

America

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Talking About Marriage and Family

AMERICAN FAMILIES SPEAK OUT ON THE UPCOMING SYNOD



OF MANY THINGS

It's a pretty good bet that if 300,000 people walked by your house in the space of an hour you would notice it. Yet here in New York City, where everything is just bigger and louder, some of us almost missed the calvacade of climate change activists bounding by our headquarters last weekend. We knew the march was coming, of course, but it hadn't fully penetrated our consciousness—much like climate change itself, I regret to say. It's the topic on all of our minds and yet one of those things we rarely talk about. The global climate appears to be changing faster than our politics.

At the same time, I sense some momentum. Many of the protesters at the New York march came from far-flung countries. It was the largest and most diverse march of its kind ever. In politics, we used to call that kind of momentum “the big Mo”—the invisible, unquantifiable, powerful force created by a succession of wins or other events that break your way. In a spiritual context, the big Mo' is often a movement of the spirit. On climate change, in addition to the mass movement now forming, it may take a dramatic divine gesture to get the world to act.

The Holy Spirit has been pretty active in the church these days as well. Everywhere I travel there are signs of the Holy Spirit at work: greater openness, greater freedom, greater generosity. People in general seem less afraid, more hopeful. That is the telltale sign of a Kairos moment, a time when God enters into events in a dramatically new way. It's no accident, I think, that this Kairos moment comes on the heels of a moment of deep despair, of scandal, the most wrenching period in the life of the contemporary church. It's important to remember that no human being is creating this moment. If it is a Kairos moment, then it is a movement of the Holy Spirit. Like the rest of us, Pope Francis is merely a participant in this moment, even if his participation is

more dramatic and far-reaching.

Another participant in this Kairos moment is the new archbishop of Chicago, Blase Cupich, the current bishop of Spokane. The pope's choice of him to be the ninth archbishop of Chicago surprised many, including the new archbishop himself, who told reporters on Sept. 20 that he was “quite overwhelmed and very surprised” when he received the news in mid-September. Bishop Cupich rightly cautioned against reading too much into his appointment. “I think the Holy Father is a pastoral man. I think that his priority is not to send a message but to send a bishop and that is what he is sending here,” he told reporters.

When asked about the church's sexual abuse scandal, Bishop Cupich praised the leadership of the outgoing archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Francis George, citing his work to implement a nationwide zero tolerance policy. “He was the one who made it happen in the discussions in Rome. He is the one who pressed for it more than anybody,” Bishop Cupich said. Bishop Cupich wrote last year in these pages that Pope Francis “reveals himself as a fresh witness of the Gospel, who is stirring our hearts to take up the journey with him as a fellow disciple with new vigor and purpose.” That is an apt description of how we should all respond to this Kairos moment, for while we are all mere participants, God couldn't do it without us. In fact, without us, he wouldn't need to do it at all.

Bishop Cupich is a long-time friend and contributor to *America*. He goes to Chicago with our best wishes and fervent prayers. He will need the prayers of all of us as he assumes responsibility for the church in the nation's third largest city, much bigger than the diocese he leaves behind. In fact, the diocese of Spokane is about a third of the size of the crowd that walked passed my house last weekend.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

America

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Cover: Pope Francis baptizes an infant in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican on Jan. 12. The pope baptized 32 children during a celebration on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters

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Judith Valente reviews "**Crossings and Dwellings**" at the Loyola University Museum of Art, and John V. Connorton Jr. talks about **the legacy of Ian Paisley**, right. Digital highlights on page 15 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



Peace Now? How?

When Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., superior general of the Society of Jesus, wrote to Jesuit provincial superiors and other advisers throughout the world about the main challenge of our time, he spoke in the spirit of Pope Francis. What, he asked, can the Society do for peace? The answers flooded in, and his reply letter to all 16,000 Jesuits worldwide was a challenge to think, pray and act.

Pope Francis recently told a crowd at an Italian war memorial, “War is madness” and said it seemed as if World War III were already being fought in a “piecemeal” fashion around the globe. A dangerous confrontation between the West and Russia simmers in Ukraine. The bombed ruins of Gaza smolder, and in Iraq ISIS tortures and kills Muslims and Christians alike with impunity.

In 1973 Father General Pedro Arrupe told his fellow Jesuits that some of them might die living a “faith that does justice.” Sixteen years later, six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter were murdered in the midst of El Salvador’s civil war. Last April Frans van der Lugt, S.J., was shot in the head in front of his home in Homs, Syria, where he had served the people as a psychotherapist and pastor for 48 years. Throughout the 20th century, in persecutions, world wars, concentration camps and violent social movements, over 300 Jesuits met death.

The letter from Father Nicolás challenged Jesuit schools to “take the risk of being wounded as Jesus was” and develop interdisciplinary programs that instill spirituality and forgiveness. But first, he said, Jesuits must achieve “reconciliation among ourselves.” Only then can the Society become a “prophetic institution that denounces the injustices that produce violence,” even unto death.

Black Lung Returns

“Black lung, black lung, oh you’re just biding your time,” we have been warned in song. It appears black lung’s time—incredibly—has come again.

The worst form of the coal miner’s disease—progressive fibrosis, a torturous, incurable condition—has come roaring back after being essentially eliminated in the 1990s. The danger of black lung has been known for decades; it has stolen the lives of 76,000 miners since 1968. But the means for preventing it, dust suppression and air filtering systems, have also been well known, and they were effective.

Just 15 years ago, the prevalence of this most serious form of black lung among miners with at least 25 years of service had been reduced to just 0.33 percent. But by 2012, according to a recent report from the National Institute

for Occupational Safety and Health, black lung among such longtime miners shot up ten-fold to 3.23 percent, the highest level since the early 1970s. The study’s authors blame the spike on overexposure to dust and increased toxicity stemming from changes in dust composition. New techniques for coal extraction are reaching smaller coal seams through thicker layers of rock that throw out new combinations of toxic silica.

Sadly the current percentage of affected miners will surely creep higher; because of the disease’s long latency period many of today’s working miners do not know how sick they are. And it will likewise be years before the effectiveness of any new effort to combat black lung will be clear. That is all the more reason to accelerate the response to this health emergency, but mining concerns are battling government regulators over new standards for dust control. The inexcusable resurgence of black lung should be all the argument needed to immediately beef up worker protections and regulatory surveillance.

Sacred Silence

Everyone knows—or should know—that a priest cannot break the confessional seal. Canon law is clear on this point. Some have argued that the person making a confession can waive his or her right to confidentiality and thus release the priest from his obligation. That question might soon reach the U.S. Supreme Court.

In Baton Rouge, La., a 16-year-old girl filed a suit against the local diocese claiming that she told her confessor that she was being abused by a lay parishioner when she was 14 and that the priest told her to “sweep it under the floor and get rid of it.” The girl has waived her right to confidentiality so that the priest might be free to testify. The diocese maintains that the state should not use its power to gain access to a conversation between a penitent and a priest during confession. The initial lawsuit was thrown out by the appellate court in Louisiana, but that decision was overturned by the state supreme court. The diocese has petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court for review.

In a blog post for The Jesuit Post channel on Patheos, Sam Sawyer, S.J., pointed to the complexities of the case. The priest has a duty to protect the right to secrecy of an individual penitent, he explained, but his duty goes further: to protect the integrity of sacramental confession itself for the benefit of all penitents. No individual penitent can relieve the confessor from this dimension of his obligation to secrecy. But a priest/confessor can help an abuse victim in other ways: by encouraging the penitent, for example, to report the abuse outside the bounds of the sacrament.

The N.F.L. Fumbles

Discussions leading up to the Synod of Bishops on the Family have largely centered on the pastoral situation of divorced and remarried Catholics, as well as external forces like poverty, migration and changing social norms that challenge modern families. Much less has been said about those for whom the greatest threat comes from within a family or from a loved one. But the recent controversy surrounding the National Football League's monumental mishandling of cases of alleged domestic abuse by its players serves as a painful reminder that conversations about the family cannot ignore this often-invisible crime.

In February, surveillance video emerged of the Baltimore Ravens's running back Ray Rice dragging his unconscious fiancée (now wife), Janay Palmer, out of an Atlantic City casino elevator. Rice was charged with assault but avoided jail time by entering a pretrial intervention program for first-time abusers, and in July received a paltry two-game suspension from N.F.L. Commissioner Roger Goodell. On Sept. 8, a second video was released, this one showing the horrific knockout punch to Ms. Palmer's head. Rice was immediately cut by the Ravens and suspended indefinitely by the N.F.L.

Ray Rice's case is unique not for its brutality but for its publicity. Many instances of domestic abuse never become known beyond the walls of the home, much less on national television. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, one in three women will experience abuse at the hands of an intimate partner at some point in her life. Victims of abuse are at a higher risk for depression, heart disease, post-traumatic stress disorder and homelessness. Geographic isolation, mistrust of police and concerns about immigration status often prevent the most vulnerable women from reporting abuse to authorities. Furthermore, girls who witness abuse in the home are more likely to become victims themselves, while young boys who see domestic violence are more likely to become abusers.

The N.F.L. is uniquely positioned to help break this cycle. Few institutions rival the cultural influence of professional football in the United States, especially among young boys and men. And as an industry that brings in \$10 billion every year by glorifying aggression, it has a special obligation to take a public and uncompromising stand against violence toward women.

Toward that end, the National Football League should institute a zero-tolerance policy. If a player is charged with

domestic or sexual assault, he should be suspended indefinitely as the case makes its way through the courts. If the player is found guilty, he should be banned for life from the league. Cases in which the victim chooses to avoid the courts should be handled on an individual basis but with equal severity where credible evidence of abuse exists. To be effective, this policy needs to be collectively bargained with the N.F.L. Players Association, which is appealing Rice's indefinite suspension and has expressed concerns that unilateral changes to the personal conduct policy may infringe on members' due process rights.

The league should implement mandatory and ongoing training and education. Currently, domestic abuse education is a part of mandatory rookie programs designed to enhance the decision-making capabilities of new players. Mr. Goodell has pledged to expand this training to all players and staff, provide counseling for victims and potential aggressors and raise awareness in communities through public service campaigns. The N.F.L. has brought on three senior-level women to implement these initiatives. It is up to the public and sports writers to follow these developments once the current crisis disappears from the headlines to see whether they represent substantial change or simply good public relations.

Finally, it is time to reform the league's leadership. Mr. Goodell no longer possesses legitimacy to serve as the sole arbiter of discipline in the N.F.L. He should at the very least hand over his role in such deliberations to a more credible party. The commissioner's dedication to "protecting the shield" should not come at the price of justice for players and victims.

Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore, who counts many Ravens fans among his flock, expressed hope that recent events would "serve as a catalyst for the kind of change needed to provide real protection [to] women." The church has learned, and continues to learn, of the great pain and suffering caused when an institution responds to scandal, abuse and crimes within its ranks by denying, covering up and circling the wagons to "protect our own." In September Mr. Goodell and league officials said many of the right things but left the impression that their primary concern was to contain the scandal and protect football's image. This October, Domestic Violence Awareness month, the N.F.L. has an opportunity to demonstrate it is just as serious about protecting women.



REPLY ALL

False Mercy

“The Message of Mercy” (9/15) brought out the nature of mercy very beautifully, but Cardinal Walter Kasper lost me at the conclusion. The church already tolerates “brother and sister” arrangements for the sake of re-admittance to the sacraments and allows the continuation of civil relationships where obligations, for instance to children or an elderly spouse, necessitate it. Does the cardinal then mean that irrespective of the moral character of the continuing relationship, the church should welcome remarried Catholics back to the sacraments? If not, then it seems no real change is necessary, except perhaps clearer pastoral norms.

If, however, what Cardinal Kasper means is re-admittance “irrespective of sexual activity” in the new relationship, then such a change would devalue the church’s understanding of the marital bond, as well as the rights and moral obligations which flow from it. It would also raise questions about the true seriousness of moral failings in other kinds of relationships. Can the church really speak of repentance and mercy without the resolution of those questions through the appropriate canonical and sacramental forums (i.e., the marriage tribunal regarding validity and the confessional regarding moral fault)? To do otherwise lifts no burden, and seems to extend the false mercy the cardinal rightfully decries.

COLIN DONOVAN
Online Comment

Youthful Spirits

“Holy Spirits,” by Carlos Mesquita (9/15), is a modestly written piece with a bombshell takeaway: The youth drinking culture—and, I would posit, its closely bound phenomenon, the hookup culture—are the products of crushing spiritual emptiness, not the outpouring of youthful high spirits. This young man in under 1,000 words lays out the simple, powerful supports

our young people need so desperately for spiritual safety and maturity: community, catechesis and role models. Oh, and the Eucharist is in there, too. What is needed now is a related critical exploration of how our young women are drinking themselves unconscious to convince themselves that, as good college feminists, they actually enjoy the degradation of casual sex without love or commitment.

BRENDA BECKER
Online Comment

Policy Please

In “Deporting the Heart” (9/15), Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., does a good job describing the horrors of the failing or failed Central American states, but it is not clear just what he wants the United States to do about them. “Until we deal with the root causes of their departures from their home countries, people will keep coming,” he writes. So “we” are supposed to deal with the root causes? Exactly how?

And as for the migrants who cross our borders, are we supposed to accept them all? Is there any limit? Mexico has 122 million people; the three other failing states have over 27 million. Must we absorb all who want to come, including the criminal gangs? It is easy to pontificate about “Holy Innocents” but far more difficult to form a reasonable policy. Perhaps that is why Father Groody doesn’t try.

THOMAS FARRELLY
Online Comment

Building Bridges

Re “Faithful Aspirations,” by Frank DeSiano, C.S.P. (9/1): As a pastoral minister, I have used the information contained in Ms. Weddell’s *Forming Intentional Disciples* in numerous workshops, presentations and trainings, presenting to over a hundred clergy, religious, lay ecclesial ministers, parish leaders and ordinary lay Catholics. Taken as a whole, the tools presented in this book foster anything but an elitist mentality among the participants.

Among ordinary Catholics who grieve the loss of post-modern young adult children or middle-aged, once-active parishioners to the evangelical churches or the land of the spiritual-but-not-religious “nones,” I often witness a hushed reverence, and an unanticipated joy at the prospect of tools that can help them build a bridge of trust to family, friend and neighbor, where once one did not exist.

The opportunity to respectfully and compassionately listen to the spiritual journey of another, instead of attaching a label, opens their eyes to a new way of evangelizing: through spiritually accompanying one another, at the grass-roots level, as inspired by the words of Pope Francis in “The Joy of the Gospel” (No. 173). Their eyes light up and the voice says yes to the words of C. S. Lewis: “Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”

KATHERINE COOLIDGE
Online Comment

More Than Charity

In “An Itinerant Preacher” (8/18), Msgr. Peter Vaghi writes, “The focus on charity and the poor not only is fundamental to the Gospel; it has been a consistent feature of Catholic social teaching from its modern advent.” Groups like Catholic Charities indisputably do wonderful work, but the poor are more interested in a just, living wage than in charity from the tips of our fingers. Not since the happy day of labor priests in the United States in the mid-20th century has the church been really active in promoting a living wage.

Let’s be frank: social justice issues have been conflated with the politics of contraception and abortion; raising the minimum wage and pro-choice policies are perceived as “Democrat issues” by much of the hierarchy. On the issue of a living wage, the action of the Catholic Church in the U.S. has too often been limited of late to “Go in peace, keep warm and eat well.” What a shame to the memory of pioneer labor

priests like the venerable Msgr. George Higgins.

ERNEST C. RASKAUSKAS SR.
Potomac, Md.

