican nuncios and papal representatives play an important role "in defending the human being" and in strengthening the local churches, especially in regions where Christians face poverty, discrimination or other hardships.

The Vatican's presence around the world through its nuncios shows people that the church and the pope are always near, that Christians no matter how small their numbers—are not alone in the world, he said.

ations realize Dr. King's dream.

Many African-American Catholics attended the commemorative marches, just as they were present a half-century earlier. "I never thought about not being here," declared Donna Pasteur, a member of St. Augustine Parish in Washington, at the march on Aug. 24. The issues that brought about the first march, in her view, stubbornly remain today. "I see the inequality in jobs and justice," Pasteur said. "We just have too many people out of work. We don't have that many good jobs." Even so, the situation is improving compared to two generations ago, she said. "You pray in different ways. You pray with your own presence, too, for jobs and justice," repeating the theme of the march in 1963.

There was a "Catholic conversation" on the church, race and the march on Aug. 25 at the historically African-American Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in Washington. Patricia Chappell, S.N.D.deN., executive director of Pax Christi USA, said at the event that Catholics must stop being complacent about militarism, racism and poverty. This drew applause and cries of support from the audience of nearly 200 people. Sister Patricia called for the church to "go back to Catholic social teaching" because it clearly lays out responsibility to speak up in support of education, housing and job programs that would help the poor. Sister

Patricia said the institutional church has done too little recently to speak up about the systems that allow racism to continue to exist. "We need to make a connection between militarism, racism and poverty," she said.

**STILL MARCHING.** A gathering near the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 28



## Plotter in Jesuit Slayings Sentenced

An ex-Salvadoran colonel accused of helping plot the murder of Jesuit priests during the country's civil conflict in 1989 will spend the next 21 months in a U.S. federal prison, followed by a year of supervised release, for immigration-related convictions. Inocente Orlando Montano, now 70, pled guilty to three counts of immigration fraud and three counts of perjury and was sentenced on Aug. 27 by U.S. District Judge Douglas Woodlock. Twenty years ago a United Nations commission said Montano participated in a meeting that planned the assassination of a priest accused of supporting rebels and that this led to the killing of six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter. In 2001 Spanish authorities indicted Montano, the former vice minister of public security, for his alleged role in the killings. The United States has not yet responded to the extradition request from Spain. Carolyn Patty Blum of the Center for Justice and Accountability, which is involved in seeking his prosecution in Spain, said the sentence represented "a huge step forward to be incarcerating him for anything." Montano has denied any involvement in killing priests. He expressed sorrow for the death of the Jesuits, adding: "Those individuals, in spite of their liberal mentality, were helping a lot in the peace process."

## Religious Seek U.S. Financial Reform

Sixty religious denominations and communities have called upon President Obama to appoint a chair for the Federal Reserve who will favor stricter regulation of the banking and nonbanking sectors. The groups favor a re-establishment of the separation between the investment and commercial

## NEWS BRIEFS

Mother Mary Joseph Rogers, M.M., **founder of the Maryknoll Sisters**, will be inducted posthumously into the National Women's Hall of Fame on Oct. 12. • **Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI** emerged briefly from prayerful retreat to celebrate Mass in the Vatican on Sept. 1 with a group of his former doctoral students. • The world's Islamic leaders must hear stories about the persecution of **religious minorities** in majority Muslim countries so that such incidents are not overlooked, said Mohamed Magid, president of the Islamic Society of North America, on Sept. 1. • The number of **registered members** of the Catholic Church in Norway has grown from 42,000 to 110,000 over the past eight years, Bishop Bernt Ivar Eidsvig of Oslo told The Nordic Page. • The top prosecutor in the Dominican Republic said Sept. 4 that he **plans to investigate** claims of sexual abuse allegedly committed by Archbishop Jozef Wesolowski, who was removed as apostolic nuncio to the Dominican Republic on Aug. 21. • As the cause for sainthood of the **Rev. Vincent Capodanno**, a chaplain during the Vietnam War, gathers momentum, he was remembered at a memorial Mass on Sept. 4 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.



**Mary Joseph Rogers in 1941**

banking sectors. This shift in policy, the organizations argue, will offer greater protection for the poor and middle class in the United States and around the world. Signers of the letter include Network, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and Jubilee USA Network. "Deregulation had negative effects on those living in poverty everywhere, including in countries with G.D.P.'s smaller than some Wall Street banks," said Aldo Caliari, an economist at the Jesuit-sponsored Center of Concern in Washington, D.C.

## Challenges for Arab Christians

Some 70 high-ranking Arab church leaders, together with their Western counterparts and Muslim clerics gathered in Amman, Jordan, on Sept. 3-4 for a meeting to deal with the chal-

lenges facing Arab Christians. The Christian and Muslims leaders aimed to find a way to end the sectarian strife threatening their people and countries. "We must confront extremist trends," Archbishop Fouad Twal, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, told the gathering. He said it was the duty of religious leaders and their communities to work jointly "to get the new generation to accept the other," in order to "isolate these trends." For decades, Arab Christians have been fleeing the Holy Land and the rest of the Middle East in large numbers, mainly because of violence. Within the past two-and-a-half years, some 450,000 Christians are believed to be among the two million people who have fled the civil war in Syria, an ancient land of historic churches and the country where St. Paul encountered Christ on the road to Damascus.

From CNS and other sources.



# Pursuing the Dream

The end of August brought differing images of American democracy. President Obama called on Congress to debate the use of military force against Syria, a consultation Congress had demanded but did not really want to face. They were unwilling to cut short their month-long recess to decide on an act of war. It was not an inspiring moment. (See my post “Washington and War” on *America’s* blog *In All Things*, 9/2.) On Aug. 28, a few days earlier, the anniversary of the March on Washington in 1963 recalled another crucial moment when people and politics came together to confront a different question: how to overcome our nation’s original sin of racism.

One advance in the commemorations was the powerful voices of women, which were missing in 1963. The starkest change was our African-American president speaking eloquently of the “great unfinished business” of poverty and inequality. For African-American marchers 50 years ago, the prospect of a black president named Barack Hussein Obama was as improbable as that of a Jesuit pope from Argentina named Francis would have been for Catholics in 1963.

Another difference was diminished religious language and leadership. The March in 1963 was as much pilgrimage as rally. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s sermon appealed to America’s soul and conscience. Seven of 15 speakers were leaders of religious groups working to make the march a success and the Civil Rights Act possible. I fear

we may be losing this capacity to bring religious vision and moral principles to fundamental national choices. We may be trading a respectful pluralism for a dominant secularism, which insists faith is private and divisive. Powerful interests, narrow agendas and left- and right-wing individualism (“my choice, my rights”) dominate politics. Where will we find the ethical principles, vocabulary and values to make sacrifices for the common good, the next generation or the “least of these”? Would Dr. King’s call be too biblical, Christian and exclusive today?

Washington this September is not filled with powerful images but with confusion over responses to war crimes in Syria and human disaster in Egypt. Immigration reform may be slipping into 2014 or oblivion, as the House will not consider legislation approved by the Senate because even though it would likely pass, it would do so without the votes of most Republicans. Calls to shut down government over “Obamacare” mask the huge challenge of implementing the complex law Congress passed. The employer mandate, for example, has been waived for a year, but the Health and Human Services mandate will be enforced. Washington turns to 2016. Will Hillary run? Who leads Republicans: the warrior Ted Cruz or the pragmatist Chris Christie?

Martin Luther King’s unfinished agenda languishes. The Voting Rights Act needs repair after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a key provision. Both parties need to confront

the silence and stalemate on growing poverty, lack of decent work and wages and related erosion of family life. The progressive agenda seems to begin with same-sex marriage and resistance to any restraints on abortion. Where is the passion for economic and social justice of Dr. King? The right rejects a path to citizenship for immigrants and insists that cutting food stamps and taxes are roads to opportunity. Where is compassionate conservatism?

Where are religious leaders? In fairness, these marches were different. Al Sharpton is not Dr. King. The 1963 March did not feature abortion and same-sex marriage. Catholic leaders are struggling to be heard as they persistently work for human life and dignity, economic justice and

immigration reform, religious freedom and peace. Parishes, charities, schools and individual Catholics are pursuing the dream every day. But we are too often distracted by partisan, ideological and ecclesiastical disputes. We need to renew the common commitment to justice that brought so many to march 50 years ago. We do not lack biblical mandates or Catholic principles but urgency and passion.

Pope Francis’ new leadership and example offer a way forward. He calls us to get out of ourselves and our ecclesial corners and into “the streets.” Pope Francis also has a dream, “a church which is poor and for the poor.” If we truly pursue Francis’ dream, it will help realize Dr. King’s dream as well.

**JOHN CARR**

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# Murray's Mistake

The political divisions a theologian failed to foresee

BY MICHAEL BAXTER

**I**t has been a greatly providential blessing," John Courtney Murray, S.J., observed in *We Hold These Truths*, "that the American Republic never put to the Catholic conscience the questions raised, for instance, by the Third Republic. There has never been a schism within the American Catholic community, as there was among Catholics in France, over the right attitude to adopt toward the established polity."

However much this statement was true in 1960, it is not true today. Now the politics of the American Republic does raise questions of conscience for Catholics. Now a schism has arisen within the Catholic community in the United States over the proper attitude toward the established polity. The schism is between those Catholics in the United States who identify with liberal politics and those who identify with conservative politics in the secular

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sphere. The division is pervasive and deep, and it is tearing the U.S. Catholic community apart.