Changing Communion

In "It Takes Time" (8/18), James Hanvey, S.J., speaks of the "Anglican Church," meaning the Church of England. But what about the larger issue of the Anglican Communion, which embraces churches like the Episcopal Church in the United States as well as the Church of England? For them, presumably, the question of the establishment or disestablishment of the Church of England is simply a local U.K. issue rather than one affecting the international Anglican Communion as a whole. How far can national churches within that larger Communion follow their own policies and beliefs and still remain part of that communion? After all, here in the United States there have been women bishops for some years, and indeed the present presiding bishop is a woman and, by all reports, a very good bishop indeed.

I have no idea what the answer to that question may be, or how the Anglican Communion as a whole will answer it, and it's clear that it has led to some divisive feelings between Western and non-Western members of that communion. Nevertheless, it may well be that we Roman Catholics have something to learn from our Anglican brothers and sisters about the shaping of local churches. To what extent, for instance, does Rome's forbidding the ordination of women genuinely reflect a theological objection, and to what extent is it simply an outgrowth of the traditional misogyny of a specific time and place?

NICHOLAS CLIFFORD
Online Comment

A New Israel

Re "Gaza Again," by Margot Patterson (8/4): We need a policy toward Israel that says: If you are threatened with military force, we will act to ensure your continued existence as a state. But

f STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to "Holy Spirits," by Carlos Mesquita (9/15).

What struck me about the article was not so much the issue of the drinking culture, but the alienation that the writer felt about being unlike his peers, and how he began to question his own identity because he was awash in a culture with different values. I think it can be challenging to realize that when you are different from everyone else in your group, it is not a sign that you are somehow deficient;

we will no longer prevent votes in the United Nations or statements of condemnation just because they are critical. We will no longer be the financial backers of the humiliations Palestinians endure every day.

If the Palestinians are truly to see a new Israel, Israel needs to do things they do not want to do. One of them is to refuse to expand the settlements—which reward settlers for having large families—and instead have settlement building go up, not out. Another is to do more than issue a tap on the wrist for settler "accidents" that cause a Palestinian's

it is merely a sign that you are in the wrong group.

ANDREW JEUNG

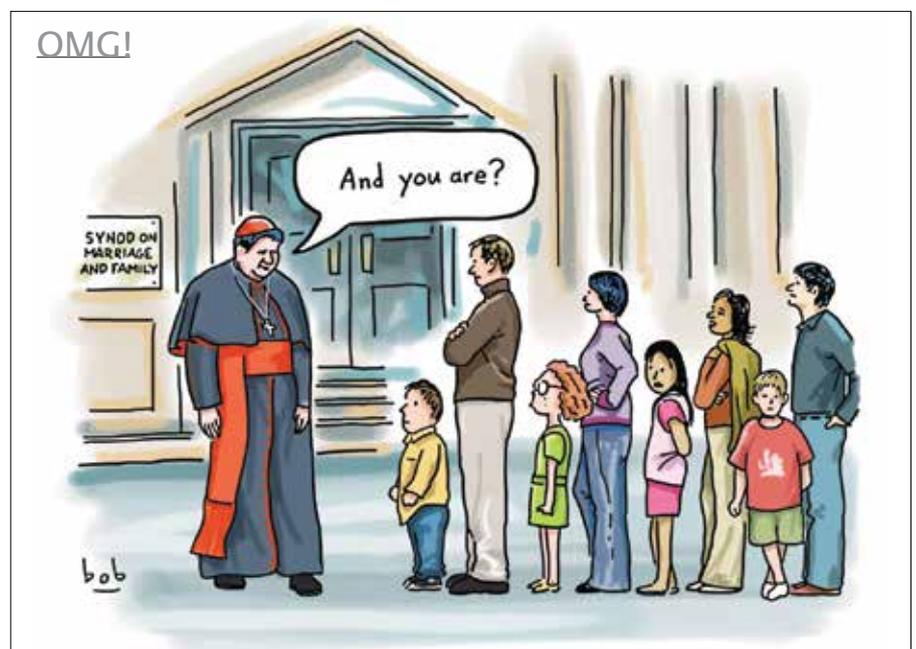
Don't discount the drinkers' relationship with God. The two do coexist. I understand the pitfalls, but a drinking college student may also be a moral, Christian example of faith, hope and love. After all, Jesus drank and associated with the sinners. Perhaps the drinking college student smells like his/her "flock," which is a noble goal if we are leading by Christian example.

KEVIN BLEY

death. They must ensure that Israeli military and police personnel that interact daily with Palestinians treat them with civility. The Palestinians have to have the knowledge that they are part of the larger society.

These changes will not have an effect immediately, but over time they will dial down the humiliation and anger that drive Palestinian lives. When a young boy sees his parents putting up with these injustices day after day, he doesn't forget.

CHRISTINE MILLER
Online Comment



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

CHICAGO

Bishop Blase Cupich Appointed to Nation's Third Largest Diocese

Describing himself as “beyond surprised” by his appointment to the Archdiocese of Chicago, Spokane Bishop Blase Cupich pledged to work with people of faith to “serve the common good” and continue efforts to promote healing in a church community wounded by the sex abuse crisis. During his first meeting with Chicago’s press on Sept. 20, Bishop Cupich said he would “keep the focus on protecting children and healing people who have been abused by Catholic clergy.”

“It’s always going to be imperfect, it’s never going to be enough, but we can try to do as best we can with our limited resources but also with the great grace of God to bring about healing on many deep levels. I’m committed to doing that,” said Bishop Cupich. “I will work hard at this and make it an important part of my ministry.”

Local and national media have depicted the ascension of Bishop Cupich as an indication that Pope Francis would no longer be appointing “cultural warriors,” as his predecessor Cardinal Francis George had frequently been portrayed. Bishop Cupich, however, took pains to deflate that analysis. “I don’t come with any intentionality,” he told the press assembled at the archdiocesan chancery. “I think the Holy Father is a pastoral man; I think that his priority is not to send a message, but a bishop and that’s what he’s sending here—someone to serve the needs of people.... I think he cares a lot about people and he took his time and he wanted to provide a pastor, so I think he sent a pastor, not a message.”

Commenting on his reputation as a “church moderate,” Bishop Cupich said, “Labels are hard for anybody to live up to one way or another. I just try to be myself and I try to learn from great people. You have had great people here in this archdiocese pastor you, and I am following a great man. I am going to try to learn from you.”

“It’s not my agenda, it’s not what I feel. I am going to try to be attentive to what the Lord wants. Maybe if there’s moderation in that, then I am a moderate.”

He did agree that his personal style was likely going to offer a change in pastoral “tone” in Chicago. “Everybody brings their own gifts and talents and experiences. If you look at the history of the various eight predecessors, archbishops here, they have all brought something different, so yes I think that

it is reasonable to expect that there will be different emphases and different approaches; that’s normal.”

Asked how he would prioritize his efforts on behalf of Chicago’s large Hispanic community, Bishop Cupich took the opportunity to scold the Obama administration and Congress for inaction on comprehensive immigration reform. “It’s time for political leaders to put aside their own agendas and to take up this issue,” he said, “so I want to take this opportunity to urge that again. Everyday we delay it is a day too long and we should move on it today.”

Cardinal George will become the first leader of the Chicago archdiocese to retire from that role, and he thanked Pope Francis for acceding to his request to do so. He told reporters that retirement will allow him not only to assist Bishop Cupich in the transition to the

HIS KIND OF TOWN. Bishop Blase Cupich of Spokane, Wash. at a meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in New Orleans in June 2014.



leadership of 2.2 million Catholics in the nation’s third largest archdiocese, but to focus on his health. The cardinal’s battle with cancer has clearly taken a toll. He said the archdiocese needed a full-time leader, something his health challenges no longer allowed him to be.

He thanked Pope Francis for sending “an able man who will serve well,” adding, “I leave this church in better hands than mine.”

Bishop Cupich praised Cardinal George for his steadfastness during discussions related to the church’s development of the Dallas “Charter for the Protection of Children.” “We would not have zero tolerance with regard to the issue of child protection if it were not for this man here,” Bishop Cupich said, referring to the cardinal. “He was the one who pressed for it more than anybody against some formidable opposition, so not only do we have that



in the church in the United States, we have that universally now.”

Both men will return to their current episcopal roles for the next few months. Bishop Cupich is finishing up a pastoral plan in Spokane, a diocese which faces significant financial challenges because of court settlements related to the sex abuse crisis and a messy bankruptcy. He will be installed as Chicago’s new archbishop on Nov. 18.

Bishop Cupich was born in Omaha, Neb., in 1949. He studied theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University and was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Omaha in 1975. In 1998, he was named bishop of Rapid City, S.D., and in 2010 he became bishop of Spokane. **KEVIN CLARKE**

Editor’s Note: For more on Bishop Cupich’s appointment, visit americamagazine.org/cupichcoverage.

ECONOMY

Small Progress On U.S. Poverty

For the first time since the Great Recession threw the United States and then the world into an economic tailspin, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that the U.S. poverty rate experienced a year-over-year decline, falling from 15 percent in 2012 to 14.5 percent in 2013. The last time the rate declined similarly was 2006. Though an improvement, the 2013 U.S. poverty rate was still 2 percentage points higher than it was in 2007, the year before recession began.

Even better news was a substantial reduction in America’s child poverty rate, which fell from 21.8 percent in 2012 to 19.9 percent in 2013. According to the Census Bureau’s annual analysis of poverty and income in the United States, released on Sept. 16, the number of children in poverty declined from 16.1 million to 14.7 million. This was the first time since 2000 that the child poverty rate declined.

The report suggests that there is plenty of reason to remain concerned with poverty in the United States. The overall number of people in poverty was unchanged at 45.3 million—about one third are children—and real median household income remained stagnant for the second year in a row, suggesting that average Americans are still waiting for relief years after the nation’s economic recovery began in 2009.

Catholic Charities USA, in its annual survey, reports a parallel slight decline in the number of Americans who have asked for help. The agency reports that in 2013 it served just over 9 million “unduplicated clients.” That number rep-

resents a decrease from the number of people it assisted at the peak of the recession, but the 2013 figure remains nearly 17 percent more than the number of people who asked for assistance in 2007, “demonstrating the continued impact of the Great Recession on the nation’s most vulnerable.”

Indeed, while absolute client numbers went down, those who did come to C.C.U.S.A. offices had more needs. In 2013, Catholic Charities reported 17.3 million health, education, nutrition, housing and other services to clients across 31 categories—the highest number of services ever recorded. The Rev. Larry Snyder, president and chief executive officer, told *America* that requests for food assistance represented the largest need C.C.U.S.A. offices fielded in 2013.

He said the new census data and Catholic Charities’ own tracking indicate some modest good news about the state of the economy but cautioned “the people we’re serving have greater needs” and worried over an increase in the number of seniors, some for the first time, coming to C.C.U.S.A. for assistance. More people may have found jobs as the nation’s recovery continues, he said, but many of them



FIGHTING HUNGER. Volunteers serving up a warm meal through a Catholic Charities USA emergency assistance program last November in Chicago.

are now earning wages that are far below what they had been receiving before the recession.

Father Snyder plans to step down from his position at Catholic Charities in February, but before he goes he is leading a national effort to change the mind-set of the social service provider. He wants to move it away from a strategy of merely responding to emergency needs and begin more integrated and comprehensive management of clients that will begin to move them out of poverty permanently. "How you approach people has a lot to do with it, he said. "The government programs we help administer look at people in their deficits and their needs and use a one-size-fits-all approach.

"We're trying to create a system that adjusts to the individuals, that looks at what assets they have in relation to their needs and decides what's the plan to help them get out of poverty instead of what will just help them survive."

KEVIN CLARKE

Murder on the Mediterranean

The deaths of up to 500 mostly Palestinian and Syrian migrants and refugees could be an act of mass murder, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, said on Sept. 19. Hundreds of migrant workers and refugees from Gaza and Syrian conflicts were aboard a boat that left from the Egyptian port of Damietta and are feared dead at the hands of human traffickers who rammed and sank the boat off the Malta coast. "The callous act of deliberately ramming a boat full of hundreds of defenseless people is a crime that must not go unpunished," the high commissioner said. "If the survivors' accounts are indeed true—and they appear all too credible—we are looking at what amounts to mass mur-

NEWS BRIEFS

According to a Vatican statement released on Sept. 20, Pope Francis has created a "special commission for the study of **reform of the canonical matrimonial process**" that will seek to simplify the procedure, "making it more streamlined, and safeguarding the principle of the indissolubility of marriage." • **Catholic aid agencies** in the Philippines were among first responders on Sept. 18 as a downpour inundated Manila and surrounding communities on Sept. 18. • **Bishop Anthony Fisher, O.P.**, 54, has been named the next archbishop of Sydney, Australia's only cardinalatial see, replacing Cardinal George Pell, who left the see of Sydney earlier this year to become prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy in Rome. • In a letter delivered privately by an Argentine politician, Pope Francis invited the **President of China, Xi Jinping**, to meet with him in the Vatican to discuss world peace, expressing his own willingness to travel "tomorrow" to Beijing for this same purpose. • Canadian bishops will launch a new "campaign for palliative care and against euthanasia" on Sept. 28 to combat a push to legalize euthanasia in their country. • **Vice President Joe Biden** was on hand to help kick off the third "Nuns on the Bus" tour, a 10-state tour promoting voter registration and participation in the political process, on Sept. 17 in Des Moines, Iowa.



der in the Mediterranean." According to survivors, there may have been 100 children under the age of 10 aboard the boat, among several hundred people crammed into a lower boat deck while several hundred more were on a top deck constantly exposed to the sun.

A Living Tradition

"They claim to know on their own what truth is, but Catholic doctrine is not a closed system, but a living tradition that develops," Cardinal Walter Kasper of Germany told the Italian daily *Il Mattino* on Sept. 18. Cardinal Kasper was responding to a new book featuring contributions by five cardinals who criticized his proposal to make it easier for divorced and civilly remarried Catholics to receive Communion. "None of my brother

cardinals has ever spoken with me," he said. "I, on the other hand, have spoken twice with the Holy Father. I arranged everything with him. He was in agreement. What can a cardinal do but stand with the pope? I am not the target, the target is another." Asked if the target was in fact Pope Francis, Cardinal Kasper replied: "Probably yes." The book, *Remaining in the Truth of Christ*, includes essays in response to Cardinal Kasper's proposal by three participants in the Synod of Bishops on the Family: Cardinal Gerhard Müller, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; Cardinal Raymond L. Burke, prefect of the Supreme Court of the Apostolic Signature; and Cardinal Carlo Caffarra of Bologna, Italy.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

Vote Keeps the Kingdom United

Supporters of Scottish independence did not see the result they were hoping for, but it is fair to say that democracy won in a national referendum that included 85 percent of Scotland's eligible voters. At 8:06 am on Friday morning, Sept. 19, "No" crossed the line. The result, 55 to 45 percent for "No," a tad wider than some anticipated, is clear but brought no closure to the debate; the conversation moves into even newer, just as uncharted waters.

The campaign electrified the Scottish nation as support for independence surged in the final weeks into a brief, tantalizing lead. In the biggest grassroots democratic turnout in decades in Scotland and the United Kingdom, a staggering 97 percent of eligible voters registered, including over 100,000 16- and 17-year-olds, the first time they could vote.

On the morning after the night before, everyone sought to calculate what this all means. We've never been here before. Commentators agree that this has emerged as a vote for change. The Westminster political establishment has, in the words of leading Scots entrepreneur Sir Tom Hunter, "been shocked to its core." The "No" campaign may have won, but over one and a half million U.K. subjects (we're not citizens) did vote to break up the union. The BBC's chief political correspondent, Nick Robinson, said that the referendum "lit the touchpaper on the explosive question of where power lies in the U.K."