The division between these groups of Catholics is a consequence of Catholics' performing the role Father Murray assigned to them. He believed that the United States was exceptional among modern states. Unlike France, it was founded on principles inherited from Catholic political theory. This meant that Catholics could carry out the crucial task of transforming public discourse with the principles of natural law and returning the nation to the consensus on which it was founded. Father Murray, a long time editor at *America*, was aware that this "American consensus" was crumbling in the nation as a whole, but he was confident it would remain intact within the U.S. Catholic community. What he did not foresee, however, is how this consensus would fall apart even among American Catholics; how, in attempting to transform the nation, Catholics would become politically divided and therefore incapable of performing their pivotal role as, in his words, "guardians of the American consensus." Without that role, his story of Catholicism and the United States falls apart.

## A Providential Partnership

John Courtney Murray's story begins with Catholicism, which has a tradition of thought "wider and deeper than any that America has elaborated" and a history "longer than the brief centuries that America has lived." A Catholic understanding of politics, he held, is rooted in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who established a spiritual order that transcends the temporal order. Accordingly, the church, in carrying out its mission in the spiritual order, requires space in the temporal order. This exigency challenged all political power by confining its authority to temporal affairs. The Incarnation was thus a divinely inaugurated interruption in history, whereby the state is limited by the church's freedom. This newly established politics, Father Murray noted, entailed a dualistic rather than a monistic structure of legal power—articulated by Pope Gelasius I in the late fifth century, when he declared, referring to the powers of the church and emperor, "Two there are."

Father Murray's scholarship traced this dualistic political theory in the thought of St. Augustine, Pope Gregory VII, John of Salisbury, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Robert Bellarmine and Pope Leo XIII, to name a few. Taken together, these figures developed the intellectual tradition of what he called "Western constitutionalism." Freedom of the church, separation of powers, consent of the governed, limited government—these principles were forged in the Middle Ages, refined by the Catholic scholastics and appropriated by the English Whigs, giving rise to the principles of modern democracy. This continuity between medieval and modern politics was captured by Father Murray in a quip—cribbed from Lord Acton—that the idea of a free people living

under a limited government "would have satisfied the first Whig, St. Thomas Aquinas."

From the Whigs it was a short step, in Father Murray's mind, to the American colonists who forged a new secular order. The United States of America, he noted, was based on the principles that society and the state are subordinate to a moral law inherent in human nature and originating in eternal reason—that this nation is under God. This idea is the basis of his "American consensus," which had at its heart the First Amendment, especially the articles on religion. These were "articles of peace," not articles of faith, set forth as a practical agreement among people of different creeds to forge a government claiming no competence in matters of religion other than ensuring its free exercise. In Father Murray's view, the First Amendment was a monumental achievement, marking the first time the ancient principle of the freedom of the church was codified, put into writing as the law of the land. Hence he described the founding of the United States as "providential."

On the basis of this partnership of Catholic political thought and the ideas behind the nation's founding, Father Murray insisted that "Catholic participation in the American consensus has been full and free, unreserved and unembarrassed." The lynchpin to this claim was natural law: "the contents of this consensus—the ethical and political principles drawn from the tradition of the natural law—approve themselves to the Catholic intelligence and conscience," he explained. "Where this kind of language is talked, the Catholic joins the conversation with complete ease. It is his language. The ideas expressed are native to his own universe of discourse. Even the accent, being American, suits his tongue." For Father Murray, the Catholic and American idioms are based on the same language, the language of natural law.

But "another idiom now prevails," Father Murray warned, one that is alien to the natural law tradition and thus alien to the American consensus. This alien idiom was not part of the American consensus; on the contrary, it threatened to subvert it, and still does, through a host of false philosophies: voluntarism, naturalism, positivism, pragmatism, materialism, individualism and (worst of all) atheism. Father Murray was confident, however, that Catholics in the United States could refute these erroneous ideas, for they speak the idiom inherited from their fathers—"both the Fathers of the Church and the Fathers of the American Republic." If other Americans adopt this alien idiom, he speculated, then history would unfold with an ironic twist: "the guardianship of the original American consensus...would have passed to the Catholic community, within which the heritage was elaborated long before America was."

This is where the role Father Murray assigns to American Catholicism comes into play. As guardians of the American



consensus, Catholics must refute these false philosophies by injecting natural law reasoning into public debate. Father Murray himself took up this task, applying natural law principles to the issues of censorship, tax-tuition credit, foreign policy and war. In advancing these arguments, he conceded that natural law principles are under siege in American public discourse. For Father Murray, however, this only made it all the more urgent that Catholics take up the task of revitalizing the American consensus.

This task Father Murray left to his successors. But in performing it, they have become politically divided. He was confident that a schism over politics would never beset the Catholic community in the United States, but it is well underway.

## Deepening Political Divisions

Father Murray was certainly aware of political divisions within American Catholicism. He knew that not every Catholic voted for John F. Kennedy in 1960 (Murray himself was a registered Republican). In 1961 William F. Buckley wrote in an editorial in the *National Review* that “*Mater et Magistra*” must strike many as a “venture in triviality.” In a later issue, in an unsigned section, appeared the famous quip, “*Mater, si; Magistra, no*,” which represented the view that John XXIII’s faulty economics carried no doctrinal authority for Catholics. A firestorm of controversy ensued, with some decrying Mr. Buckley’s lack

of docility and others countering that economic policy is a matter of prudential judgment in which conscientious Catholics may differ. As the 1960s wore on, similar political divisions emerged concerning race relations and the Vietnam War. But none of these divisions dislodged Father Murray’s picture of the U.S. Catholic community united “over the right attitude to adopt toward the established polity.”

The same has been true of Father Murray’s followers—“Murrayites” as some call them. Regarding the harmonious relation of Catholicism and America, they have assumed Father Murray got the story right. All the while, the political divisions among American Catholics have gotten worse. The reason they do not see this problem is that they—the priests, prelates, political pundits and public intellectuals invoking Father Murray’s authority—have themselves divided along liberal and conservative lines in American politics. They propound conflicting views of America, conflicting views of natural law and, alas, conflicting views of Father Murray.

This ideological divide among Murrayites crystallized in the early 1980s as the U.S. Catholic bishops prepared their pastoral letter “*The Challenge of Peace*” (1983). In the two-year debate over how to bring natural law principles of just war to bear on U.S. nuclear policy, liberal-leaning Murrayites like the Rev. J. Bryan Hehir and David Hollenbach, S.J., urged a more conciliatory posture toward the Soviet Union (no first strikes, no retaliatory strikes and no use of tactical

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nuclear weapons), while Murrayites of a more conservative political bent, led by Michael Novak, called for a hardline stance. The result was a compromise document that left both sides in deep disagreement.

A similar division emerged as the U.S. Catholic bishops prepared yet another pastoral, "Economic Justice for All" (1986). Here, too, some Murrayites called for economic policies directly supporting the poor and working classes, while other Murrayites called for greater freedom for markets to operate without governmental regulation. Both sides called upon Father Murray to show how they were carrying out his agenda.

Ironically, both were right, inasmuch as both sought to infuse the national policy debate with natural law principles, differing only on how to apply them to specific issues. Their common allegiance to Father Murray, however, did not stop them from lobbying bishops for their competing sides, generating articles and books listing the errors of their opponents and in some instances crafting alternative pastoral letters. They held competing interpretations of natural law and competing prescriptions of what the nation needed.

These divisions continued in the '90s and into the new century. The political battles among Catholics were fought in other arenas: in Catholic periodicals like *Commonweal* and *First Things*, both claiming Father Murray as mentor and guide; in Catholic-led organizations like *Network*, the "social justice lobby," and the *Ethics & Public Policy Center*, both dedicated to carrying out Father Murray's agenda of policy reform; and of course in Catholic or Catholic-inspired political action groups. The scenario is familiar. Catholics who identify with liberal secular politics call for a moderate foreign policy, an end to the death penalty, advancing the rights of women, minorities and the poor and protecting the environment. Catholics who identify with conservative secular politics call for an end to abortion, euthanasia, embryo-destructive research and other policies undermining "family values." Thinkers on both sides of the partisan divide invoke the authority of Father Murray in support of their politics. As national election cycles have lengthened, as midterm elections have become more decisive and as Catholics (who comprise one fifth of the voting electorate) have become more crucial in the coveted swing states, these divisions have only worsened. It has become a rule of thumb that as the nation at large becomes more politically polarized, so do American Catholics.

## Murray's Catholic version of American exceptionalism blinded him to the danger of Catholics' being absorbed into U.S. political culture.

This pattern has been insightfully analyzed by the sociologist Robert Wuthnow in *The Restructuring of American Religion* (1988), who observed that after World War II, Christians came to identify less with their own denomination and more with those of other denominations who share their political and cultural concerns. Baptists with liberal politics, for example, formed alliances with Methodists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians who shared the same politics; and political conservatives made common cause with each other in the same way. In tracking these trends, Professor Wuthnow noted the rise of "special purpose groups," religious groups organized to promote a particular cause or national agenda. The unintended consequence is that these groups, while seeking to reshape national politics, were reshaped by the mechanisms they employed, restructured by the political culture they tried to transform. As government bureaucracies

expanded, religious bureaucracies grew accordingly, disengaging from their denominational bases. In the '60s religious groups with liberal politics arose, like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Clergy and Laity Concerned About the War in Vietnam. In the '70s and '80s religious groups with conservative politics countered with their own organizations, most notably the Moral Majority. Each group set out to "Christianize America" in its own particular way, but this agenda divided them along politically partisan lines.

Catholics in the United States are not central to Wuthnow's account (he discusses them only briefly), but Catholic journals, organizations and political-action efforts certainly fit his description. The moral, philosophical and theological differences between these groups are complex and important, and I do not mean to downplay them. But the overall pattern of conflict is also important and must be noted because it is getting deeper and shows no sign of abating. Just watch. With campaign planning for the national elections in 2016 already underway, we are surely in for another round of dramatic Catholic subplots: another distribution of the U.S. bishops' "Faithful Citizenship," more voting guides about "non-negotiable issues" for "serious Catholics," more partisan-driven manifestos (the "Manhattan Declaration," "On All Our Shoulders"), the ritual scrutiny of Catholic candidates (Mass attendance? pro-life record? social justice?) and probably another installment of Nuns on the Bus.

It would be unfair to lay these familiar spectacles at the feet of Father Murray. But it is fair to say that they are



generated from the national policy agenda that he urged Catholics to pursue. The problem is that in setting out to transform politics in the United States, Catholics have been transformed by it. Like mainline Protestants, they have succumbed to the molding pressures of state-sponsored bureaucratic power—not the overt and direct power of Fascism and Communism or the militant secularism of European democracy (as in France), but the more subtle workings of indirect power, which domesticates any and all subordinate groups by dissolving their ability to resist the authority of the state and by co-opting the well-intentioned efforts of good people, good Catholics, into conforming to the polarized political culture of the nation.

The lesson to be learned is this: those who set out to manage the modern state get managed by the modern state. In heeding this lesson, Father Murray's story of Catholicism and America will have to be revised.

### Genuine Political Community


At the time of his death in 1967, John Courtney Murray was hailed as American Catholicism's leading intellectual light—with good reason. At the outset of his career in the early 1940s, church teaching on politics held that the norm is the "confessional state," which gives public support to "true religion" and reserves the right to prohibit false religion on the grounds that error has no rights. Church-state separation was regarded as an evil to be tolerated at best. For a quarter

century, Father Murray chipped away, often in **America**, at this official teaching, historicizing it, pointing out its outmoded reasoning and positing scholastic distinctions to show how the church can embrace religious freedom without forfeiting its claim to teach the truths of revelation as the one, true church. At length, his efforts were vindicated. Called to Rome as an expert during the Second Vatican Council, he lobbied for revising the official teaching and helped write the "Declaration on Religious Freedom" (1965). By all accounts, he succeeded in dispelling from Catholic teaching the long-standing fantasy of resurrecting the confessional state.

At the same time, Father Murray cleared the way for Catholics in this country to make their mark on American politics by demonstrating—once and for all, it must have seemed—that there is no conflict between being American and being Catholic. This is the part of the story that must be revised, for Father Murray failed to foresee—perhaps his success prevented him from foreseeing—the onset of "a schism within the American Catholic community...over the right attitude to adopt toward the established polity." His Catholic version of American exceptionalism blinded him to the danger of Catholics' being absorbed into U.S. political culture, overtaken by its polarizing dynamics, divided into partisan camps, dissolved into just another religious denomination to be managed by political elites, whether liberal or conservative. In other words, Father Murray did not foresee the danger of the U.S. Catholic community

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ceasing to be a united ecclesial body, ceasing to be (as we used to say) “the church.”

Looking back almost a half century later, this danger should be more apparent to us. Father Murray got the story of American Catholics wrong. The United States is not unique among modern states. It is not providentially blessed in the way he supposed. But what of the natural law tradition? What does eternal reason enjoin the American Catholic community to undertake?


For several decades Alasdair MacIntyre has been arguing on Thomistic-Aristotelian grounds—the same grounds on which Father Murray argued—that the natural law does not serve the modern state but subverts it, that the modern state must be resisted because it is corrosive to the practices and virtues necessary for genuine political community. Only small-scale, practice-based communities, MacIntyre argues, can support the kind of practical reasoning aimed at achieving the common good. Only a *polis*, as envisioned by Aristotle and re-envisioned by Aquinas, can sustain the moral and intellectual life through these dark and difficult times.

Providentially, this task of constructing local forms of community has been taken up by increasing numbers of Catholics. Troubled by a sense of political homelessness

in America, disaffected with both liberal and conservative ideologies, they have turned from state-centered, partisan politics and devoted themselves instead to the political life of local communities wherein the common good may be embodied: unions, worker co-ops and neighborhood organizations; agrarian projects and charter schools; ecclesial communities of prayer, friendship and works of mercy; houses of hospitality for the poor, unemployed, elderly, disabled, unwed mothers and immigrant families.

The significance of these efforts was acknowledged by the U.S. Catholic bishops when they unanimously endorsed the cause of the canonization of Dorothy Day. For almost

five decades Day urged Catholics to turn aside from the impersonal, bureaucratic and often violent politics of the nation-state in favor of constructing genuine political communities where it is possible to take personal responsibility for the care of others. Perhaps now

Catholics are ready to absorb Day’s antistatist, personalist politics, as when she proclaimed in an editorial in *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, denouncing the cold war and universal military conscription, “We Are Un-American: We Are Catholics.” Perhaps providence will bless us with a revolution inspired by another—doubtless very different—St. Francis. 

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# A Trinitarian Love

The sacramentality of adoption

BY TIMOTHY P. O'MALLEY



One of the radical insights of the Second Vatican Council is the salvific character of married life. Marriage is not a secondary vocation for those who are not strong enough to embrace celibacy, but instead offers an icon of love that the entire church is called to contemplate. The married couple's self-gift, embodied in the secular activities proper to the married life, offers us a glimpse of what God's own love is. Further, the married couple is divinized, taken up into God's own life as they come to embody the same self-giving love manifested by Christ to the church. As one of the prefaces for the eucharistic prayer for the rite of marriage dares to say, "In the union of husband and wife you give a sign of Christ's loving gift of grace, so that the sacrament we celebrate might draw us back more deeply into the wondrous design of your love." The vocation of marriage draws the entire church to participate in the logic of love manifested on the cross.

As a sacramental theologian, I have often considered how remarkable it is that something as ordinary as marriage could become a sign of God's own salvific plan of love. My domestic commitment to sometimes making the bed in the morning, to sharing meals with my wife, of taking long walks in the summer, is necessary for the narrative of salvation to continue to unfold in the church. I thought

about the salvific nature of the married vocation when my wife and I adopted a newborn. If indeed marriage is sacramental, drawing all of humanity to participate in the self-gift of Christ to the church, then perhaps the process of adoption reveals something unique about the Christian life as a whole. Adoption is a sacramental sign that gives us unique insights into the wondrous design of love that God has for all humanity.

## The Stigma of Adoption

Before attending to the sacramentality of adoption, one needs to recognize that within U.S. culture there remains an unexamined, albeit significantly decreased stigma regarding adoption. On sitcoms, older siblings continue to taunt their younger brothers and sisters, telling them that they are adopted. When my wife and I decided to adopt, we were surprised to learn from our social worker that many birth mothers cease considering adoption as an option when their parents express disgust at the possibility that another couple would raise the child.

Catholicism, a faith that is wholeheartedly pro-life, has often done too little to counteract this stigma. For years I have attended a pro-life dinner in which the presenters have addressed the need for prayer and political activism (often using violent rhetoric) but have remained silent regarding the promotion of adoption within the various faith communities of our area. Even the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which speaks with poetic beauty regarding

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procreation and parenthood, treats adoption as a last option for infertile couples to care for abandoned children. Such language implies that mothers who choose to give up their children for adoption are performing an act of parental negligence rather than witnessing to the very logic of self-gift at the heart of the church. Yet adoption is not a half-way house between the ideal form of parenthood and infertility.

What eventually drew us to use Lutheran Social Services as our adoption agency was their recognition that adopting a child was not a last resort for infertile couples and not a careless act by a birth mother who really should raise her own child. For this agency, the process of adopting is an act of human love, of self-gift, between strangers who are bonded together in the mystery of divine love for the very same child. And in this mutual self-gift, a child does not simply come into physical existence, but instead dwells in a family of love that stretches biological bounds.

Thus, essential to the Christian imagination is a treatment of adoption that gives equal weight to the manner in which the birth mother, the adopting couple and the infant present to us an icon of humanity taken up into divine life.

## **The Birth Mother**

Though the culture of celebrity has reduced pregnancy to a status symbol, to watching for the “baby bump,” pregnancy should in fact elicit contemplative wonder among Christians. Think about how one’s entire body becomes the source of life for a child. Morning sickness is not merely an illness to be treated but a visible sign that the mother now shares every aspect of her being with another person. As the body changes and adjusts in preparation for a child, as the mother looks at 3-D ultrasounds, she comes to imagine the infant who is intimately a part of her. What will she be like, the mother asks herself? Are the frequent movements, the womb aerobics, a sign of a child whose activity will be ceaseless?

Now imagine nine months of dwelling with these questions, with the handing over of one’s body to the growth of a child, only to give birth one afternoon and to give this child to another couple—a couple who will learn to call your son or daughter theirs. Missing from Catholic reflections on adoption is adequate attention to the virtues of the birth mother. The reasons a birth mother might have for giving up her child for adoption are myriad: she may be too young to raise a child; she cannot financially care for the infant as

she would need to; she is not healthy enough (physically or psychologically) to carry out her role as mother. But at the heart of adoption, the birth mother gives her child away as an act of love. She comes to recognize something that some parents never learn. Parenthood is not about the parent, the manner in which one’s identity or status is affirmed by having a child. Instead, parenthood is about love, about caring for those most in need. And the mother

who gives up her child for adoption becomes the icon of authentic parenthood. She does not claim the child as her own. She may never hear her child call her mom. But fatherhood and motherhood are not about such titles. They are about compassion, mercy, the gift of self that a parent offers to

a child. In the birth mother’s decision to put her child up for adoption, the purest form of parenthood is on display—a parenthood of total, self-giving love.