Where does all this go now? As I

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

write this, on the day after Referendum Day, it is too soon to say, such has been the excitement and energy. It will take some time for the adrenaline to dissipate. It is difficult, though, to see how things can return to a status quo that has been so shaken.

The yes vote came from a massive ground-up movement of many disparate groups; the antonym of and a direct challenge to Westminster politics.

It is difficult to see how things can return to a status quo that has been so shaken.

The majority vote for no ensured that the United Kingdom still exists, but a significant proportion of the Scottish populace rejected what they perceive as a broken political model. Independence supporters in Scotland and increasingly in other parts of this shared archipelagic democracy are turning against what many perceive as elitist governance, marked by privilege and a sense of entitlement. Average people feel detached; the concentration on London and the South-east is too much for many of the U.K.'s northern subjects.

The debate has been often good-humored, intelligent and passionate, but there has been plenty of division, too. Who will be the agents of reconciliation? Leading up to the vote, U.K. churches appeared, on the whole, nervous about getting too involved in the independence debate. Three weekends before the vote, the Scottish Catholic bishops had limited themselves to encouraging partici-

pation and careful thought and prayer, with particular attention to Catholic social teaching. Many thought that the church could have provided a more detailed account of the specific relevance to social doctrine to this contest. The moderator (leader) of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Rt. Rev. John Chalmers, on BBC radio, congratulated the nation on its mature conduct of "this wonderful process," urged people to take down their signs and banners and proposed a reconciliation service on the first Sunday after the vote (Sept. 21) at Edinburgh's historic St. Giles Cathedral.

What happens next? Prime Minister David Cameron, moving quickly to contain the situation, claimed on Friday morning that the question of Scottish independence is now settled "for a generation"; others are not so sure. All that grassroots energy has to earth somewhere. In Glasgow, a source reports, people are already putting together components of a new, pro-independence, left-of-center party.

The U.K. general election will be held on May 7, 2015; the nation's place and role in Europe will be a central point of contention. Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond quickly suggested that the existing Scottish government would not seek another referendum "any time soon." But in a concession speech early in the morning on Sept. 19, he acknowledged that the Scottish people had voted against outright independence with three telling words: "at this stage." Later that day he resigned. It is anyone's guess what—or when—the next stage will be, but it is likely to be just as enthralling as this referendum campaign has been.

DAVID STEWART



When in Rome

Some people believe that Jesuits can be characterized as follows: We all have doctorates; we all know the pope personally; and we all travel to Rome frequently. But, like many Jesuits, I do not have a Ph.D.; I've never met the pope; and the last time I was in Rome was decades ago—in 1994, on my way home from a two-year stay in Kenya.

That was true until June. Last year, a Jesuit friend invited me to assist as a spiritual guide on a pilgrimage to Rome for a group of 40 adults connected to two Jesuit high schools. It would be an "Ignatian pilgrimage," that is, focusing on sites that figure in the life of St. Ignatius Loyola.

When my friend first invited me, I warned him that I knew little about Rome. I imagined myself among a group of American tourists in the middle of a busy piazza with tiny cars buzzing around us, and saying, "St. Peter's Square? Gee, I'm sure it's around here somewhere."

"Don't worry," said my friend, "all you have to do is offer a spiritual reflection at the beginning of our day. The tour guide and I will take care of the rest."

The pilgrimage this summer was enormous fun. Our group stayed in a pleasant hostel not far from the Vatican walls, we were able to get within 10 feet of Pope Francis during his weekly outdoor audience (along with 50,000 of the pope's closest friends) and spent an entire day in Assisi, a town that is like one, big outdoor church.

At one point, we visited the

Catacombs of St. Sebastian, outside the Roman walls. Near the end of our tour, we saw a sizeable tomb decorated with remarkably well-preserved drawings. On one side was a group of people, on the other a man carrying something indistinct. "That's the 'Feeding of the Multitudes,'" said our guide, "and the 'Good Shepherd.' From the second century." There we stood, in front of the creation of someone from the earliest days of the church: I felt an almost electric shock of connection.

Even after the official pilgrimage ended, there were many graces. Providentially, my sister's family was on vacation in Italy, and my friend and I stayed a few days longer to spend time with her, her husband and my two nephews, ages 8 and 15. It was a joy to see so many Catholic sites through the eyes of my nephews and to witness their interest in St. Ignatius, whom they know by now. This year Charles, the older brother, chose Ignatius as his confirmation name—with no pressure from his uncle. Their interest, however, manifested itself in surprising ways: in the rooms of St. Ignatius, alongside a bronze bust of the saint, they took selfies.

Not everything about our church, I was reminded, is easy to understand. One day we visited the Church of the Gesù, the mother church of the Jesuit Order. After entering, I led Matthew and Charles to an ornate altar. "That's where St. Ignatius is buried," I said. "Really? Right here?" said Matthew. We prayed before his tomb.

Across the aisle was an altar

that would need more explanation. "Matthew," I said, "do you know who St. Francis Xavier was?" He shook his head. I explained that Francis was Ignatius's best friend. "Uh huh," he said. And Francis Xavier went around the world to preach the Gospel. "Uh huh." I pointed to a golden reliquary above the altar and said, "And that's his right arm."

"Wait—that's his *arm*?" said my nephew. "Why is it here?" I explained that it was a special part of his body because it had baptized many people during his travels.

It was a joy to see so many Catholic sites through the eyes of my nephews.

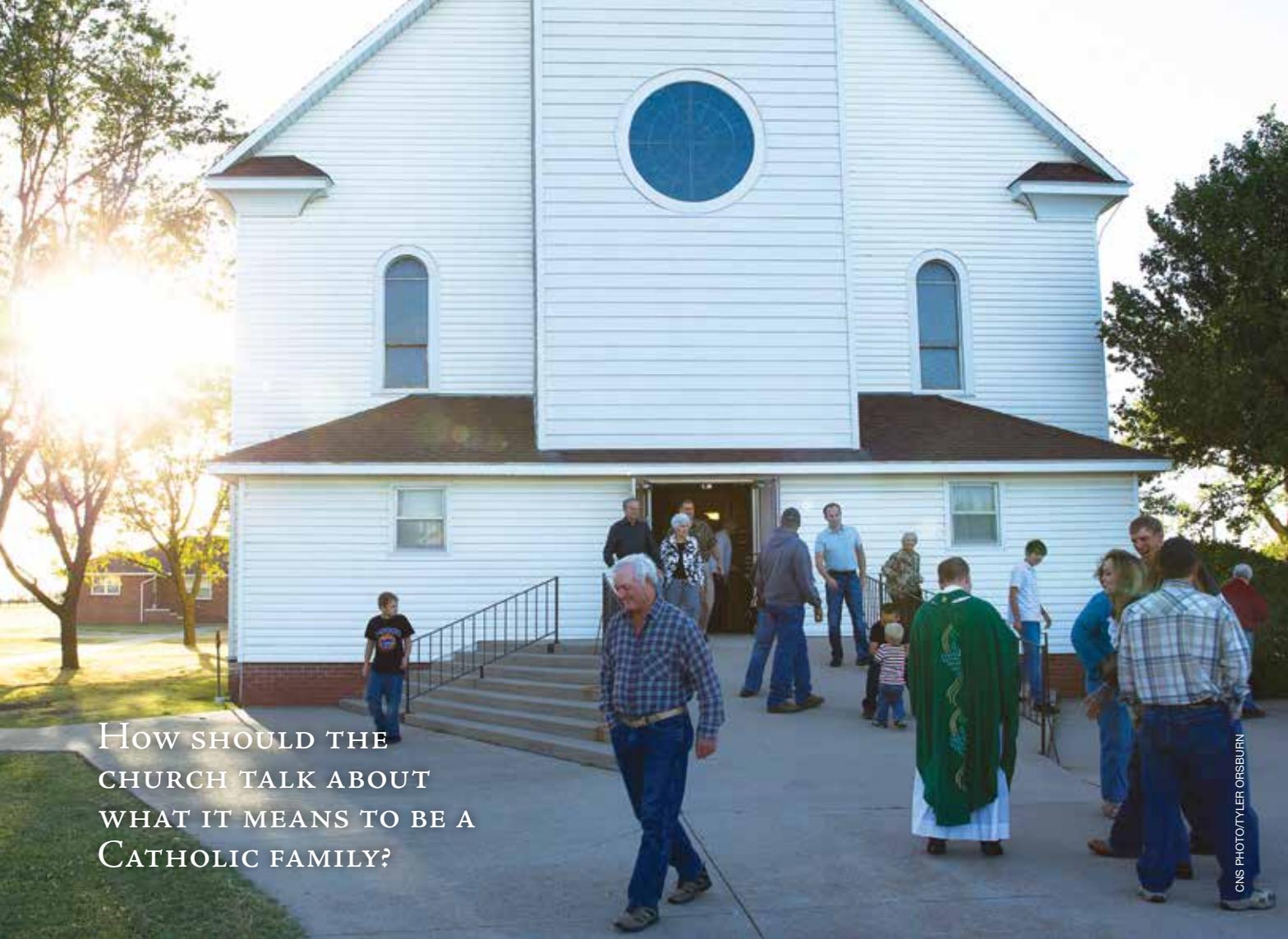
"Where's the rest of him?" Goa, a city in India. "Why is it there?" They liked Francis very much in India, I explained, so they kept his body and sent his arm here.

With wide eyes, Matthew looked at the arm, and then at me, and then back at the arm. Then he said, "That makes me very uncomfortable!"

In the coming years, I'm not sure how much my nephews will recall about their visit to Rome. I'll remember coming face to face with those haunting drawings in the catacombs, seeing the pope wave to our group in St. Peter's Square, and praying with my family in the room where St. Ignatius died. I hope that in some way the trip helped my nephews connect with the astonishing story of their faith, especially with those Christians who came before us—what they did, prayed, created and suffered.

One of them will certainly remember St. Francis Xavier—or, at the very least, a part of him.

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



ONS PHOTO/TYLER ORSBURN

HOW SHOULD THE CHURCH TALK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CATHOLIC FAMILY?

Speaking of Faith

BY HELEN ALVARÉ

OPEN HOUSE. Churchgoers in St. Leo, Kan., after Saturday evening Mass.

It is no small challenge to speak about “the family in America” given family diversity in this country. It is possible, however, to speak generally about the forces acting on families, and some of their effects within households, in light of the coming deliberations at the Synod of Bishops on the Family.

The working document prepared for the synod, called in Latin *Instrumentum Laboris* looks at these causes and effects in summary fashion, but does not quite capture the depth or texture of the disquiet within the American family. It thereby understates the need to move beyond the matter of how dioceses and parishes can tend directly to families. In order to get at the powerful influences today alienating men from women from children from the common good, the results of the synod must be to empower the laity to confront these influences and to do so with dramatically improved comprehension and expression of

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Catholic teachings concerning marriage and the family.

“Instrumentum Laboris” well summarizes the forces pressuring the family. It cites, among others, technology, media, hedonism, relativism, materialism, individualism, secularism, selfishness, the uncertainty and fragility of relations and a “liquid society” with a mentality of “waste” and a “culture of the moment.” By way of “effects” upon families, it names cohabitation, divorce, fear of childbearing and violence. It accurately portrays the practical ways that the outside forces contribute to these effects. It considers how these same forces lead to a failure or refusal to understand Catholic teachings on the family. It does not, however, portray well enough what I might call the family’s existential crises. Painting necessarily with a broad brush, I would characterize these crises as a loss of confidence, a loss of scripts and an excessive permeability.

Loss of confidence. By this I am referring to diminished hopes that it is possible, without great difficulty or risk, to find a person willing to be a spouse or to form a permanent, faithful bond. Fewer men and women are marrying, and the numbers are especially low among the poor and people of color. Dramatically more people, both young and old, opt for cohabitation. Yet today fewer cohabitations convert to marriage. The divorce rate remains high.

There is also a loss of confidence that it is possible, without overwhelming cost and a daunting juggling routine, for a couple to welcome children. Many have lost confidence that it is possible to secure the help of extended family or to find the time or the resources to care for elderly or disabled members. Our economy remains uncertain, buffeted by decisions made by far-away governments and global corporations. Our nation does not make policy with an eye to enhancing family strength.

Loss of scripts. By this I am referring to a reduced clarity about what it means to be a particular member of a family and how to interrelate with other members. Certainly this can render individuals more free to build family lives attuned to their particular gifts and shortcomings. It can free women from cabined roles and free children from oppressive conformity. But there are risks, too, when some scripts are lost. Family scripts can offer norms for individuals to “live up to” or “sacrifice for;” they often require the stronger to care

for the weaker. They affect other priorities too, like the script “family first, work second.” Today, however, technology, secularism, materialism and other forces are shredding these scripts. Reproductive technologies can confound family relations; by means of egg donation, the woman a child knows as “aunt” might in fact be her mother. Rising numbers of same-sex households, stepparenting and mothers cohabiting with men who are unrelated to their children, challenge notions of motherhood and fatherhood. Parents daily receive a cacophony of contradictory advice about their individual and mutual roles.

Permeability. By this I mean that the family is porous to external influences, information and people, to the extent that it is more difficult for it to grasp its own shape, identity and culture. Every day, schools, sports programs, employers, caretakers and even lawyers and judges participate actively in families’ lives. The latter are increasingly present not only in the form of a growing number of laws regulating parents and schools, but also via court orders

governing single and divorced parents’ schedules, finances and interactions. The Internet, too, is omnipresent, bringing work, information and entertainment into our lives around the clock.

A New Language

These changes leave many Americans with the sense that their family lives are falling short of joy, harmony, peace and time to breathe. They feel themselves struggling with messages, people and large systems that contradict what their faith and their own convictions and common sense hold to be true. It is well recognized, globally, that the United States is home to uniquely effective cultural messaging. Consequently, it would be misguided to conclude that U.S. families are merely victims of nostalgia for a mid-20th-century dream of family life. They are reacting, rather, to their environment as it is, as compared with what nature, reason and Revelation inspire them to want.

In this situation, it is not enough that church leaders undertake the good work of rousing their parishes and dioceses to reach out better to families both within them and on their margins. Rather, our church must become eminently more gifted in explaining the nature and functions of the family in

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currently meaningful language and in empowering the laity to address the sources of challenging external forces.

On the matter of improved communications, there is foundational work to do. Church teaching claims that permanent, faithful marriage between a man and a woman, open to children, is nothing less than an icon of God, a glimpse of the nature of God's relationship with his people and a way of understanding the meaning of our lives as loving service in the model of Jesus Christ. How many can understand all this? New words, new reflections are necessary, having reference to the situation on the ground as described by current sociological data. Families need better guidance regarding how to appropriate the fundamental tenets of Catholic teachings for themselves. Church leaders might pose relevant questions, for example: Why would two sexes image God? How do we understand the meaning of sex, given that God made sex the origin of human life, when he could have done otherwise? Why do our thoughts of love lead us to thoughts of forever? Where in our mundane lives do we approach a glimpse of the reality of a love that would die for the other? What does this imply about the link between marriage and the meaning of salvation? What does it mean that we see havoc unleashed when spouses turn their backs upon each other or sons are deprived of their fathers? What is the meaning of a young woman's sense of humiliation when she is ignored by the man she slept with last night

or refused marriage by someone only too willing to cohabit with her instead?

New language is needed even for those Catholics lucky enough to have found a home in their parishes or a religious order or lay movement. They are the beneficiaries of ever-improving parish and diocesan programs built to serve their marriage and family lives. But even they struggle to find the words to express what they know to be beautiful, in order to strengthen their own commitment, to teach their children, to share with disaffected Catholics or to enrich their community.

Those who feel on the peripheries of the church need new language even more. Whether they drifted or marched away, they need not only that "look of love they crave" from their fellow Catholics, but also convincing and beautiful reasons to give their faith another chance.

Then of course there is the world "out there," from which comes the forces weakening family life. Of course it is important that our church leaders give Catholics directly the strength to grapple better with the powers that be. But this is not enough. The church should venture to a further periphery. The laity should be empowered—bravely, intelligently and with confidence—to hazard these domains. Catholics are already present within every conceivable power structure. But not often enough in service to the family. **A**

DIGITAL HIGHLIGHTS

America

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ART

Judith Valente reviews the exhibit "Crossings and Dwellings" at the Loyola University Museum of Art in Chicago.



PODCAST

John V. Connorton Jr. talks about the legacy of Ian Paisley, a deeply divisive figure in Northern Ireland.



BLOG

David Stewart, S.J., reports on the aftermath of the referendum on Scottish Independence.

WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT:

When there is transparency between patients, hospitals, and doctors, clashes over conscience can be significantly reduced.
— ABIGAIL WOODS-FERREIRA on *Erasing Conscience*

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Robert David Sullivan

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Kevin Clarke

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The Message of Mercy
Cardinal Walter Kasper



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Revisiting Remarriage

The Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, October 5-19 in Rome, addresses “The pastoral challenges for the family in the context of evangelization.” It is preparation for the 2015 ordinary synod and it’s time to address the situation of divorced and remarried Catholics.

Statistics from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate estimate that the United States is home to 4.5 million Catholics who are divorced and remarried sans annulment. Church law bans them from the Eucharist, but the situation is confusing. Some don’t know they’re not permitted to receive Communion. Others wrongly think they’re denied Communion because they divorced, though the ban is incurred only if the divorced person marries again without an annulment since the church says the first marriage still exists.

Sorry is the plight of people whose children receive first Communion but they can’t join them. Some exit at Communion, when Mass ends for them. Some feel they serve a life sentence for a youthful mistake.

Pope Francis’ emphasis on the church’s pastoral nature offers hope, but no one should expect the church to alter its teaching on the permanence of marriage. Still, the church must face this issue.

Among the possibilities:

Streamline the cumbersome annulment process. Sacramental marriage requires that the partners be ready, willing and able to marry. Some individuals recognize there were problems such as

immaturity and pressure to marry that precluded a sacramental marriage. The annulment process can help couples see why their marriage failed. Yet annulments still have a bad reputation.

CARA estimates that only 15 percent of Catholics who could avail themselves of the process actually do. Suggested remedies: Instead of having witnesses testify as to what they saw in another’s marriage, tribunal judges could accept what the people seeking an annulment say. The process could skip the automatic appeal to another court. To dismiss the canard that you can buy annulments, all dioceses might stop charging for them. Once a tribunal grants an annulment, a priest can bless the new marriage because no sacramental marriage existed, though a civil marriage did.

Encourage more use of the internal forum (not the external forum of church law). This process enables individuals convinced that their first marriage was not sacramental to approach Communion according to their own well-formed conscience. This is not an annulment and does not involve blessing the current union, but it acknowledges the primacy of conscience. It can be the answer for people who cannot successfully pursue an annulment. The church strictly reserves the internal forum to those who have unsuccessfully tried to pursue an annulment, but can there be other options, for example, for a battered spouse terrified of being in contact with the abuser? Might the church be less strict? A confessor could assist someone in development of a well-formed conscience so they

can approach Communion if he or she sincerely believes the first marriage was not sacramental and the second one is. (Church practice holds that a priest who recommends this route must call on the couple to live without conjugal relations.)

Consider the Orthodox churches’ solution. In these only the first wedding is considered sacramental: The wedding psalms are joyful; the bride and groom are crowned and process around the altar. When marriages fail, however, the Orthodox are open to reviewing each case, granting a divorce with the possibility of contracting a second or even a third, nonsacramental marriage. The blessing of a second or third marriage differs.

This allows participation in the sacraments yet still affirms the permanence of the first marriage.

Two concerns face the Synod fathers. One, after so much consultation, they dare not do nothing. That would be akin to what happened with the encyclical “*Humanae Vitae*,” when people anticipated a change in church practice but got none. Some say this is why today many Catholic women, according to pollsters, use artificial means of contraception. Others claim this ultimately led to broader rejection of church teaching. Two, the bishops cannot even suggest that marriage is not permanent.

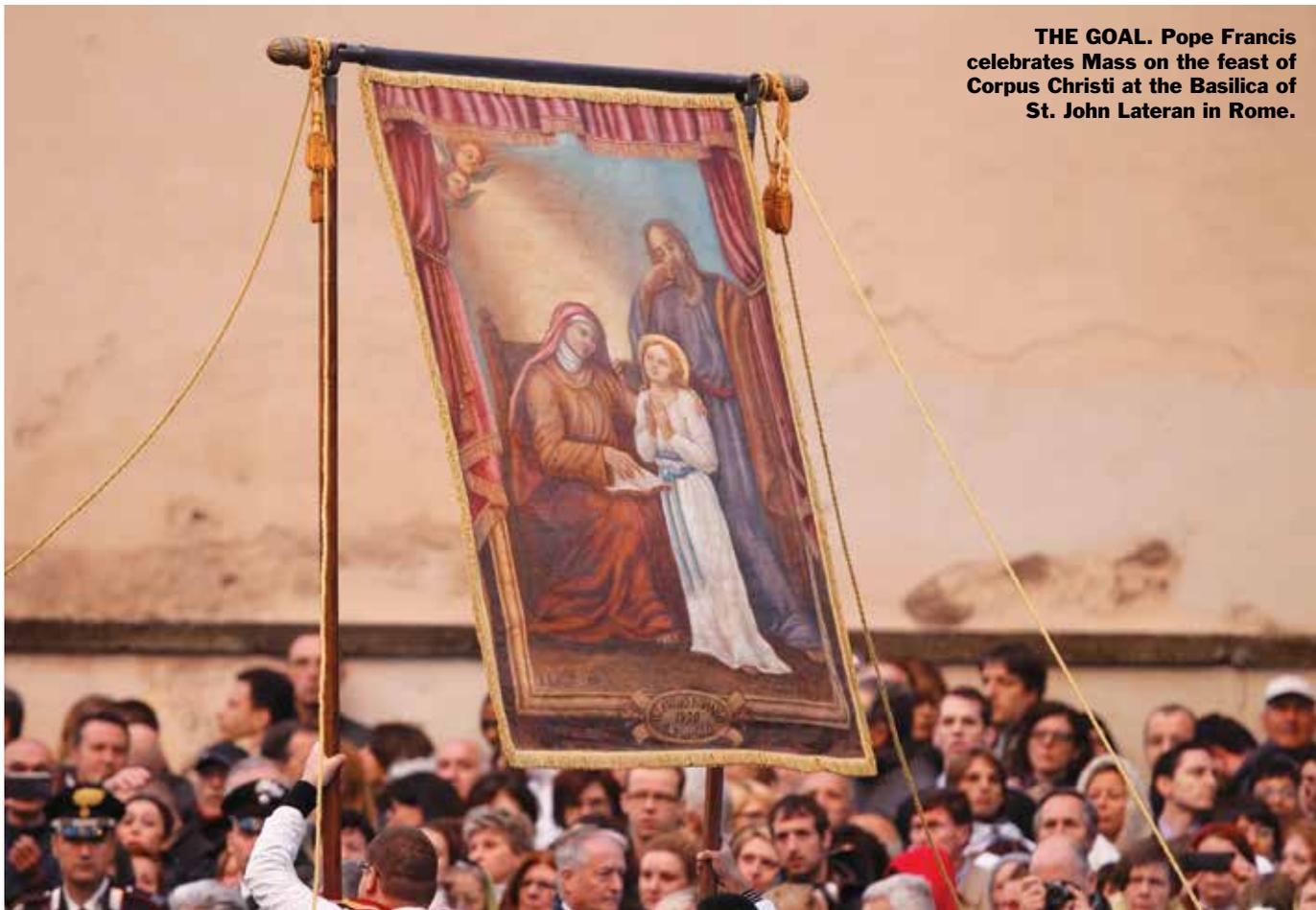
Now, working with the Spirit, the bishops should find a way to comfort the pastorally afflicted and uphold the permanence of sacramental marriage.

MARY ANN WALSH

MARY ANN WALSH, R.S.M., is the U.S. church correspondent for *America*.

Family Portraits

Discussion starters for the upcoming synod



THE GOAL. Pope Francis celebrates Mass on the feast of Corpus Christi at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome.

CNS PHOTO/PAUL HARING

Editor's Note. "Families," Pope Francis noted in a homily on Sept. 14, "are the first place in which we are formed as persons and, at the same time, the 'bricks' for the building up of society." In preparation for the launch of the Synod of Bishops on the Family on Oct. 5, parish members and pundits alike have wondered how the church might better support families as they seek to live out these roles. *America* asked seven men and women to reflect on how the church might use this moment to more fully delve into the beauty and messiness of their everyday family lives.

Martyr Family Values

BY NATHAN SCHNEIDER

My mother's name is Barbara. The saint with whom she shares that name was, the story goes, locked in a tower, subjected to torches and then beheaded by her own father because she refused to be married. This was a common sort of story among early Christians.

St. Agatha is the patron saint of breast cancer, but the breasts she is often depicted holding on a plate were not lost to disease. Agatha, like Barbara, chose to die horribly rather than put up with a more or less respectable Roman marriage. More on my mother later.

It is a strange legacy for a Catholic Church that now makes so much of promoting old-fashioned family values. For many early saints, from Barbara and Agatha to the column-sitters and desert hermits, being a follower of Christ meant a chance to escape the expectations of married life for alternatives that at the time seemed scandalous—dangerously so.

That said, I will take whatever old-fashioned family values I can get right now. For most of this year my fiancée, Claire, and I were preparing to be married—the traditional way, in a church and everything. In the process we have benefitted from being part of communities of faith that see upholding marriage as a sacred mission.

Our parish priest has had us over to the rectory for good, long talks; another priest-friend has put cake and sparkling wine before us at his living room table, coaxing out conversations that have been both difficult and necessary. We spent a weekend at a Franciscan monastery with the Engaged Encounter program, where a pair of couples, one older and one younger, led us on a tour of what to expect by sharing the trouble and joy of their lives together. They modeled how to bring prayer into the messes we are sure to face. The way they talked about marriage was less lofty and spiritual than I expected, but also so ordinary as to be an even better kind of lofty and spiritual after all. That is incarnation at work.

The church has been good to our marriage, and we have hardly even begun. But we fit the old-fashioned mold pretty well. The real test for us as a church is how we recognize the less sanctioned forms that love might take. For Barbara's sake.

My parents split up when I was a teenager; after that, my mother was on her own. She is a devout soul who finds formidable strength in meditation and solitude, but still I worried about her. People tried to reassure me that she would find somebody new. What she ended up doing I would never have guessed: She invited her brother to move in.

It perplexed the neighbors, but that was the neighbors' problem. For more than a decade, the two of them have taken care of each other, while giving each other freedom to grow. My mother has learned Sanskrit, while my uncle plays saxophone and works on old computers. They have made my childhood home half house, half monastery.

Uncommon forms of life, from our priest's to my mother's, do not detract from my marriage with Claire; they strengthen it. Christ preached the sacredness of marriage, but he also spoke of family values quite scandalously—teaching that there is no need for marriage in heaven, that his truest family were simply those who do God's will. Love at once binds and liberates. Family should embody certain values, but it does not fit a singular mold.

NATHAN SCHNEIDER, a columnist for *America*, is the author of *God in Proof: The Story of a Search From the Ancients to the Internet and Thank You, Anarchy: Notes From the Occupy Apocalypse*.

The Joy of Joey

BY GINNY AND BOB KANE

Nearly every Sunday we watch our son go up and down the entire length of the center aisle of our church during the greeting of peace. Joey, who has Down Syndrome, generously doles out hugs and handshakes to all he can reach. Naturally, Joey's greeting extends long beyond the norm, and we used to worry that someone, priest or parishioner, would finally say "Enough." We soon learned that parishioners looked forward to making that momentary connection with Joey and were disappointed on the days when altar serving kept him out of the pews!

Joey was the child we prayed we would never have. We were not wise enough to understand what a tremendous

blessing he would be in our lives. Put very simply, Joey embodies love and is a constant reminder of the presence of Jesus.

Any parent of a child with Down Syndrome will speak of the challenges involved. It is not easy to raise a child with special needs. We want the best for our child but fear that the needed resources will not be available. We worry about our child fitting in. We see children stare. We see adults sometimes

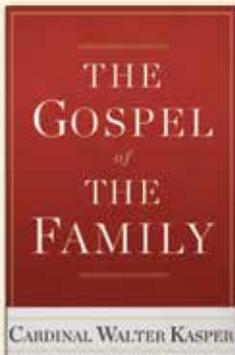
speak past Joey, asking us questions that he could easily answer himself. Mostly, we worry about whether people will accept Joey for the wonderful person he is.

Our parish, our Catholic grade school and high school and our local Catholic nursing home all have played key roles in raising Joey. At Joey's baptism our parish community made a commitment to raise Joey in the faith and that commitment has never wavered. Our Catholic schools welcomed Joey even though there had never been another student with Down Syndrome in their classrooms. The nursing home where he volunteers has provided amazing friendships—not to mention numerous servings of hamburgers and fries, Joey's favorite foods.

What is the benefit of having a person such as Joey in our midst? What do the church, the schools and the nursing home receive for welcoming, accepting and including Joey? They all knew they were allowing Joey to grow as a person and in his faith, but they could not possibly have

It is a strange legacy for a Catholic Church that now makes so much of promoting old-fashioned family values. For many early saints, being a follower of Christ meant a chance to escape the expectations of married life.

 **Extraordinary Synod Reading**

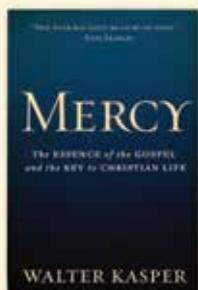


THE GOSPEL OF THE FAMILY

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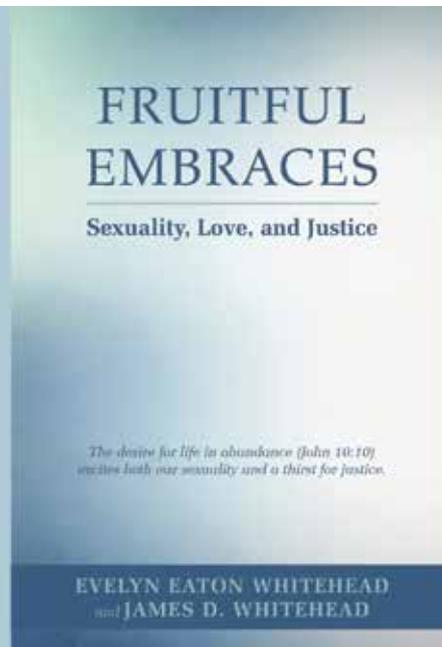
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known the remarkable extent to which their gift would allow that same growth in the lives of those around him. No one could have foreseen how Joey would melt the hearts of those in the pew with a hug—perhaps the only hug they received all week. No one could have foreseen that Joey would give a speech at his grade school graduation or that he would receive awards naming him the Most Inspirational Senior from both the students and the faculty at his high school graduation. Whoever would have thought that the nursing home at which he volunteers would throw him a high school graduation party in appreciation of all the time he spent visiting and assisting residents?

Joey has given our family and our community a glimpse of Jesus' unconditional love. Our community has given Joey and our family a rare gift in return. We no longer worry that Joey will not be accepted for who he is. The genuine outpouring of love and kindness toward our son has been truly humbling. Our prayer is that churches, schools and communities will welcome people with special needs, the Joeys of the world, as ours did. We believe that if they do, many lives will be changed in beautiful ways. We know ours have been.