## **The Adopting Couple**

Those couples who have children biologically often have close to nine months to prepare their homes and hearts for the arrival of a child. In the case of a couple who adopts an infant, the time may be closer to three weeks. There is a kind of precariousness to adopting a child, a fear that loving your potential son or daughter too early will lead only to disappointment if the adoption does not go through. The adopting couple exists in a space of the doubtful, of the unknown, of the unclarified. Yet as adopting couples can attest, when you hold the child to be adopted in your arms at the hospital, the only response you can give is the entirety of yourself. One no longer cares about the possibility of a wounded heart, of a love that might be too temporary. Adoption is a gift for the couple who welcome the child into their home. Where before there was no child, no imminent plans for the transformation of every aspect of your life, now there is my son, my daughter.

Adoption clarifies something that is true for all Christian parenthood: to have a child is always to participate in a divine gift. While the child may share your genetic material, he or she is never fully yours, never a “being” that you earned. The love that you bestow upon a child is always precarious. A parent, whether biological or adopting, bestows love upon a child not because of the promise that one day he or she will return such love in equal measure nor because the child will one day fulfill the hopes and dreams that we as parents have. Such precarious love opens us up to the extraordinary suffering we will come to know as we watch our son or

**Adoption clarifies something that  
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daughter discover the bitterness of disappointment. Parenthood encourages the parent to love gratuitously, even in the midst of the stinginess of a world that is afraid of love like this.

In the hospital, as I looked into the face of my son, I could not help but be overwhelmed by gratitude—for the birth mother, for the nurses who lovingly made us name our child even when we were afraid to fall too deeply in love before we knew if the adoption would go through. My own capacity for gratitude, for self-gift, increases each day I look into the increasingly widening eyes of my son and remember again the extraordinary gift he is. The manner in which adopting a son has taught me gratitude beyond what I thought imaginable has slowly enabled me to recognize the call to bestow precarious love like this upon all in my life—my wife, my mother and father and brother, my students. Christian love, total self-gift, is always precarious.

## The Adopted Child

Less than 20 years ago, it was considered anathema to tell a child of his or her status as “adopted.” Adopted children who come to know of their identity late in life populate film and television with their often unsuccessful quests to meet their biological father and mother. Today, most adoption agencies encourage not simply that one tell the child early in his or her life, but also that one consider an open adoption—including the birth mother or father in some way in the child’s life. My wife and I are planning to tell our son as soon as possible, and we remain open to the involvement of the birth mother, if she would like that.

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When I look at my son, I often wonder how he will react when he learns that he is adopted. What sort of relationship might he have with his birth mother and possibly his siblings? What is my hope for this conversation? When I imagine telling our son, I cannot help but hope that he perceives the gift of love that has infused his existence from the very first moment. In contemporary theology, procreation is often imagined as Trinitarian. The self-gift of the father and the mother, expressed sexually, results in the gift of a child. Likewise, my son only exists as he does right now because of a Trinitarian love that marks his adopted life: the self-giving love of his birth mother, who chose us to raise her son, as an act of supreme love; our love for him bestowed precariously, recklessly and generously—without thought to the fact that we do not share biological material (as if this

were the primary mark of parenthood to begin with). In fact, he will most likely learn a truth early on, one that all children eventually need to discover. Our parents do not love us because they have to, because they are obliged by biological necessity and

legal constraints. They love us because they delight in our existence, because each day they choose self-gift above self-cultivation. And they are only part of a broader ecology of love that made our existence possible in the first place—an ecology that includes grandparents and nurses and cousins and godparents and teachers and on and on.

Every human being, in fact, is adopted (or at least should be) into an ecology of such love. Adoption is a sign for all Christians that a person’s fundamental identity is as one who has received love: the love of God generously and precariously poured out upon creation, the love of God manifested in

Christ, who reveals to us that our humanity was made for total self-gift. Those relationships with teachers, friends and parents, which immerse us into the logic of this sort of love, reveal to us that we are indeed beloved.

A Catholic approach to adoption will cease treating adoption as the last resort for infertile couples and the abandonment of children by negligent mothers, and begin to imagine adoption as a sacramental icon manifesting to the entire world the surprising and transforming gift of divine love—a love not connected simply to biology, to the realm of expectations and roles, but a love that interrupts those limitations we put on the possibility of love. Adoption is sacramental, revealing to humanity the possibility of divine love. **A**

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# End of an Illusion

BY TIMOTHY E. O'CONNELL

**B**rought up short by the U.S. Supreme Court's abortion decision, the Catholic community realizes now that God and country do not always stand together. The myth gone, the government may have lost one of its most stable and politically beneficial allies.

It's a cliché of Catholic theology that old concepts, irrelevant and near-forgotten, have a way of reasserting their importance at unexpected times. A cliché, a truism somehow more common than true, even a bit self-righteous. Such statements seem out of place in an era of creative, forward-looking theological vision. Or so we thought.

For the Supreme Court decision voiding the anti-abortion laws of Texas and Georgia has, in spite of itself, proved the cliché quite true. The Court's judgment has managed to transform one of the hoariest, most irrelevant notions of traditional Catholic theology into a star of contemporary thought. And in the process, I suggest, it has also changed the status quo of the American Catholic Church in a fundamental way.

On February 13, 1973, the Administrative Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral message responding to the Supreme Court. The committee declared that "the Supreme Court...has stated that the unborn child is not a person in the terms of the

Fourteenth Amendment. ...This opinion of the Court fails to protect the most basic human right—the right to life. Therefore, we reject this decision of the Court, because, as John XXIII says: 'if any government does not acknowledge the rights of man or violates them...its orders completely lack juridical force.'"

And as if this were not strong enough, the bishops continue with even more emphatic statements: "We find that this majority opinion of the Court is wrong.... Whenever a conflict arises between the law of God and any human law, we are held to follow God's law.... No one is obliged to obey any civil law that may require abortion."

Perhaps it is only because the issue here is abortion, but it seems incredible that the radical tone of these declarations of the bishops has been so blithely overlooked. When before has the hierarchy had the audacity to stand eyeball to eyeball with the highest court in the land and, with not the slightest dissimulation, announce: "No way"? When before has the leadership of the American Church proclaimed: "We shall not serve?"

It all sounds like some children's story of a far-off land: a beleaguered Church fighting for its life against a hostile government. But it isn't. The scene is not Moscow or Rio de Janeiro or Johannesburg; it's Washington. And that is what makes the whole affair so

astonishing.

What may be even more astonishing is that the most traditional brand of Catholic theology stands ready to provide the theoretical justification for just such a radical statement. To logically ground the bishops' action one need not turn to the popular but suspect theologians of the left. One need not depend on the newest twist in the "theology of liberation." No, when the deed was done, it was good old scholastic theology that explained its correctness. If the bishops' statement was,



indeed, radical, it was an exercise of the "radical right."

I believe that what the bishops have done is radical. But to appreciate that fact, we must first make a quick survey of the theology that they employed. A little history, as usual, will go a long way toward illuminating our current state of affairs. Scholastic theology, at least since the 12th century, has drawn a distinction between "natural law" and "positive law." The natural law, of course, is the sum total of those obligations which arise from the very being of man. The natural law requires no legislation: it depends upon no consensus. Just because man is who he is, murder is wrong; that's all there is to it.

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And because man always is who he is, there are no exceptions to the natural law, no moments when it doesn't apply, no situations in which it doesn't bind.

Not so with positive law. Such laws don't simply exist; rather they are established by some "positive" act of legislation. They are "placed" (Latin: *positae*) in existence. The category of positive law was used in the traditional theology to include all those organizational dictates of society that are altogether proper, perfectly appropriate, but not utterly inevitable. Positive laws serve the natural law, concretizing it for a particular group. Positive laws organize society in such a way that it harmonizes with the natural law.

So, to use a standard example, traffic regulations are part of the positive law. Natural law makes clear that automobile drivers must take care not to kill one another on the road. The state comes along and, by an exercise of positive law, facilitates observance of the natural law: the state declares that we shall all drive on the right side of the street. Or again, natural law dictates that man should worship his Creator. The Church, by means of positive law, declares that we shall do it on Sunday.

Positive law, then, serves the natural law, it assists men in their attempts to be faithful to the demands of their own being. But there is another side to this. Namely, to the extent that positive law fails to truly serve the natural law, it is invalid and totally without binding force.

That much is clear. The problem comes when we try to apply this theory, when we try to decide if a particular positive law really serves the natural law. And for centuries theologians struggled with the question of how that decision should be made. There are obvious dangers present if every man is left to his own devices (and whims?) in making that decision. Social chaos

could quickly develop. So the question persisted: how should one decide if a positive law obliges?

One school argued that the best way to decide was to consider the legitimacy of the ruling government. If an authority came to power justly, if it was duly authorized to care for the common good, then it had the right to concretize the natural law for the society. Such a government had the right to establish positive laws and to bind the consciences of the citizenry with its decisions. And those decisions, as a

## One does not arbitrarily support the decisions of government simply because they are legitimately proclaimed.

consequence, must be presumed to be correct.