BOB AND GINNY KANE are members of Holy Rosary Parish in Seattle, Wash. Joey is the youngest of their four children.

Are All Welcome? BY VALERIE SCHULTZ

My daughter grew up in a town where a gay teenager hanged himself from a tree in his own yard. If you are gay, what can you do but leave a town like that? So, upon reaching college age, my daughter left. Unfortunately, she felt the same inevitability about leaving the church.

I am the Catholic mother of a lesbian daughter. This does not make me unique. I have met plenty of Catholic parents of gay children, both at church and at Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays meetings. We are here. I also have three heterosexual daughters, who defend their lesbian sister against all slights. "If my sister isn't good enough for you," their motto goes, "neither am I." Naturally, this affects their Catholicism.

The church would do well to invest in training for the catechists and youth ministers who work with teens at the parish level. I did not suspect that my daughter was a lesbian until she came out to me, home from her freshman year of college. I knew that she was a deep and quiet young woman, a bit of an old soul, but she had dated boys and was quite feminine in appearance. I regret that I had never perceived her sexual orien-

tion. My unconscious expectations clouded my perception of her. For just this reason, training in conscious sensitivity for those who minister to young people is essential.

Whether a catechist knows it or agrees with it or not, the fact is that some of his or her students are gay. They may be silently struggling. My daughter later related things that well-meaning Catholics had said and taught that wounded her in her adolescence. She believed that God must have

made a mistake when creating her, that she was destined only for hell. One catechist told my daughter's class the story of how he had become Catholic rather than Episcopalian because of the "gay thing." My daughter heard the parishioners singing "all are welcome in

this place," but she knew in her heart that some did not mean people like her. She still says that she did not leave the church; the church rejected her.

My own faith has been battered these past 11 years, in the storm of accepting my daughter's civil marriage and loving my daughter-in-law. I have become a back-of-the-church Catholic, having withdrawn, with gentle prodding, from active ministry. I used to be a lector, a catechist, a eucharistic minister. I used to conduct Communion services at the prison. I used to have a Catholic husband. Now I have a mixed marriage; my husband has become Episcopalian, in part because of the "gay thing." But I stay.

I stay because I am Catholic. I stay because I have been abundantly blessed by priests, religious and lay people who have ministered to me with love, which is something that the "micro" church gets right, despite some of the "macro" pronouncements from on high. A point I cannot emphasize enough and the synod must remember: the individual shepherds who actually smell like their sheep, as Pope Francis puts it, and who care for us where we are, are truly the saving grace of the church.

VALERIE SCHULTZ is a frequent contributor to *America*.

Examples of Faith BY REBECCA PETERS

Perhaps this goes without saying, but I never planned to be a single mom. Some women do, but I always planned to be a great mother while simultaneously being a great wife. It did not work out that way, however. A few years ago, I found myself alone with my two daughters, who were 1 and 3 at the time.

They are now 3 and a half and 5 years old, and there are times I look back and am astonished to think that I managed

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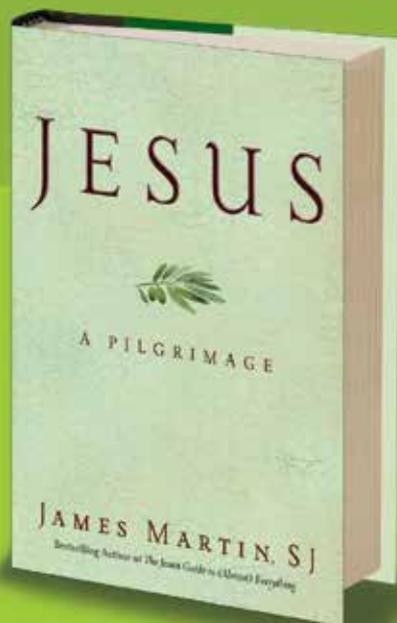
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simply to keep everyone fed and alive. I remember the early days when they would wake up in the middle of the night. I would pack them into the car so they would fall back asleep as I drove, heading to the drive-thru window for coffee before cruising around dark neighborhoods until it was time for school.

Now the challenges are different. My children are alive, they are healthy and they are growing up. And now I am the one waking up in the middle of the night. I worry about things. Am I enough for them? Can this most important job, designed to be done by two people, be done by just me? My daughters and I live in Atlanta, far from my family in Massachusetts. Do I give my daughters enough attention, enough discipline, enough fun? Will they be attentive students, early readers, good spellers? Did they brush their teeth correctly? Put on enough sunscreen? And, truly terrifying: am I raising them to be good people?

As an elementary school teacher, the topic of what makes a kid “good” is never far from my mind. I spend my days with kids just a few years older than my own, and I see my daughters’ qualities mirrored in my students. I talk to their parents and see my own hopes and worries reflected in them. I read books about parenting and education, how to communicate, make learning fun and raise compassionate kids. And still, it seems my daughters fight over everything. They use hurtful words, and sometimes I watch them go out of their way to be unkind.

We live in a very international community, and some of our good friends here belong to different faiths. I have been intrigued by how much these different religious communities offer to parents in terms of raising their children. My coworker’s Mosque provides an evening school to better prepare their community’s children (and their parents) for their academic years. Our Baha’i friends have weekend classes with their children about the importance of many virtues, including how to live with moderation, honesty and humility.

I went to a Catholic elementary school, high school, college and graduate school. I also spent two years with the Jesuit Volunteers in Belize. Catholics, and being Catholic, have been a big part of my identity, but it has started to feel less meaningful as I have grown older. Since my marriage ended, my church participation has been the lowest it has ever been. I have not felt like part of the church since I became a mother, and I have begun to wonder what support, what community, I have been missing.

Last Sunday I took the girls to Mass. We sat close to the front, and (although I embarrassed myself several times trying to remember the new translation) we had a wonderful experi-

ence. Clare, 5, was fascinated by the altar server. She kept her hands in prayer position and kept checking to make sure the girl on the altar was doing the same. My 3-year-old, Annie, was equally engaged with the hymnal. Every time people picked it up, she was on me, demanding, “What page, Mom?”

I do not yet know if my church offers reading tutorials or teaches classes on the virtues. I hope to find some programs at my parish that will engage our family. What I do know is that for an hour each Sunday, I have a place where my children are surrounded by people they want to emulate. They are in the midst of people dedicated to a community and to a faith. There my daughters have examples of worship, of quiet, of concentration, prayer and peace. I do too.

REBECCA PETERS *is an elementary school teacher in Decatur, Ga.*

A Necessary Network

BY MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY

When my family decided to adopt a child, it seemed only natural to work with a Catholic adoption agency. I went to Catholic schools through high school, and adoption was, in my mind, part of the robust array of social services offered by Catholic organizations around the country. My wife and I knew the process would not be easy, but we were comforted by the idea that we would be guided by fellow believers with the proper sensitivity and expertise.

Our experience turned out to be different. After doing our homework, we found that a secular adoption agency best met our needs. In addition to guiding us through the adoption process itself, the agency offered a full suite of counseling and post-adoption services. This was key for us, especially as we entered into the process of open adoption, whereby we maintain a degree of contact with our child’s birth parents. So far we have been very happy with our decision. We visit the adoption agency every year for summer barbecues and Halloween parties.

I suspect that our experience is not unique. There are still many excellent Catholic adoption agencies around the country. But they are not the only option, and in some cities there are none. In Boston, the archdiocese has withdrawn from the arena entirely because of governmental pressures to offer adoption to nontraditional families. The same could happen in many other parts of the country. This is a very sad development. The Catholic Church has many years of experience in the field of adoption. The pro-life cause is best served when multiple agencies are working in multiple ways to find homes for children.

Couples who choose to adopt need support, especially from their faith communities.

I expect that the Synod on the Family will, in one way or another, praise adoption as a life-giving choice. And so it is. But I hope that the delegates are also sensitive to the changing nature of adoption today. Open adoption, for example, can be a healthy choice for children struggling with a sense of their own identity. It can also provide a ray of hope for birth mothers who are struggling to decide whether to bring a child to term. Some women cannot imagine giving birth to a child they will never see again.

Adoption should also be discussed with a frank understanding of the challenges involved. It is sometimes too easy to say to couples struggling with infertility, “Well, you can always adopt.” The adoption process can take years, especially when couples try to adopt from countries abroad. Domestic adoptions are increasingly difficult, especially in states with lax abortion laws. Costs can be in the tens of thousands of dollars. Sometimes a birth mother decides to raise her child rather than place her with a prospective adoptive family—an admirable decision, but not one without heartache for the potential adoptive parents. Adoption is a lifelong commitment; it does not end on that happy day when the child comes home.

Couples who choose to adopt need support, especially from their faith communities. Sometimes adoptive families will look a little different. Adoption across ethnic and racial lines is more common today. I am happy to say that for most people I know this choice is not an issue, but that does not mean it is easy to raise a multiracial family. Too many subtle prejudices endure. A pro-life community must be actively welcoming to families of all types.

Our adoption agency recently changed its mission to focus on finding homes for foster children and children with special needs. The decision was prompted in part by circumstance—fewer newborn babies are available for adoption in the Northeast—but it is brave nevertheless. Any conversation about adoption today must recognize these changing dynamics and seek to provide networks of support for families willing to take on these challenges.

MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY *is an executive editor of America.*

Parents at Work

BY KEVIN CLARKE

Like a gazillion other working parents around the world, each school night my wife and I somberly confer like field marshals planning a Prussian offensive, prepping for the morning rush out the door to the big yellow bus on the corner. But it seems no matter how detailed our pre-emptive strategizing—the homework-signing, backpack-checking, clothes-readying and lunch-building—one or two or all four of our children will find some novel, if not diabolical way to turn what should have been our orderly march to the bus into

a frantic, expletive-swallowing rout. It is most lovely to find yourself on a September morn chasing down a 6-year-old and menacing him with a bag of Cheez-It crackers and a missing pair of gym shoes in front of all the neighbors.

I was raised on reruns of “My Three Sons” and “Father Knows Best”; both shows featured characters who seemed to have the whole parenthood thing down pat. Yet it has been ages since I was able to get my cardigan and slippers on before some sort of meltdown occurred in my household. Between commuting and after-school activities, homework, after-work work and extra work on the weekends, I find myself wondering how much of the family-building my wife and I actually are accomplishing and how much we have outsourced the job to school, child care programs and an aging Nintendo Wii. How did I get here? Who can help me figure out how to do this thing called family?

It will not come as a shock to most readers to discover that being a family in the United States, the land of dual-income households, spotty child care services and long commutes, is not easy. I will also acknowledge that to a great extent I should be grateful for the things I mostly feel like complaining about. Parents in many parts of the world are not worrying over how their commute affects family life as much as they are agonizing over how to get more calories and clean water on the dinner table.

But the fact that other families face more daunting, existential challenges does not mean that those confronting parents in the United States can be easily dismissed. Most of us are trying to raise healthy, decent and merciful kids in a culture that seems bent on thwarting that aim. We are desperately trying to keep a toe in the middle class, saving for health crises and college educations or to pay off credit cards, while supervising and safeguarding our children’s education and their moral, emotional and physical development. Most times we are just struggling; sometimes we are “failing,” spinning our gears and only acquiring more debt and more worries no matter how hard we plan and work.

Unlike many other advanced economies, the United States does not maintain policies on mandatory vacation or sick days that can make family life easier. Its minimum wage traps a growing number of working parents in poverty. American companies are not required to offer the generous paternity leave typical of other Western states, and most do not. Extravagant tuition fees are pricing promising but affluence-challenged students out of higher education. Despite all the rhetoric on family values, too often in the United States it is every family for itself. When I think of the real threats to family life, it is this stress—the financial and practical obstacles to being a family in America—that most comes to mind, not the gender of two people who wish to get married.

We need the church to go to bat for us as an ally on these social and cultural challenges, but we could also use some help

at the street level with the many practical frustrations of being a family today. Now that the parish school has closed, the Sunday catechism classes are a welcome support, but could the parish open a morning and afternoon child care service that is actually matched to real-world work schedules? How about some evening classes offering guidance on family budget making or escaping from credit card debt? Can families at your parish share baby-sitting leads?

I know the bishops meeting at the synod on family plan to discuss weighty matters related to the status and treatment of Catholics in “unconventional relationships” and their presumed impact on the family, but I hope they reserve some time also to talk about the many pressures and night terrors faced by folks in conventional relationships, trying to be a family amid work, commutes and soccer matches.

KEVIN CLARKE is senior editor and chief correspondent of *America*.

Community Building

BY ALEXANDER M. SANTORA

When I first became pastor of Our Lady of Grace parish in Hoboken, N.J., I saw maybe two babies in attendance at Masses each weekend. Today there is baby-carriage gridlock on Sunday morning. In the last five years, an influx of young families in this gentrified, mile-square town of 50,000 residents has meant more young children at Mass. The city’s businesses and housing stock have become family-friendly, and the church is working to do so as well. Another parish in town has built a family chapel in the church basement. Parents are bringing their children to church looking for an environment that welcomes them and provides them with age-appropriate programs.

Exploring the beliefs and expectations of young families is

FROM OUR BLOG IN ALL THINGS

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an interesting—and necessary—venture. Many couples are rediscovering their faith. Some come because they need paperwork to become godparents or confirmation sponsors and then keep coming back.

Many young married couples have taken to heart the importance of family and are excited about having and raising children (two or three, on average). Yet beyond acknowledging that bringing life into the world is part of the divine marriage plan, many have tuned out the ongoing debates about all kinds of sexual morality. And that is sad, because there is much good in the church’s teachings. But the strident-

cy of some castigating Catholics has resulted in many young Catholics choosing to find their own way. After 32 years as a priest, I can count on one hand the number of engaged couples I have met who were living apart before marriage. Yet, most of them attend Mass fairly regularly before the wedding. Afterward is another story.

For many young couples, issues like birth control, single motherhood and same-sex unions are negotiated by conscience, without much thought of the magisterium. Yet they return to Mass, seeking something to feed their spirit and to help them arrive at ethical decisions. They seek preaching that is relevant and savor references to the sorts of conundrums in which they find themselves.

Pope Francis’ message resonates with young families. They have sighed with relief that a pope speaks their language. Young adults and parents see justice as paramount, and the old moral shibboleths do not work for them. Support for same-sex unions has grown. Parents feel that if their child were to identify as gay or lesbian, they would want a safe and pleasant life for him or her, filled with opportunity.

Most parents revel in their roles as parents and want their children to be part of a larger community. Often, I invite the children at Mass to gather around the altar as we recite the Our Father. Our parish includes a diverse group of parishioners. The children hold hands and, although they do not yet sense it, the prayer unites those living in Section 8 housing and those living in \$1.5 million brownstones. They sometimes smile at each other as they return to their pews. Our hope is that the community building will continue after they leave the church building.

Hope is another thing families seek from a parish community. Families contribute widely to the Advent Giving Tree to help the poor, the elderly, military families and children. They generously donate to the annual Hoboken Shelter collection.

They bring food, clothes and baby items for the pro-life advocacy center. They want to make a difference and to teach their children that giving is better than receiving.

And yet, on a sunny Sunday, more people can be found enjoying brunch al fresco on the sidewalks of Hoboken than sitting in the pews. How might we go about welcoming people back inside? I have observed that when families have a good experience at Mass, they tell their friends, and that personal connection and conversation can be the most powerful form of evangelization. How can parish leaders help to create that experience? Call people by name. Pay attention to the children at Mass. Inquire with care about the particulars of parishioners’ lives. Help to create a friendly, faithful environment that families want to be a part of.

REV. ALEXANDER M. SANTORA is the weekly Faith Matters columnist for *The Jersey Journal*, a New Jersey daily newspaper, and a recipient of a 2014 Religion Writers Association Award.

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St. John's University
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Encountering Christ

One couple's journey in faith

BY MARTHA LUJÁN AND RUBÉN LUJÁN, WITH JUAN ROMERO

As the fathers of the Second Vatican Council debated the chapter on marriage and the family for the constitution on "The Church in the Modern World," one married couple listened in. José and Luz María Icaza, leaders of the Latin American branch of the Christian Family Movement, were among the 50 or so lay Catholics and Protestants invited to the council as auditors. When the word *concupiscence* was repeatedly used in discussions about married love, María decided to speak up. "Your Eminences and your Excellencies," she is said to have interjected, "I'll wager that if you asked your parents, they will tell you that you were not conceived in 'concupiscence,' but in conjugal love!" The subsequent document makes no reference to concupiscence, but instead speaks of "conjugal love," thanks, at least in part to the intervention of María Icaza. Although supposedly only a "listener," she, inspired by God's Spirit, knew when to speak and what to say.

Now, half a century later, we, Martha and Rubén—together with thousands or even millions of married couples—can hardly wait for the Synod of Bishops on the Family. And we too want to make our voices heard, in the spirit of Pope Francis' invitation to the whole church to provide input.

We are a senior couple, cradle Catholics married 56 years, with seven children, eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Rubén and I have extensive experience working with married couples and their families, with couples living together, with divorced-and-re-married couples as well as with divorced and celibate individuals. We hope that our insights—gained from age, experience and good mentors—may resonate with couples actively trying to live out their marriage sacrament.

Swept by the Spirit

Rubén and I met during our senior year of high school, and it was love at first sight. Our preparation for the sacrament of marriage began even before we met: it came from our wonderful Catholic families who supported our participa-

MARTHA LUJÁN has 18 years experience teaching counseling on the graduate level. **RUBÉN LUJÁN** has a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. They live in Altadena, Calif. **REV. JUAN ROMERO** is a priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

tion at Mass, holy days, yearly retreats and parish missions, as well as the example of all the married couples in our lives. On Christmas Eve 1957, we brought two people to witness our formal engagement in the church where we promised to marry each other for life. Afterward our favorite parish priest asked us questions to which we answered yes or no. He knew us so well that he checked off what he already knew. And that was it. We then had a beautiful High Mass for the wedding; it was all very pre-Vatican II.

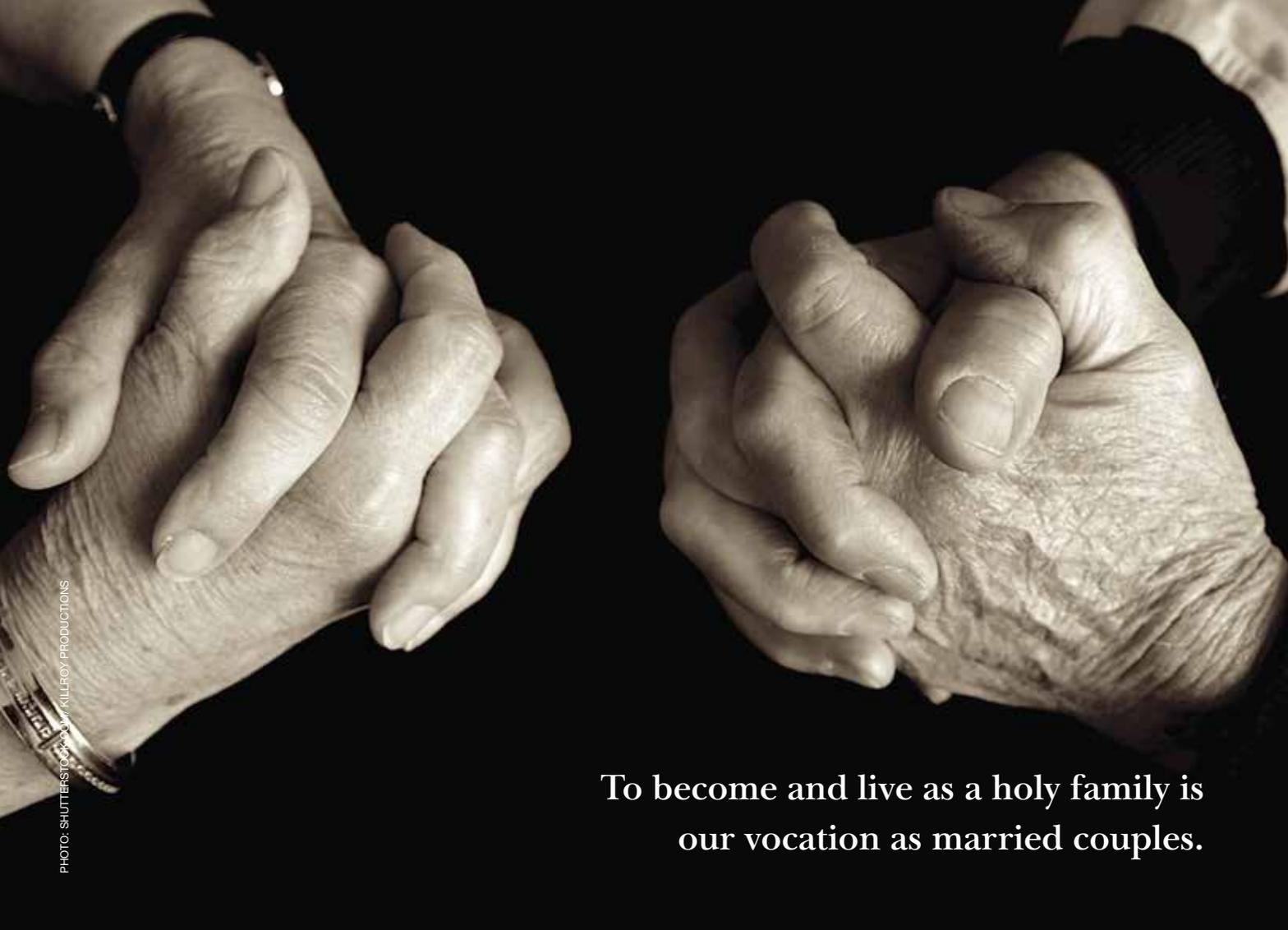
Then the Spirit blew! Life was filled with love, but making a home and finding the right jobs were tough. We were left to figure out for ourselves how to live our married life with our children: work, home, finances, medical crises. The children were born one after another. Our fourth child, Karen, was our special challenge. In my first trimester I was diagnosed with rubella syndrome (German measles), which left our daughter with medical complications, including a non-verbal condition that many interpreted as severe mental retardation. As she developed and grew, the condition and diagnosis changed from severe to moderate mental retardation. People's lack of understanding about

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT

The Christian Family Movement is a national network of small, family groups that meet regularly to promote Christ-centered marriages and families and help individuals integrate their Christian faith into everyday life. The movement began in 1948 in South Bend, Ind., and by 1966 had spread to over 50 nations. C.F.M. groups use the "observe-judge-act" method to discuss how the teachings of Jesus have been present or missing in their lives and then commit to taking concrete steps to bring Christ's love into their communities.

our Karen pained us. We wondered whether we were being punished and asked ourselves, "Where did God go?"

By 1964, our anger toward God had provoked between him and us a growing distance. The cultural changes that swept across the United States and the world in the 1960s affected us too. This was a trying time for our marriage. Rubén's job in Santa Barbara, 90 miles north of our home in Los Angeles, made things especially difficult. We had to live separately for almost a year while trying to sell our L.A. home in a buyers' market. It was a wild time, and church and God no longer seemed so important. But we were not so far gone that we did not listen to the good Pope John



To become and live as a holy family is our vocation as married couples.

XXIII, who exhorted all Catholics to pray for the Holy Spirit to come and fill the church with her wisdom in the early days of the Second Vatican Council. We did—and she did! Pope John had thrown open the windows of the church, and in the exciting, post-Vatican II years, we were swept up by the powerful winds of the Spirit.

Donald Hessler, a Detroit-born Maryknoll missionary priest and great apostle of family life, moved into our lives like a tornado. Father Hessler spent time in a Communist China prison camp during World War II and served for years in Mexico, always seeking to promote “inter-hemispheric solidarity.” One day in 1970 he rang our doorbell and began sharing with us a bewildering story about traveling up the coast from Mexico to California. He spoke of praying with different groups of people who were praising God by singing in tongues, laying hands on one another and being slain in the Spirit. It was our first encounter with the charismatic movement and we wondered: Is this man really a Catholic priest? We asked him to pray for one of our children who had been struggling in school, and he graciously laid hands and prayed. Then he went to our other children

and did the same thing. Finally, he asked if he could pray for us. Of course we said yes, and he placed his hands on each of our heads, as a couple, and prayed, kissed us goodbye and left. We were dumbfounded! We didn’t sleep that night because we had to talk about what we had experienced.

The next morning we immediately went to a Catholic bookstore and each of us bought a pocket edition of *Good News for Modern Man*. (We owned a coffee-table Bible with beautiful pictures, as did so many Catholics, but it lay mostly unread.) We also bought a variety of other titles in Catholic reading: *The Life of St. Teresa of Avila*; *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, by St. John of the Cross; the little paperback *My Other Self*, by Clarence Enzler; and *The Seven Storey Mountain*, by Thomas Merton—a story that lit a fire within us. We devoured these books and felt filled with light as we read, realizing that we were growing in our faith in a way we could not fully explain. The readings left us hungry for more.

Deepening Encounter

Another small whirlwind that blew through our lives was an old schoolmate (our co-author), Johnny, who had become a

priest. One day in 1969, we saw his name in the newspaper where he was named as a supporter of the Berrigan brothers at an anti-Vietnam War demonstration. We reconnected, and in 1970 Father Johnny (known to others as Father Juan) introduced us to the Christian Family Movement, through which we met other Catholic couples who shared our hunger to learn more about our faith and vocation.

Once a week we attended C.F.M. gatherings, where the lead couple presented a theme on which we all reflected, prayed and shared our thoughts. Because Rubén and I speak both Spanish and English, we were asked by our lead couple, Dora and Jorge Antillon, to attend an *Encuentro Matrimonial* (Marriage Encounter) at a neighboring parish, presented by an ecclesial team from Mexico. It was a beautiful weekend, and we learned to listen better and share better with each other. Jorge and Dora then asked us to make another M.E. weekend, this one in English. Our task was to evaluate the Spanish and English offerings for married couples and to discern the strengths of each for the enrichment of the whole Christian Family Movement.

Our third Marriage Encounter brought us yet another beautiful gift from the Holy Spirit. Upon arriving for the weekend, we were greeted by a man with a huge smile on his face, who immediately grabbed our bags and welcomed us. When the program began, he introduced himself, still dressed in a red and white striped T-shirt, as Father Chuck Gallagher, S.J. Again we wondered: Is he really a Catholic priest? That weekend Father Chuck challenged us through his talks, pushing us to share more deeply than we had ever been asked to before. Afterwards, he asked us to consider becoming a Marriage Encounter team couple.

For the next three months, Rubén and I flew to and from New York for training and to deepen our understanding of our sacrament of matrimony. Our lives were turned upside down as we traveled across the country, working with ecclesial teams consisting of one priest and two other team couples, who had all been through this deepening encounter. At each weekend encounter we sought to bring the good news of the sacramental way of life to other couples, so that, we hoped, when they returned to their parishes, families and friends, their love for one another could be a sign of Christ's love for his church.

Prepare the Way

It is said that Pope John Paul II once asked Mother Teresa, "Where are we to get holy priests?" Mother Teresa wisely replied, "Our holy priests are to come from our holy families." To become and live as a holy family is our vocation as married couples, not simply to encourage religious vocations, but to encourage all people as they work to answer the Gospel call. Are we living this call? As married couples we are invited and challenged by the Holy Spirit to look at, listen to and embrace her fruits: love, joy,

peace, patience, kindness, generosity, tolerance, temperance, faith, modesty, continence and chastity.

How do we, as the church, prepare committed couples to embrace these gifts and become holy families? Currently, there are several excellent marriage preparation programs. Pre-Cana is one very good program. Another is Engaged Encounter, which was developed by couples and priests involved with Marriage Encounter and uses similar principles to help couples learn how to listen to one another, work as partners and, most important, pray together. Making mutual decisions with prayer is a central part of welcoming our Lord Jesus Christ into our marriage.

In 1978, we were asked to coordinate all Pre-Cana programs in 17 parishes located in East Los Angeles. We invited couples from our Marriage Encounter teams to work with us in presenting

the topics for the four-week program: finance and budgeting, health care and natural family planning and effective communication. On the fourth weekend a priest would talk with the engaged couples about planning for marriage not as a single event but as a lifelong journey of growing together through prayer and the sacraments. Marriage preparation programs such as these are good, but we could do better; we must shine a spotlight on them so that all Catholic couples may enter marriage aware of their vocation as a great sacramental sign of the relationship between Christ and his church.

One gap in the church's support for Catholic couples is the lack of "couple-saints" who could serve as role models for married life. In the mid-70s, Rubén and I were invited to join other Spanish-speaking couples at the house of the Oblates of the Blessed Virgin Mary. That is where we met the founder of Marriage Encounter, the Rev. Gabriel Calvo, who is from Spain. Father Calvo told us that early on he had a dream that at least one contemporary married couple be

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

Marriage Encounter is a marriage enrichment program that seeks to revitalize Christian marriages by giving couples a chance to spend a weekend together to focus on their relationship away from the distractions of everyday life. Marriage Encounter began in 1952 as a series of conferences offered to couples by the Rev. Gabriel Calvo in Spain. In the early 1970s, Marriage Encounter separated into two organizations: National Marriage Encounter and Worldwide Marriage Encounter. W.W.M.E. began under the direction of Jesuit priest Charles Gallagher and emphasizes the development of an M.E. community that provides ongoing support for couples as they seek to live out the values of a sacramental marriage after their weekend encounter.

canonized to give us a holy example for young people thinking about marriage.

At one point, his Spanish community—the Operarios (Workers in the Vineyard)—were meeting in Rome, and were to have a private audience with Pope Paul VI. Father Calvo was told by his superior that they were to kiss the pope's ring but say nothing. However, as the pope neared, he felt the Holy Spirit bursting inside and then outside of him, and succinctly shared his dream. Pope Paul asked a cardinal walking with him to follow up on Father Calvo's suggestion about a patron saint-couple for married people. A month later, the same cardinal, attending a dinner with Father Calvo, excitedly told him that maybe he had found the couple, a model Catholic family, living in the 19th century. Father Calvo listened courteously, but then energetically shook his head in the negative. He replied:



Martha Luján and Rubén Luján

No. I visualize a contemporary couple of today that has a mortgage, goes to work, comes home and takes care of changing diapers. They may sometimes have disagreements, but follow that in reconciliation expressed by making love, and then continue to live their life in the love of the Lord. I'm not thinking of a couple that becomes widowed, and then the survivor founds a community, or the couple decides to separately live celibate lives while forming their own distinct communities. That is not conjugal love! We need a canonized couple or several of them who are married and love each other, whose children struggle with daily life as well, and all enjoy the delights of their married life.

Those present with Father Calvo at the meeting in San Antonio asked him, "How can we propose a couple for canonization?" He asked Rubén and me to show him our notebooks, where we write our love letters to each other, and then said, "There's your proof, your documentation." We were stunned at the thought of ourselves as married saints, yet, indeed, that is what we are called to be, to become!

Equal Callings

There is a story told of the time that Giuseppe Sarto, the future St. Pius X, became a bishop. His mother could not attend the ceremony, so when he went to visit her; he proudly showed his new bishop's ring to his mother. She looked at it, piously kissed it, and then pointing to the simple band on her left hand remarked, "Were it not for this ring, you would not have that one." I can imagine the future pope-saint reverently and gratefully kissing his mother's wedding ring.