Not a bad answer to our question. This response guaranteed some social stability. In an era when political units were rising and falling with disconcerting frequency, such a theory gave a theological assist to the status quo by granting the benefit of the doubt to the actually existing government. Viewed this way, positive law made revolution, as a morally permissible option, almost unthinkable. A government would have to be patently and continually at odds with the common good before one could justly refuse to obey its dictates. Ordinarily, the citizen's one clear obligation is to cooperate with the development of the state as it now exists—without asking impertinent questions.

This, I say, was not a bad answer to our question. For, among other things, it could be argued that such an approach to positive law played a significant role in the emergence of the strong, relatively permanent states we know today. Such a view helped turn

Europe from a cacophony of political mutations into a stable civil structure.

But it was not a perfect answer. And that became painfully clear after the Second World War. For this conception of positive law was cited by many leading Germans as justification for their participation in Nazi policies. After all, the Third Reich was a duly established government; it was even democratically elected. It is not the citizen's place to evaluate the particular decisions of his government. It is his place to obey. And in any case, to object would be tantamount to revolution, and revolution is clearly immoral.

Thus, another understanding of positive law has, particularly in the last twenty years, become popular. In its essentials it is also an old theory. It can be traced, as a matter of fact, all the way back to Aquinas. But its popularity is relatively recent.

According to this theory, one does not arbitrarily support the decisions of government simply because they are legitimately proclaimed. Rather, one looks to the intrinsic function of positive law. Such laws are to explicate the natural law; they are actually to serve the true common good of society. To the extent that laws do this, they are binding; to the extent that they do not, they are not binding.

The citizen, consequently, does not blindly obey the laws of his land. Rather, he evaluates the decisions of his government, he measures them against the needs of the common good. And if this individual responsibility runs the risk of social fragmentation, that's just too bad. For there is simply no alternative to personal judgment in the arena of social and political life.

Interestingly, this latter conception was sometimes seen as more rigorous, not less, than the first. For under the "legitimacy" theory, if a government came to power unjustly (by revolution,



for instance) one was obliged to nothing that it legislated. It was an illegitimate ruler, it did not stand in the place of God as the ruler of civil society, and thus it had no right to the citizen's obedience. Under the "functionalist" theory, however, even an illegitimate government should be obeyed if its laws as a matter of fact functioned in the service of the common good.

Thus, for example, the former view would hold that Cubans have no obligation to obey Castro's government. The latter view would hold that in those things that benefit the true common good of man, Cuban citizens do have such an obligation.

In a somewhat paradoxical way, then, the functionalist view (the term comes from theologian Josef Fuchs, S.J.) justifies both the Nuremberg trials and recent papal efforts to achieve detente with the Communist bloc. For in both cases it looks, not to how we got to the present, but rather to what the common good actually requires in the real here and now.

This is the theory of positive law. And as I mentioned in the beginning, it has long been viewed as an anti-quarian nicety of Catholic theology. Seminarians and college students have long rebelled against its picayune concerns. To them, the fact that it habitually used such examples as traffic laws and Sunday Mass obligation only certified that it was basically an irrelevant and out-dated conception. Or at most, it was a theory which was of use to Catholics in unstable or atheist lands far away. For us it was simply of no use.

Which brings us back to the Supreme Court. The fact of the matter is that the average American Catholic simply did not believe that his government would ever do anything opposed to the common good, to the perennial dictates of the natural law. He bedecked his churches with Old Glory, and symbolized thus his conviction that in the U.S.A. God and country would always stand together. Faith and

patriotic obedience, if not exactly the same thing, were at least complementary virtues.

Prominent Catholic spokesmen echoed the toast: "My country, right or wrong." Many Catholics shouted their support. Some citizens, to be sure, exeged the oft-quoted statement and found in their exegesis grounds for agreement. There is, after all, a certain sort of loyalty and affection that one should feel for one's native land not only when it is right but also in the sad moments when it is wrong.

But whether or not it was the original meaning, many also took the statement another way. Rightness and wrongness are small details of political life. This country, my country, is a godly country. In matters of fundamental importance it always has been and always will be right. We live in a nation rooted in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. We live in a land that is, from its very foundation, attuned to the natural law and the common good. And praise the Lord for this!

Then came the conscientious objectors. The land gave birth to war protesters, peaceniks and other unsavory types. And beyond their inflammatory rhetoric, these people enunciated an inflammatory and thoroughly unorthodox theory. They declared that the Vietnam War was unjust. It might or might not be legal. But even if it was, it was still unjust. And unjust laws, no matter how legitimately established, are not to be obeyed. One's conscience comes before the decisions of one's draft board. If the board does not see fit to validate one's conscience, then one goes to Canada. And what is more, such actions are not cowardice, they are not ultimately unpatriotic and they certainly do not stand to be heretical.

The really fascinating thing about the whole peace movement is not that

many people disagreed with its conclusions. For that sort of disagreement there always has been and always will be room. No, the fascinating thing is that most Catholics, including many bishops, simply did not comprehend the line of argumentation. If Catholics had rejected the protestors' comparison of Nixon and Hitler as hyperbolic, that would have been understandable and open to honest debate. But many rejected it on the grounds that no analogy was possible, or could be possible, at all. And that's quite a different matter.

That our government could be guilty of immorality seemed such an outrageous assertion that an individual citizen should take it upon himself to evaluate and pass judgment upon the decisions of Washington seemed so presumptuous as to be utterly unthinkable. The ancient details of positive law theology simply didn't pertain in our situation. A good Catholic knew that our government was the servant of our God, and that's all there was to it.

All this, however, was before abortion. All this was in our days of civil innocence. And those days, I suggest, are no more. Positive law does have pertinence to our time and our place. Our government is able to oppose itself to the natural law and the real common good. And as the bishops said on February 13: "Whenever a conflict arises between the law of God and any human law, we are held to follow God's law."

Apart from the immediate ramifications of the Supreme Court's decision, one of its major effects may be an increase of political sophistication that politicians may soon come to rue. For in striking down the laws of Texas and Georgia, the Court has also gone a long way toward striking down one of the most politically beneficial myths of American life. Catholics have, by and large, been among the more patriotic segments of the population. They be-

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lied in the government. They believed in the Statue of Liberty, which had been the first sight glimpsed by so many of their parent-immigrants on their arrival in America. They believed that the political order could be implicitly trusted, that it would not let them down. And that belief, to say the least, has been shaken by the Supreme Court decision.

The death of the old naïveté is probably a good thing. For all the beauty of adolescent innocence, most people would agree that growing up is a good thing to do. But I don't mean to suggest that we ought to celebrate the Supreme Court's decision. Fetal life is not some plaything to be used by theology any more than it is to be used by the political process. But I do mean to suggest that there may be something still to be gained from this sad state of affairs.

We were naïve. We were foolish. Indeed, we were unfair to the civil order. For in our childish faith we expected that order to do more than it was able. We expected it to mediate in an infallible way the will of God for our lives. We expected it to make clear and certain the moral standards by which we ought to live. We expected the government to guarantee a comfortable meld of "Christian" and "American." And that it just can't do.

A peculiarly Catholic sort of civil religion has been a fact of life in the United States for a long time. And it will not die an easy death. Indeed, it is too desirable a commodity to be willingly relinquished. But if the Supreme Court has not killed Catholic civil religion, it has at least struck it a serious blow. I'm sorry, America, but that old, slightly quaint theology of positive law is, indeed, relevant to our situation. God and country may go together. But then again, they may not.

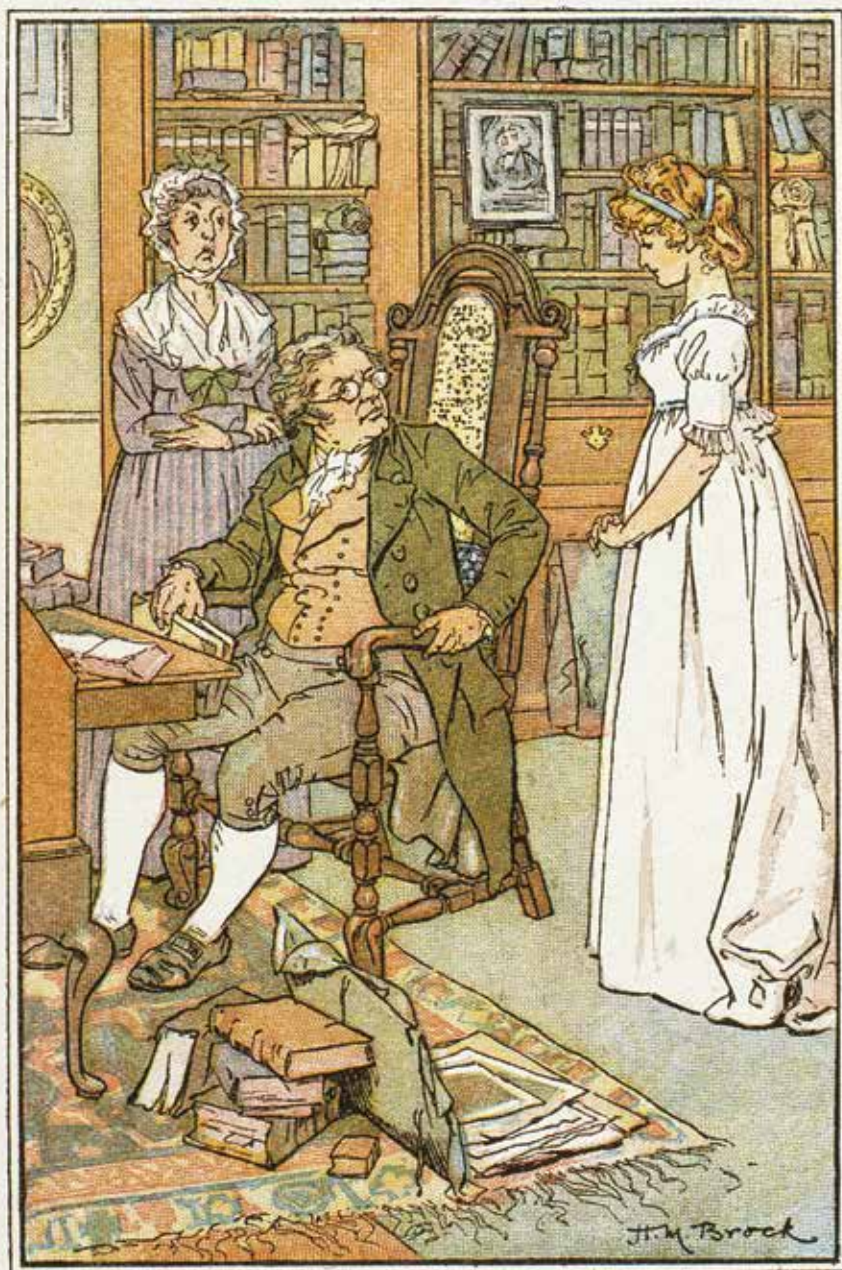
The Court's abortion decision has not changed everything. But it has changed something. The church and the state may yet bed down together once more. But things will never be quite so cozy again. A



IDEAS | JULIE RATTEY

## PRIDE AND PRINCIPLE

*The spiritual side of Jane Austen's novels*



*"And this offer of marriage you have refused?"*  
Chap. XX

Pride and Prejudice, 1895 edition

In the 200 years since the publication of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, women's rights have risen, empire waists have fallen and many manners of the day have disappeared with the barouche and the bonnet. But a good love story is timeless, and Jane Austen's novels still have a place in the hearts and on the bookshelves of readers worldwide.

Romance is not the only timeless element in Austen's novels, however. Her works have a solid moral and spiritual foundation that make them as much about vice and virtue, character and conscience as about marriage and manners. The turning points in her novels often hinge on a character's examination of conscience, putting morality front and center.

God, church and religion were an integral part of Austen's life and the society she lived in, and they influenced her work. Her novels are rife with moral commentary on everything from hypocrisy (Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*) to near occasions of sin (the play in *Mansfield Park*) to love and marriage. Speaking in *Pride and Prejudice* of the marriage between the wayward Lydia and the deceitful Wickham, Austen offers: "How little of permanent happiness could belong to a couple who were only brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtue, [Elizabeth] could easily conjecture."

The influence of Austen's religious and moral worldview is seen perhaps most explicitly in *Mansfield Park*, whose heroine, Fanny Price, humbly examines her conduct and that of others through the lens of morality. For example, Fanny disapproves of staging the play "Lovers' Vows" at Mansfield Park partly because it facilitates an inappropriate flirtation between the engaged Maria Bertram and the rakish Henry Crawford. Diane

ART: CHARLES EDMOND BROOK. PHOTO: THE ART ARCHIVE AT ART RESOURCE, NY



Capitani, a lecturer at Northwestern University and a speaker with the Jane Austen Society of North America, calls Fanny the representation of moral law in that novel.

*Mansfield Park* also gives a positive view of church and clergy through the character of Edmund Bertram. “I cannot call [the clergyman’s] situation nothing,” he says, “which has the charge of all that is of the first importance to mankind... the guardianship of religion and morals, and consequently of the manners which result from their influence.”

In Austen’s other novels, morality and spirituality are treated somewhat less explicitly. That these concerns are examined primarily through character and action, not high-handed preaching, recalls Austen’s own religious upbringing. In *Jane Austen: The Parson’s Daughter*, Irene Collins notes that under the guidance of her father, an Oxford-educated Anglican clergyman, Austen “was encouraged...to make her witness in the world through her behavior to others rather than by preaching; In her writings, as in her life, she was to be typically reticent with regard to religious devotion and to concentrate instead on providing examples of good and evil in people’s conduct towards each other and in their attitude to society at large.” Austen, says Collins, wanted her novels both to entertain and to have a moral purpose; contemporary reviewers praised both aspects of her work.

### What’s in a Name?

One need look no further than the titles of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* to see that the characters’ flaws and virtues are as important to the stories as the characters themselves. Austen’s heroes and heroines shine brightly either in devotion to or in reformed adoption of the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance) and the fruits of the Spirit (charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity).

Characters who exemplify these qual-

ities, like the gentle Jane Bennet (*Pride and Prejudice*), patient Elinor Dashwood (*Sense and Sensibility*) and modest Fanny Price (*Mansfield Park*), are rewarded with home and husband. Those who often do not (the narrow-minded Mr. Collins, the preening Sir Walter Elliot) are playfully skewered. Those needing some polish (the proud Darcy, emotionally intemperate Marianne and snobbish Emma) are metaphorically thrust into the belly of the whale for a sober examination of conscience before being spat out, chastened and grateful, a few steps from the altar. Their final task is the same that awaits the repentant sinner: confession and reconciliation. In Austen’s novels, these are sealed with a marriage.

The famous conversation between Darcy and Elizabeth near the end of *Pride and Prejudice*, full as it is of moral terms like *pride*, *vanity* and *ashamed* on one hand and *kindness*, *generous* and *compassion* on the other, is as much a confession of sins as it is a profession of love. In *Emma*, only after the titular character has acknowledged her folly and wrongs, and atoned for them through good works, is she a suitable life partner for Mr. Knightley. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne’s near-fatal illness, partly brought on by her emotional indulgence, spurs a realization of her faults and a humble confession to her more stable sister, Elinor. She expresses a penitent desire to atone to God, family and community:

[M]y feelings shall be governed and my temper improved. They shall no longer worry others, nor torture myself. I shall now live solely for my family.... [I]f I do mix in other society, it will be only to show that my spirit is humbled, my heart amended, and that I can practise the civilities, the lesser duties of life, with gentleness and forbearance. As for Willoughby,...[h]is remem-

brance...shall be regulated, it shall be checked by religion, by reason, by constant employment.

Marianne’s reform enables her to recognize the merits of the worthy Colonel Brandon—and ultimately accept him in marriage.

Whether the parallel is intentional or not, one can see in these character progressions the echo of the soul’s journey from sin (and thus, separation from God) to spiritual reconciliation and symbolic marriage with Christ. The journeys of Austen’s leading characters recall the soul’s “pilgrim’s progress” to the Celestial City and its encounters with a host of unusual people and places on the road. To the readers’ delight, this progress is narrated with Austen’s characteristic wit, a reminder that on this journey, it doesn’t hurt to laugh at ourselves along the way.

“I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life,” Austen

wrote in 1816, “and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am

sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter.”

Toward the end of *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy speaks to Elizabeth of the faults of his past. “Such I was...” he says, “and such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth! What do I not owe you? You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled.”

Through her novels, Austen acts as an Elizabeth for her readers, revealing to us our human weaknesses and making us—if we are humble enough to heed her implicit advice—better heroes and heroines of our own real-life adventures.

### ON THE WEB

‘Pride and Prejudice’  
in film and culture.

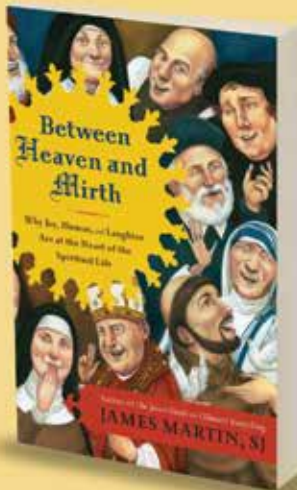
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**JULIE RATTEY** is a senior editor and writer at Boston University and the author of *If I Grew Up in Nazareth: Take a Trip Back to the Time of Mary, Joseph & Jesus* (23rd Publications).

# From *New York Times* bestselling author James Martin, SJ. . .

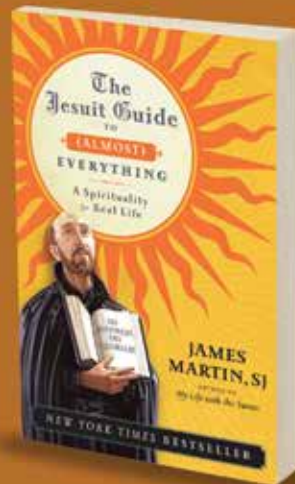
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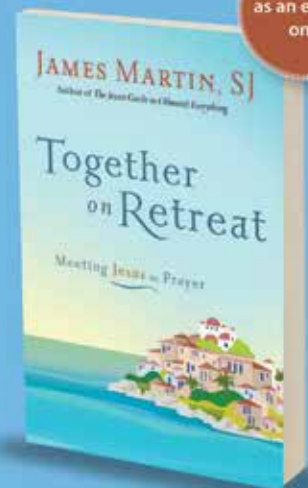
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# THE ART OF WAR

One hundred and fifty years ago, the great American artist Winslow Homer traveled with the Army of the Potomac to document a key military campaign in the Civil War. Some of his paintings were recently featured in the exhibit “Civil War and American Art” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (see “The Real War,” an online review by Leo J. O’Donovan, S.J.). One struck me not so much for the craftsmanship of the portrait but the quotation that accompanies it.

In “Sharpshooter,” Homer focuses on a lone Union gunman perched in a tree. He is balanced precariously, aiming carefully through the crosshairs of his rifle. His target, presumably a Confederate soldier, is not pictured. The painting, which resides permanently at the Portland Museum of Art, captures in miniature a notable military innovation of the Civil War.