As a child, I had thought of marriage as "second best" to either priesthood or becoming a sister. Rubén and I are now

more deeply aware that matrimony is one of the seven sacraments, indeed that holy orders and matrimony are twin sacraments that serve the church in conjunction with, and nurtured by, the other five sacraments. We are important to our church. We are vital to the life of our church. We are in fact a "little church" part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic family of domestic churches ("Lumen Gentium," No. 11). Priests need our sacrament of matrimony to bring new life to the church and to initiate each generation into the faith. We also need our priests to help our reconciliation with God and one another, to sustain our faith with the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, for spiritual healing and for a final blessing on our way to meet the Lord at our heavenly home. Together with our priests, we—lay faithful, *christifideles*, in the church and world—are the people of God, the church.

We need and demand an adequate preparation and life-long support for our contemporary couples who want to live a sacramental way of life. Who gives it to us? Christ the bridegroom! Through his apostle John, he has told us, "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him" (1 Jn 4:16)—in us, in our marriage and family, insofar as we are one with Christ. A

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Raise Up the Roof

Families with disabilities belong at the synod too.

BY MARIA CATALDO-CUNNIFF

Be careful, Mom, I don't want you to fall," my son Joseph said to me as he reached out to take my hand on an uneven Cape Cod shoreline. This might not be an unusual thing to say if Joseph were an adult and I were retired, but Joseph has just started kindergarten, and my retirement is a long way off.

In some ways our family is a lot like many other Catholic families. My husband, Gary, and I have been married for just over seven years, and we have two children: Joseph, 5, and Margaret, 4. In fact, according to the standards of the upcoming extraordinary Synod on the Family, we are quite "regular." But there is something unusual about us. We are a family with a disability.

In 1968 my parents had a regular Catholic family too. They had been married in the church almost 12 years earlier, had six children already, and I was on the way. I showed up two months early and spent my first eight weeks in the intensive care unit. Eventually diagnosed with cerebral palsy, I learned to walk at age 4, after surgery and lots of physical therapy. Before I learned to walk, my parents and my brothers and sisters carried me wherever I needed to go: to nursery school, to church, to friends' houses. Everywhere. It made perfect sense to me. I thought we were just like everyone else. And we were. We went to school, went to Mass, played sports, sang in concerts and had Sunday dinner with my grandparents. But we were also different: my siblings stuck up for me when kids at school teased me about the way I walked, and they argued over who got to help me with my exercises and strap on my casts.

When I was 6 years old and asked my mother at the kitchen table, "Mom, why did God give me cerebral palsy?" she prayed to get the answer right. Thankfully, she did. She replied, "Maria, I don't know why you have C.P., but I do know this: God gave you a great capacity to love." And that is what families with disabilities have, a great capacity to love—each other, certainly, but God's world as well. The challenges and joys that families with disabilities experience while living our faith express the paschal mystery in a unique and powerful way.

MARIA CATALDO-CUNNIFF is a graduate of Weston Jesuit School of Theology (now the Boston College of Theology and Ministry) and a board certified chaplain at Children's Hospital Boston. She lives with her family in Quincy, Mass.

Embodying the Good News

Families with disabilities are prominent witnesses to Jesus' healing love in the Gospel. Think of Jairus's daughter and the centurion's son. Lazarus is brother to Martha and Mary. A Canaanite mother pleads her daughter's case. And when the disciples' faith is not great enough to heal a father's only son, the father brings the boy to Jesus. We know them all in the context of family.

And even where no particular familial relationship is mentioned, persons with disabilities are often presented to Jesus by others who care. Such is the story of the deaf man with a speech impediment (Mk 7:31-37). Presumably his friends call out to Jesus on his behalf. Jesus heals in the midst of the community, for the sake of the community. In the Gospel narratives, Jesus' powerful and efficacious love moves beyond the individual, beyond the family. All those who witness God's healing love at work through Jesus become an evangelizing force in the wider world.

Things are not so different today. Families with disabilities still tell a story of faith, hope and love. Faith that in the mystery of human suffering, we find and make meaning; hope that, filled with the Holy Spirit, we can continually seek the *magis*, moving beyond human expectations and limitations. The love we embody is the very sort of love that the bishops describe in the working document for the upcoming synod and which they hope today's young people will understand: "not an overly romantic idea that love is only an intense feeling towards each other [but] that it is, instead, a personal response to another person as part of a joint project of life, which reveals a great mystery and great promise" (No. 85).

Families with disabilities live this kind of love daily. There is nothing romantic about staying by the side of a long-hospitalized child or helping a spouse use the bathroom, but these are some of the many ways that families with disabilities respond in love to one another in the joint project of life. We are committed to one another in good times and in bad. We have to be.

Families and communities that include people with disabilities live in contrast to the individualism and isolation the document so clearly condemns. We embody interdependence in a powerful way. In my parish, a member of our choir is blind. For over 20 years she has taken the arm of another musician to enter and exit the sanctuary to sing.

PAPAL BLESSING. Pope Francis kisses a child during a visit to the parish of Santa Maria dell'Orazione, on the outskirts of Rome, March 16.



GNIS PHOTO/STEFANO RELLANDINI, POOL VIA REUTERS

A few weeks ago, I saw two teenagers in our parish guide a classmate with Down syndrome up to the altar, where they all received the blessing given to students moving from the junior high to the senior high youth group. And every Sunday I lean on my husband with one hand and guide my son or daughter with the other as we all approach the eucharistic table together. Every day, in our neighborhoods, our parishes and our schools, families with disabilities both depend on and support those around us “so as to counteract the idea that love is something lived apart from the community” (No. 85).

Choosing Life

What makes us human, valuable, loved by God and worthy of the love of our brothers and sisters? Each and every one of us is created in the image of God and is unique and unrepeatable. Under the heading “Critical Situations Within the Family,” the working document reports, “Many bishops’ conferences are greatly concerned about the widespread practice of abortion,” stating “in many ways today’s society seems to promote a culture of death regarding the unborn and to manifest an indifference in approaching life in general.”

Families with disabilities are a witness to the power of life. We embrace it, hang onto it and fight for it when others might say it is not worth the fight. We love our children and our parents, our husbands and wives, regardless of

their abilities to walk, talk, see, hear, think and sometimes even love us back. In the face of consumerism and individualism, some of the external pressures on today’s families mentioned in the document, people with disabilities and their families know that what abilities a person has or skills they possess will never be as important as who he or she is. Families with disabilities reject the culture based on the senses and immediate gratification that the authors of the working document bemoan.

Of course people with disabilities sometimes envy the intellectual prowess or physical strength of our more able-bodied brothers and sisters, and our families may envy other families’ seemingly less complicated lives. Like St. Paul, we have prayed that God would take away the thorn in our flesh. In faith, like Paul, we receive God’s response: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” In response, Paul proclaims, “So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me” (2 Cor 12:9).

Every time we go to Mass in wheelchairs, use our hands to sign hymns or walk with our developmentally delayed children to receive Communion, we boast with Paul. When we reject the shame that so many would cast upon us, the shame that we have learned to take upon ourselves, we boast. And in doing this, we do what Jesus did, we offer our broken bodies for the sake of others. We embody this truth: that no one has to be stronger, smarter, richer or more beau-

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tiful than others to be loved by God and welcomed into God's family.

Opening Doors (and Sometimes Roofs)

Two of my favorite healing narratives involve people contending with crowds. In John's Gospel there is a man who has been ill for 38 years, trying to make his way to a healing pool in Jerusalem. Jesus knew he had been waiting there a long time and asked him if he wanted to be made well. The man responded: "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk" (Jn 5:7-8).

In Mark, when word gets out that Jesus has returned to his home in Capernaum, he is mobbed. In an effort to reach Jesus despite the crowds, a paralyzed man is lowered through the roof before him.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven.... I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (Mk 2:1-5, 10-12).

In the midst of these events, the scribes debate over whether Jesus can forgive sins. Even today these verses often stir another debate: whether disability should be equated with sin. As far as I am concerned, that question is answered in John 9 ("Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him," Jesus says of the man born blind) and needs no attention here.

For me, this narrative of the paralyzed man, when contrasted with that of the man at the pool, brings up a much more important and timely question: Are we going to be the kind of church that politely ignores and quickly moves past the concerns of families with disabilities, or are we going to tear open the roof to proclaim and welcome their presence?

The bishops participating in the upcoming synod have an extraordinary opportunity. By specifically recognizing families with disabilities, our challenges and contributions, they, like Jesus, can recognize and celebrate members of the body of Christ who have been ignored or forgotten in our church for too long.

Families with disabilities uniquely do every day what Pope Francis hopes the synod will do for families in the church: demonstrate the importance and value of lifelong commitment in the context of the larger community; show that human value comes from who we are rather than what we have or what we do; and proclaim that the power of God's love in Jesus can heal the deepest wounds, in ourselves, in our families and in our world. 

The Nuclear Option

A call to refocus on the love between a man and a woman

BY CORNELIUS F. MURPHY JR.

Contraception and the possibility of readmitting divorced and remarried Catholics to the sacraments have captivated the imagination of many Catholics. Many of them hope that when the bishops of the world meet this October for the Synod on the Family, they will focus on these issues.

These are undoubtedly important questions. But there are other problems that should also be taken into account. The rise of homosexual unions requires that the bishops give thoughtful attention to the higher value to be found in the permanent and exclusive sexual love of a man and a woman. There are also changing ideas about the nature and purposes of marriage that need to be addressed.

Traditionally, there was a division of labor in the family between husband and wife; the former being “the breadwinner” and, at least notionally, head of the family, while the latter maintained the household and was responsible for the nurture and care of the children. The advancement of women’s rights has substantially altered these arrangements. There is now an equality between the sexes that has not only changed relations between men and women in society at large, but has also created a new experience of marriage itself. Now, in many



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CORNELIUS F. MURPHY JR., is the author of *Beyond Feminism: Toward a Dialogue on Difference* (The Catholic University of America Press).

cases, both husband and wife have careers. There is less separation of roles within the home and a greater sharing of parental and household responsibilities. This division of labor, which once gave basic stability to conjugal life, has generally disappeared.

More significantly, the time-honored distinction between

parent and child has become blurred or ignored. The modern household revolves around the children. Their security and interests have the highest domestic priority, and both parents are deeply immersed in the lives of their offspring. In this culture of “hyper-parenting,” spousal love has little independent significance within the general experience of family.

Friends or Lovers?

The child-centeredness of modern marriage has brought many positive benefits. Children raised in such households feel more loved and secure, more at ease with themselves and others, and more confident about their abilities at school and on the playing fields. Parents, meanwhile, have gained from the rejection of rigid gender roles. But the change has not been unambiguously for the better. When the welfare of the children becomes virtually an obsession, the love between husband and wife does not fully develop. The relations between them become more familial than erotic. There is less time for deeper physical and emotional intimacies and, in many cases, lessening interest in them as well. Consumed by work and parenting, such couples

come to see themselves as partners more than lovers. They share little that can be separated from their mutual concern for the good of their children. As the years go by, they begin to lose any deeper sense of a companionship and mutual affection that transcends, but does not oppose, the other purposes of family life.

In his book *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, Nicholas Berdyaev observed that when married love is bound up with family rather than with personality, the person affected—whether husband or wife—cannot endure such a state of affairs. Feminism

Consumed by work and parenting, such couples come to see themselves as partners more than lovers.

has highlighted this problem on behalf of the wife, who is struggling to establish her independent identity and is desperately trying to balance career and family. But the situation diminishes the male partner as well, especially if he feels excluded from whatever bonds may exist between mother and children.

These painful realities are particularly difficult for some bishops to comprehend, since they have for centuries emphasized procreation as the fundamental purpose of marriage. They have little appreciation for the depth and scope of spousal love when it is not directly concerned with reproduction. They understand how married couples become father and mother but their continuing union as husband and wife is of little consequence, even though it is at the heart of the sacrament. At the synod, the bishops will stress the importance of procreative love, but they also need to articulate the independent value of the spousal relationship between an adult man and woman. Only then will the hierarchy speak with comprehensive authority about the nature and purposes of sacramental love.

The Demands of Love

The beginnings of a marriage are a time of intense emotional and erotic togetherness. Sexual delight pushes aside thoughts of the long-term consequences of the relationship or the quality of its future. The arrival of children brings substantial changes, and the responsibilities they entail quite naturally draw the attention of the spouses, now parents, away from each other. Sometimes, as a result, a husband and wife struggle to reach a clear understanding of their own needs as persons.

Yet years of marriage can help them reach this understanding. Unfortunately, the individualism of American culture understands personal happiness as an individual matter rather than as an aspect of a shared life. Under these circumstances, the vocation of spousal love is often seen as

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an impediment to self-fulfillment. But we need to remember that the mutuality at the heart of spousal love between a man and a woman is not limited to their sexual capacity to engender new life. The sacramental union is a total sharing of life and love, and, as a couple, the husband and wife complement each other in ways that are virtually inexhaustible. If married love matures—and in modern life the “if” is significant—the partners can both experience even more deeply the happiness that flows from exclusive and durable sexual commitment.

In the dynamics of married love, each should delight in the life and accomplishments of the other, because the good of the beloved is an essential aspect of each lover’s own happiness. Such happiness extends beyond parental and domestic experience. Under the conditions of modern equality, both wife and husband seek some form of personal fulfillment beyond the home, especially in terms of employment. Work can be a matter of financial necessity, but it can also be an expression of personal freedom. Such external engagements can create difficulties, not just for the care of the children, but also for the marriage itself. The conjugal love between the couple is impaired when the satisfactions and burdens of such occupations are experienced without reference to the community of life and love between the spouses.

The initial romance of marriage is exuberant, but it is impermanent. At the beginning each is so absorbed in the other

that they give inadequate attention to themselves. Here lies an unexamined problem: the love that we have for another must be compatible with the love that we have for ourselves. The blissful unities that initiate a marriage and are consummated in the creation of new life become strained as partners become more aware of their own need for self-fulfillment. Such legitimate self-love becomes selfish if it is forgotten that from the beginning there has been a perception of something lovable in the other that must also be sustained.

In married love there is a mutuality that cannot be limited to generative ends. Love between spouses is love between persons, persons who affirm and support each other in all the various activities of a complete life, whether they are undertaken alone or in the company of the other. If attention is given to this aspect of a mature marriage, the husband and wife should draw closer together in intimate friendship and mutual respect. As love for each other deepens, the responsibility they bear for their children is seen in a more balanced perspective. As the spouses become more concerned with each other, excessive parenting will decline. The children may receive less direct attention, but their lives will be greatly enriched by the witness of the love that their parents show for each other. And as husband and wife gradually develop their intimate friendship, they are preparing for the life they will have together after the children are no longer with them. ▲



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Pope Moves to Protect Minors

Pope Francis established the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors on Dec. 5, 2013, to make clear to the whole world that the safeguarding of children and minors is a top priority of his pontificate. His recent appointment of Msgr. Robert Oliver as secretary of this commission is a welcome signal that this new body will soon begin to function in an effective way.

Msgr. Oliver, a canon lawyer from the Boston Archdiocese, comes to this newly-created post with considerable knowledge and experience. Since January 2013, he has served as promoter of justice at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, where he dealt with cases of sexual abuse of minors by priests from around the world. Before that he worked closely with Cardinal Sean O'Malley on abuse cases in Boston. He has now left the C.D.F. for this full-time position, where he heads a new Vatican office.

A Jesuit from the Chicago province, Robert Geisinger, who has been procurator general of the Society of Jesus since 2001, succeeds him at the C.D.F.