Reflecting later on the picture, Homer expressed horror at the grim duty of the sharpshooter. It “struck me as being as near murder as anything I could think of in connection with the army & I always had a horror of that branch of the service,” he wrote to a friend.

I am sure I am not the only visitor to the Met who thought of predator drones, today’s controversial weapon of choice. In fact, I would bet the curators had drones in mind when they chose that quote from Homer. Drones, too, allow soldiers to execute their targets from a safe distance. The distance, of course, is much greater, measuring in miles, not feet, but the anonymity of the sharpshooter strikes me as very much like the mystery surrounding drone pilots. Both are unknown to

their victims, and both bring sudden death.

Today sharpshooters, or snipers, are a mainstay of modern warfare. And the reasons for their ubiquity are clear—aren’t they? Better to kill a dangerous enemy from afar than risk the lives of a platoon of soldiers. The battles of the Civil War saw heavy casualties precisely because men fought the enemy face to face. Modern artillery used in traditional military engagements proved to be a lethal combination. Executing the enemy while hiding in a tree may not have been honorable, but it was better than the alternative.

And yet Homer’s objection lingers. Even with the distance of time, one cannot dismiss his argument. There is something unfair, unnatural about the sharpshooter’s trade. Homer’s art helps clinch his case.

In the picture, the sharpshooter sits in an evergreen tree. The contrast between the tranquility of the backdrop and the bringer of death is jarring. Homer captures his subject just before he pulls the trigger. The beauty of nature is evident, but one wonders how long it can survive in a country wrecked by war.

Leaving the Met, I wondered what kind of art drones have inspired. A quick Google search discovered the work of the Pakistani folk artist Mahwish Chisty. Over the last few years she has composed a series of paintings of drones in the Pakistani “truck art” style. (In Pakistan trucks

and other vehicles are richly decorated by their owners.) They are disturbingly beautiful, an intricate patchwork of colors and patterns. In “MQ-9/Guardian,” the belly of the drone is decorated in blues and reds, with two haunting eyes at the center. It looks like a god hovering above, mulling the fate of those below.

Critics have called Chisty’s paintings an exercise in re-appropriation. Drones are widely feared in Pakistan, and she makes them more familiar. A foreign agent of death is given a uniquely Pakistani makeover. “I wanted people to think maybe what would happen if these drones were friendlier looking, instead of such hard-edged, metallic war machines,” Chisty said in an interview.

Yet as gorgeous as these paintings are, one cannot easily forget why these drones were created. Beauty and death stand side by side, just as they do in Homer’s painting of the sharpshooter.

In the years of after the Civil War, artists found inspiration in the American West. The wide-open spaces and untouched beauty of places like Yosemite gave people hope that perhaps the United States could experience a rebirth following war’s devastation. A century and a half later, we are at war again, following the first attack on American soil since the Civil War. Yet the chances of another American renewal seem faint. The question posed by Homer persists: Can beauty survive in the midst of calculated destruction?

In these paintings, beauty and death stand side by side.



MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY is executive editor of *America*.



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# MAN OF CONTRADICTIONS

## THE DREAM OF THE CELT

By Mario Vargas Llosa  
Translated by Edith Grossman  
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 368p \$27  
(Hardcover)

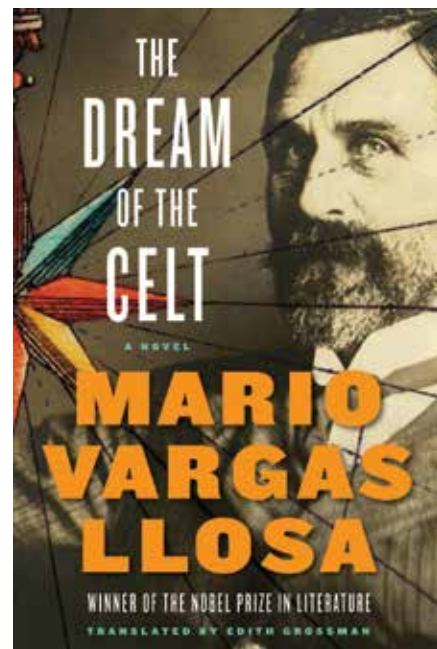
I first discovered Mario Vargas Llosa in 1990 when I was in Peru to see a friend, climb Machu Picchu and write an article. That was the time when Vargas Llosa, the novelist, was running for president of Peru. The guerilla movement Shining Path was terrorizing the countryside, and the economy was falling apart. Vargas Llosa thought a renewed democracy and free market could save the country. But what made a novelist think he could cure a nation's ills? He lost the election to Alberto Fujimori, who is now in prison.

I was told then that Vargas Llosa's 600-page novel *Conversation in the Cathedral* (1975), a complex group of dialogues involving a network of families during political upheaval in Peru, was a key to his political ideas. I read it, but I had to wait for his latest book, *The Dream of the Celt*, to find the answer to my question.

Vargas Llosa has been a political activist all his life, shifting from left to right with his ideas, but certain themes hold: opposition to dictators and the exploitation of the weak and poor throughout the world. Inevitably this led him to Roger Casement, whose life is the main focus of *The Dream of the Celt* and whom John Banville in *The New York Review of Books* (10/25/12) called "one of the greatest Irishmen who ever lived"—though his reputation has been smothered by the combined bile of his enemies and his own foolishness, which led to his being hanged by the British for treason in 1916.

In *The Dream of the Celt*, named after a Casement poem, Vargas Llosa, who lives in Madrid, London and Peru,

returns with the novelist's imagination to Peru with the tragedy of a good man in a corrupt state. The novel is structured as a three-part biography of Casement, each focused on a main period in his career: the Congo, Amazonia and Ireland. Each chapter opens in Casement's prison cell as he



awaits the fate of his appeal and drifts back into the events that led to his life's unraveling.

Born in Ireland in 1864, son of the dashing Captain Roger Casement of the Light Dragoons in India, whom he admired, and Anne Jepson, a closet Catholic who secretly had him baptized at age 4, whom he adored. Casement lost his mother at 9; and his father, unhinged by grief, farmed out his four children to relatives.

In 1884 he served his apprenticeship as an explorer with Henry Morton Stanley, famous for his expedition into the Congo to find the "lost" missionary Dr. David Livingstone. Stanley's later task was to open up thousands of square miles of territory in Africa for European

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businessmen of the International Congo Society, presided over by King Leopold II of Belgium. After 18 years' experience in Africa, Casement realized that Stanley was a cruel, unscrupulous villain who deceived the natives to hand over their land for nothing but false promises in return and whose whippings left a multitude of scarred, skinny black bodies across the continent. In the 1890s, employed as consul by the British Foreign Office, Casement worked for years building a case against the criminal activities of King Leopold's government and emerged, with his report in 1903, as a champion of human rights.

In 1910, after four years in Brazil, Casement carried this zeal into Peru, at the request of the British foreign secretary, to investigate accusations of cruelty by the Peruvian Amazon Company in the Putumayo region: floggings, stocks and the rack; cut-off ears, noses, hands and feet; men hanged, shot, burned or drowned under the direction of Armando Normand, the district manager in Matanzas. Accused of mistreating workers, Normand replied, "You can't treat animals like human beings." Casement shot back: "I've lived for twenty years in Africa and I didn't turn into a monster—which is what you have become."

Casement's two reports on Peru made him even more famous, and he was granted a knighthood; but honors from England made him uncomfortable. As he began comparing England's treatment of Ireland to the colonial exploitation of Africa and Latin America, he reverted more and more to what he had been born, an Irishman. An Irish revolution was boiling up and he wanted to be part of it; when World War I broke out in 1914, he dreamed up a wild plan in which British army prisoners in Germany would team up with German troops "side by side" to invade Ireland, coinciding with the Irish "uprising," and drive the British

out. But at the last moment he was convinced that the uprising would fail, and he returned secretly to Ireland in a German U-boat to convince the rebels to call the uprising off. Too late. The uprising flopped; many rebels were killed or imprisoned. Casement was arrested, tried and sentenced to death. Long-time English friends dropped him; how could they even look at this man who conspired with the enemy when their own sons were dying on the battlefields of France?

Meanwhile, Casement's captured journals revealed his homosexual activity. Vargas Llosa suggests that much of the sexual activity described is fantasized, but the incidents described are sad. He bought minutes of sex from "beautiful" boys as he traveled. Following months of abstinence, he compulsively dove in again. The one young man who became a traveling companion turned out to be a British spy. Here is a man 52 years old idolized as a moral hero for risking his life and reputation to protect victims of exploitation and torture in far off jungles who has never known love—neither romantic love nor deep friendship—except from the mother who still appears in his dreams.

When I was first drawn to Vargas Llosa 24 years ago I was taken by the title of *Conversation in the Cathedral*, as

if it represented the tension between social-political and religious life. Only later did I learn that "Cathedral" was the name of a pub where they talked. But I was not far off. Vargas Llosa, a Nobel Prize winner in literature in 2010, remains a moralist committed to justice. So was Casement—though sometimes very confused.

At the same time that his life was deteriorating, Casement was being drawn, paradoxically, into the Catholic Church, influenced by missionary priests encountered in his travels; and he was delighted when the prison chaplain checked his baptismal record and convinced him he had been a Catholic all his life. Now, for comfort, he read *The Imitation of Christ*. On the eve of his execution two priests prayed with him. He confessed his sins at great length and wept profusely; then they talked for hours, mostly about their vocations. The next morning he received his first Communion, which was also his viaticum. Sunlight flooded the open yard. When the governor asked if he had anything to say, Casement simply murmured, "Ireland." The executioner said later that Roger Casement was "the bravest man" he had ever hanged.

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RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J., is literary editor of *America*.

LESLEY HAZLETON

## OUR BEST INTENTIONS

### BEYOND WAR Reimagining American Influence In A New Middle East

By David Rohde  
Viking. 240p \$27.95

When the Egyptian military seized power in June, American pundits instantly rushed to preach about democracy. This took some hubris, considering that two recent American

elections—2000 and 2004—are still considered by many to be of questionable legality and that redistricting is rapidly ensuring the minority status of Democratic strongholds throughout the south. Is the United States even in a position to preach democracy—especially since, as with national elections, so too with foreign policy: democracy is subject to money and how it is spent.



This is the hard-headed reality behind the new book by David Rohde, a two-time Pulitzer prize-winner and former Taliban captive, which focuses on how the U.S. government spends money abroad, specifically in the Middle East. It is an argument for small-scale economic aid rather than large-scale military aid and as such is immensely welcome in principle. The question is how to do it in practice. As Rohde writes, “Washington’s archaic foreign policy apparatus” and its weakened civilian agencies mean that “in the decades since the end of the Cold War,

the ability of the White House, State Department, and Congress to devise and carry out sophisticated political and development efforts overseas has withered.”

Whether Rohde is aware of it or not, the problem might be encapsulated in the subtitle of his own book, which assumes not only the existence of American influence, but also its necessity. Many of his sources are well-informed and palpably frustrated employees of the United States Agency for

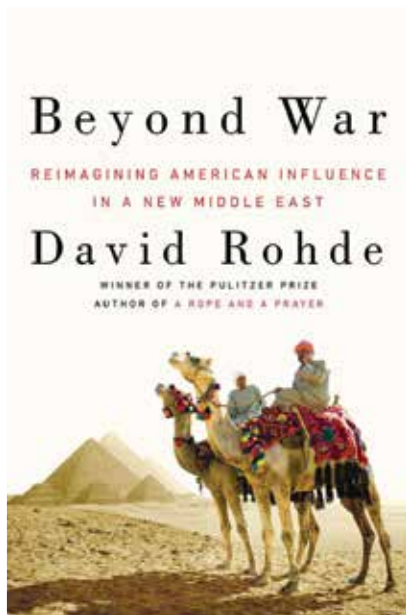
International Development who are basically in conflict with both the State Department and Congress. Yet

the stated goals of U.S.A.I.D. are clear: they include providing “economic, development and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of the foreign policy goals of the U.S.”

For all the talk about the need for humanitarian aid and intervention (most recently in Syria), the reality is purely political. What is presented as humanitarian aid is always a matter of foreign policy. And American foreign policy is still intensely focused on George W. Bush’s “global war on terror.”

The principle is that U.S. aid should act as a stabilizing force against militant Islamic extremism. But the very idea of the United States as a stabilizing force has been thoroughly undermined by the disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even the best-considered foreign aid has now been rendered suspect in many parts of the Middle East, especially when there is “a widespread perception of the American government as a finely tuned, nefarious machine, not an unwieldy cacophony of viewpoints,” and when authoritarian control fosters an intense rumor mill, with conspiracy theories rampant (most recently, for instance, Malala Yousafzai as a C.I.A. plant, or American-backed Zionists as the instigators of the new regime in Egypt). In Egypt in particular, Rohde notes, “Washington faces an extraordinary public-policy conundrum. Decades of support for Mubarak will not be forgotten overnight.”

Rohde details the conundrum country by country in a series of chapters, some intensively well reported (particularly on civilian contractors’ takeover of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and on the use of drones in Pakistan and Afghanistan), others (on Turkey, Libya and Tunisia) more perfunctory by comparison. But in the light of the military coup in June, the chapter on American dollars-for-



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peace financing and the Egyptian army's vast business empire is particularly fascinating and uncomfortably prescient.

Oddly, though, there is no chapter on Israel, the largest recipient of American aid. This seems to me tantamount to ignoring the elephant in the room, since the intense investment in an Israel that seems willing only to prolong and intensify the conflict with Palestine undermines U.S. efforts elsewhere in the region. A pretty strong argument could be made, in fact, that U.S.

support of Israel, driven by domestic electoral politics, runs directly counter to its own foreign policy interests. Inevitably, the United States is perceived elsewhere in the Middle East as at least tolerating if not encouraging Israel's land grab in the Palestinian territories; if its funds do

not literally finance the expansionist project, they certainly free up funds that do.

Even assuming the best American intentions, then, they are all too often interpreted as the worst. But what exactly are those best intentions?

At root, this book is about America's perception of itself. Are we the world's greatest do-gooders, distributing our largesse (and our arms) where most urgently needed? Or are we acting to secure a blinkered and out-dated conception of our own interests?

Either way, as Rohde wrote in a New York Times op-ed article in May, "We should stop thinking we can transform societies overnight.... Nations must transform themselves. We should scale back our ambitions and concentrate on long-term economics." His economic recommen-

dations are accordingly small scale (sometimes to the level of pathos, as in his enthusiasm for an Egyptian version of "The Apprentice"). Yet his emphasis on entrepreneurship may actually undercut his argument that trying to force Western models on other countries will backfire. And this is the argument that matters.

Like Ambassador Chris Stevens in Libya, says Rohde, American officials need to listen rather than try to muscle their way in, whether economically or militarily. "The U.S. needs to hold its nerve as Egypt finds its way," he writes—not the American way, but its own way. A little respect, that is. Preach less, listen more. That may not be much of a "reimagining," but it's the really important message of this book.

**LESLEY HAZLETON** is a former Middle East reporter; her most recent book is *The First Muslim: The Story of Muhammad (Riverhead)*. She blogs at *The Accidental Theologist*.

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# Rich Man, Poor Man

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), SEPT. 29, 2013

Readings: Am 6:1–7; Ps 146:7–10; 1 Tm 6:11–16; Lk 16:19–31

*“The rich man also died and was buried” (Lk 16:22)*

**P**aul’s First Letter to Timothy, though many scholars doubt Paul wrote it, reflects the heart of the Christian hope that Paul expressed in his letters: “Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” At the end of this letter, Timothy is encouraged to imitate “Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession” and “to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is at the coming of Christ Jesus that the fullness of him “who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords” will be displayed. This is the cosmic perspective that makes kings, tyrants, presidents, celebrities, nobles and rich men and women seem small or, rather, allows them to be viewed in the proper light: they are people like everyone else, not inherently better, not inherently worse, created by God for the “unapproachable light” of divinity, not for the passing glory, honor and riches of this world.

But it is hard to be humble, or to share, when you are the rich man and your perspective is narrowed to this world or, even narrower, to one’s own desires. Jesus tells what seems like a simple parable in Luke 16 about a rich man and a poor man. But the poor

man has a name, which alerts us that this parable may not be as simple as it seems. After all, whose name do you know better, Bill Gates or the beggar on your corner? But here we learn that the poor man’s name is Lazarus, while the rich man’s name remains unknown. Yet no one is nameless to God. We are all known by name, whether rich or poor; and no one, in the eyes of God, is superior to another. Our worth, our inherent belovedness, is not based on who we are but what we are: human beings created in the image of God.

There is another point about Lazarus’ name that is even more telling for this specific parable. The rich man seems to be separated from Lazarus and God only because of his wealth, which seems unjust, improper, simply not fitting. Why should earthly wealth condemn one to an eternal life of misery? The parable is subtle, however; the clue to why the rich man is judged is in the details. Lazarus lay in misery by the rich man’s gate for a long time, begging for food, but his pleas were not heard. Rather, they were ignored. How do we know this? In the parable it is the rich man who identifies Lazarus by name, when he calls out: “Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my

tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.” If he knows Lazarus by name in the afterworld, he knew Lazarus by name when he begged for mercy and food in this world. But the rich man decided he had better things to do than help the poor man at his gate. That decision to ignore the poor, Jesus demonstrates for us, has eternal implications.

Even accounting for the rich man’s turning away from Lazarus, the issue of wealth still discomfits. It does seem that there is something inherently distracting about worldly riches that focus our attention on earthly pleasures. In the parable Abraham says, “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on Lazarus sitting at your gate. When you see him, how do you want to befriend him?

now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.” This is properly frightening, for it does suggest a kind of quid pro quo, where the “good things” of this life equate to agony in the life to come and “evil things” in this life to comfort in the world to come. Is this a necessary outcome?

No, for Jesus, throughout Luke and all of the Gospels, suggests that proper use of wealth can have positive implications both for those in need now and for the life to come. It is especially pertinent for those of us who are wealthier than we want to admit. We need to be certain about what truly matters to us, for it matters now and it matters eternally.

**JOHN W. MARTENS**

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## Friday, November 8, 2013 — PUBLIC LECTURES

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JOHN W. O'MALLEY, S.J., Georgetown University

"Theological and Reform Prelude: The Councils Before Trent"

NELSON H. MINNICH, The Catholic University of America

"What Happened and Did Not Happen After Trent"

SIMON DITCHFIELD, University of York, UK

"The Sensual and the Sensuous in the Art of the Tridentine Period"

MARCIA HALL, Temple University

TRACY COOPER, Temple University

"Reckoning with Trent: Poetry and Faith in Torquato Tasso's 'Jerusalem Delivered'"

LAURA BENEDETTI, Georgetown University

"Early Lutheran Perspectives on Trent"

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"From Trent's Reform Decrees to Vatican II as a Pastoral Council of 'Aggiornamento,' via Carlo Borromeo and Angelo Roncalli"

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