"This is a very important step forward in the organization of the office and the work of the commission," Cardinal O'Malley said after the Vatican announced Oliver's appointment on Sept. 10. Ms. Marie Collins, a commission member, agreed. "The appointment is a move forward," she told me. Bill Kilgallon, national di-

rector of the New Zealand Bishops' Conference's Office for Professional Standards, concurred. "The commission is a great challenge and a great opportunity, and Bob Oliver has the necessary skills and experience to make it work," he told me by email from Auckland. "Oliver has a real appreciation of the need to listen to survivors of abuse and an understanding of the need to bring the local church in all parts of the world into the work of the commission," he added.

Msgr. Oliver's role would appear to be that of chief executive officer of this international body, which will report directly to the pope and advise him. Cardinal O'Malley is expected to be its president.

On March 22, Pope Francis appointed the first eight members to this commission: four women, including a victim of sexual abuse (Marie Collins), and four men with a variety of skills and experiences from eight countries: Argentina, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, England, Poland and the United States. He will soon add other qualified persons to it from Africa, Asia and Latin America, underlining that the sexual abuse of minors by priests is a problem of the universal church and not just of the Anglophone world, as a senior Vatican cardinal once suggested.

The commission has met twice already (May 1-3 and July 6) and discussed its mandate and statutes, possible new members from other geographical areas and how it will proceed. Francis met its members on both

occasions and insisted that the commission be "independent." It will meet again on Oct. 4-5 and should be in a position soon after that to present him with the results of its deliberations.

It will have a broad mandate, but will not deal with individual cases of abuse, as that is the task of the C.D.F., Cardinal O'Malley explained after the May meeting. It will propose initiatives to encourage local responsibility around the world and the mutual sharing of best practices for the protection of all minors, including programs for training, education, formation and responses to abuse.

Speaking for the commission, O'Malley said: "We plan to make specific proposals regarding the importance of emphasizing ways for raising the awareness of all people regarding the tragic consequences of sexual abuse and of the devastating consequences of not listening, not reporting suspicion of abuse, and failing to support victims/survivors and their families."

The commission has already outlined to the pope the areas it considers important for its future work and, in particular, for ensuring accountability in the church and developing means for effective and transparent protocols and processes. It intends to focus with particular urgency on the accountability of bishops.

"Accountability is for everyone in the church, irrespective of what their status is," Cardinal O'Malley stated firmly.

GERARD O'CONNELL

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

Suffering Children

Do not despise these little ones

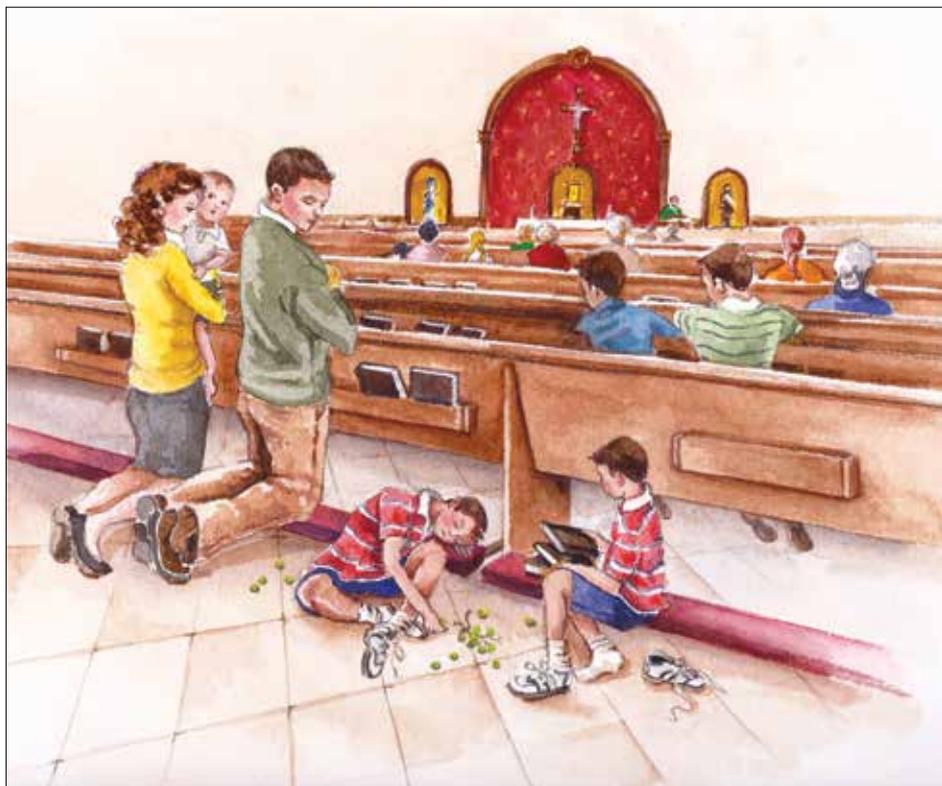
BY BRIAN DOYLE

Usually the daily noon Mass on campus is attended by the familiar dozen or so faculty and staff and students and neighbors; but today, to my amazement, there are 4-year-old twin boys in front of me, complete with parents, the father immensely tall and the mother adamantly not.

The noon Mass is legendary for starting on the button and never going more than 25 minutes because afternoon classes start at 12:30 p.m. and you want to give students a chance to make their flip-flopped sprint across campus. For the first five minutes the twins sit quietly and respectfully and perhaps even reverently, each in his seat between mom and dad. This does not last. At 12:07 p.m. I see the first flurry of fists and elbows as they jockey and joust. At 12:11 p.m. one of them, incredibly, pulls a bunch of grapes from his pocket and begins to eat some and to lose the rest on the floor. At 12:13 p.m. there are easily a dozen grapes and both boys under the chairs. At 12:15 p.m. the mom, clearly a veteran of these sorts of things, pulls two cookies from her pockets for the boys. At 12:20 p.m. the dad finally bends down from his great height and tersely reads his sons the riot act, a moment I have been waiting for with high fraternal glee, for I have been in his shoes. I have been at Mass in this

very chapel with my small twin sons, who have dropped Cheerios from the balcony onto the bald spots of congregants below and stuck their arms into the baptistry just to see what it would feel like (it's cold and wet, one son said, indignantly) and made barnyard noises at exactly the wrong moments and ran all around the chapel shaking

and drop hymnals on the floor with a terrific bang and pay no attention whatsoever to the Gospel readings and the homily and the miracle of the Eucharist but rather gaze raptly at the life-size cedar crucifix and try to blow out a candle on the altar as their parents carry them up for a blessing and say *Hi!* to the grinning priest as he lays



ART: ANN KISSANE ENGELHART

sticky hands with startled, bemused congregants at the Sign of Peace.

After Mass I say to the celebrant with a smile that it is not every day we are graced by rambunctious ruffians who scatter grapes and crumbs on the floor and giggle and yawn and shimmy and snicker and lose their shoes

his hand upon their innocent brows and spend the last five minutes of Mass sitting in the same single seat trying to shove the other guy off but only using your butt and not your hands; and the priest, unforgettably, says this to me:

I love having little kids at Mass.

BRIAN DOYLE is the editor of *Portland Magazine* at the University of Portland and the author, most recently, of the essay collection *The Thorny Grace of It* (Loyola Press).

I love it when they are bored and pay no attention and squirm. I love it when they get distracted by a moth and spend five minutes following the moth's precarious voyage among the lights. It's all good. They are being soaked in the Mass. They hear the words and feel the reverence and maybe they even sense the food of the experience, you know? Sometimes people complain and

make veiled remarks about behavior and discipline and decorum and the rapid dissolution of morals today and stuff like that but I have no patience for it. For one thing *they* were little kids at Mass once, and for another if there are no little kids at Mass, pretty soon there won't be any Masses. You have to let kids be kids.

I love having little kids at

Mass. If you are distracted by a little kid being a little kid you are not focused on what's holy. Little kids are holy. Let it be. My only rule is no extended fist-fights. Other than that I don't care about grapes and yawning. I think the cadence and the rhythm and the custom and the peace of the Mass soak into kids without them knowing it. That's why a lot of the students here come back to Mass, I think—it sparks some emotional memory in them, and once they are back at Mass then they pay attention in new ways and find new food in it. It's all good. The more the merrier. I don't mind dogs when I celebrate Mass, either. For one thing they are generally better behaved than little kids, but for another I figure the Mass soaks into them too, and how could that be bad? You know what I mean?

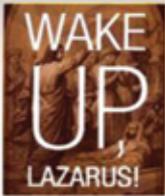
I say I do know very well what he means and we shake hands and he heads to the sacristy to disrobe and I head back to work. But about half-way back to my office I feel awfully sad that I do not have grapes and cookies in my jacket pockets. I don't even have remains of ancient Cheerios anymore, and there were years there when my pockets were so filled with brittle crumbs that birds followed me in rotation, sparrows in the morning and crows in the afternoon. For a minute I want to shuffle back to the chapel and catch that tiny mom and ask her for a cookie, just because, but then I realize that she will think I am a nut and I remember that I had my run as the dad of little kids squirming at Mass. It was a sweet glorious unforgettable run, too, and now it's someone else's turn, and how good and holy that is, that there are still little kids under the seats, paying no attention whatsoever.

But they will.



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THEATER | MICHAEL V. TUETH

STILL 'FANTASTICK'

Returning to the world's longest-running musical

In the late 1950s, Broadway and Off Broadway theater had become a bit grim. The major hits of the era presented a rather pessimistic view of life, especially of the family: the home as prison ("A Raisin in the Sun," "The Miracle Worker"), monster parents ("Gypsy") and rebellious adolescents ("West Side Story"). Even musicals fell into this pattern. But on May 3, 1960, a modest little musical called **The Fantasticks** opened Off Broadway at a tiny theater in Greenwich Village. It has become the longest-running musical in the world, still playing at another

tiny theater in Times Square.

The simple plot follows the path of two young lovers, whose fathers have pretended to quarrel in order to encourage their children to rebel and fall in love. The story was derived from a 19th-century play by Edmund Rostand, the author of "Cyrano de Bergerac." The original version of the script was an elaborate musical set on a Texas ranch with the boy and girl living on opposite sides of the Mexican border. But when "West Side Story" opened on Broadway in 1957 exploring similar questions of race and re-

lationship, the playwright and composer were forced to rework the piece. Needless to say, this version had staying power.

Thousands, perhaps millions, of people have seen a production of "The Fantasticks" at least once, either as an Off Broadway production, a regional theater's staging or a high school or college version. Some may have seen it for the first time as a "Hallmark Hall of Fame" telecast in 1964, starring a real-life El Gallo, Ricardo Montalban. (Am I dating myself here?)

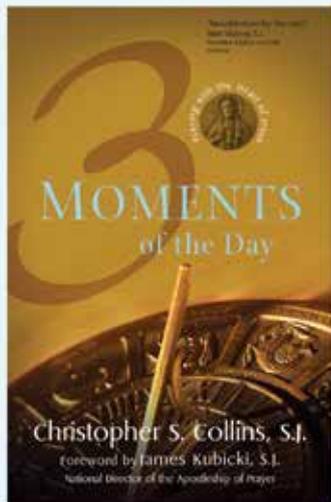
I was fortunate to see the show recently at the Jerry Orbach Theater, named after the famous actor who portrayed the character of El Gallo, the story's narrator, in the original production. I was pleased to find that the magic of this show has not only survived; it is thriving. Located on the upper end

FOREVER YOUNG. Max Crumm as Matt and Samantha Bruce as Luisa in "The Fantasticks"



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of Times Square, the Jerry Orbach Theater is a more pleasant venue than the Sullivan Street Playhouse, where the show played for its first 47 years. The room is larger, the seating (which is still something less than 100 seats) is roomier and more comfortable, and the stage seems larger.

The current production features Michael Sharon as El Gallo; he bears a striking resemblance to Mr. Orbach and displays an equally powerful voice and allure. The romantic leads are played by two relative newcomers (as is tradition), who are well worth watching. Max Crumm, who won the role of Danny Zuko in a 2007 televised competition for the most recent revival of "Grease," exhibits a combination of innocence and charm as he plays the romantic young fellow smitten with the girl next door. Samantha Bruce, making her Off-Broadway debut, is a lovely ingénue with impressive singing, dancing and acting skills. I predict she is destined for stardom. The fathers are played by two gentlemen who demonstrate what it means to be theater veterans. In fact one of them, Tom Flagg, was in the original production 55 years ago. He can still capture the mischief, charm and irascibility of the boy's scheming parent. And there are the lovable but fading old travelling performers, Henry and Mortimer. This production's Mortimer is performed by Michael Nostrand, who has played the part over 1,000 times on Sullivan Street and is still as clumsy, hammy and loyal as ever.

One of the most refreshing elements of the play still follows the *commedia dell'arte* tradition of a simple playing area, with the costumes, the few props and even some characters emerging from a large theater trunk set just off-center on the stage. A few witty sound effects add to the magic.

And of course the music remains stellar. Still accompanied only by a piano and a harp, the cast gets to sing some lovely ballads, like "Soon It's Gonna

Rain" and "They Were You"; a couple of charming comic songs sung by the fathers, "Never Say No" and "Plant a Radish"; and the haunting waltz "Try to Remember." Two of the songs, while archetypal expressions of restless youth, hint at the changes soon to arrive in the 1960s. The boy, dismayed when the joy of early romance turns into the boredom of everyday life, goes off to live a life of adventure and danger. The girl's cry—"I want much more than keeping house, much more, much more, much more"—expresses what many young women felt at the time (a feeling that was, of course, captured by Betty Friedan).

Although the musical has, for the most part, stood the test of time, the newest production includes a few changes for the better. The song "It Depends on What You Pay" offers a prime example of how a term considered naughty several decades ago became, with more social awareness, offensive and demeaning. The number now replaces the frequent use of the word *rape* with *abduction*, which is actually a more accurate description of what they are singing about so gleefully. And in the last spoken line in the play, the creators have changed the sentence, "Leave the wall. Remember, you must always leave the wall"—which always sounded a little too Robert Frost-y to me—with the words, "No, leave the wall. It is not about the wall." Much better, don't you think?

There is that line that El Gallo sings in "Try to Remember": "Without a hurt the heart is hollow." As the years tumble on, that maxim has come to mean more and more to me. If the enthusiasm for the current production of "The Fantasticks" is any indication, that line, and the story that surrounds it, will resonate with audiences for years to come.

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

PARADISE LOST?

Dystopian films based on dystopian books have been all the rage recently. Hits like “The Hunger Games” and the “Divergent” series have sparked interest in the darker side of futuristic imagination. Perhaps for this reason Lois Lowry’s 1993 book, *The Giver*, has finally been adapted for the big screen after 20 years.

But *The Giver* is not actually about a dystopian world. It is, ironically, about a utopian paradise.

The film adaptation may be one of the rare instances in which the visualization of a powerful story enhances the narrative rather than disappointing the audience. It opens with a world of sameness, reason, order, “precision of language” and black and white. All difference, creativity, passion and emotion have been removed from human existence. There is no violence, no dispute, no variation—and it seems to be the perfect society in action. And as far as any citizen knows, this is the way it always has been and ought to be.

This is true for everybody except a community elder known as “The Receiver,” whose responsibility it is to keep safe the memory of what the world was once like, the world of diversity, passion, creativity, emotion, confusion, grays and colors. The Receiver is occasionally consulted for advice by the other elders, who watch constantly over the community, make pronouncements from speakers above, establish laws and decide which persons (especially the newborn and elderly) are “released,” a euphemism for homicide. The Receiver, who is getting up in

age, knows how things once were and therefore is aware of how things could be.

The story’s protagonist is a young man named Jonas, who is selected to be the next Receiver. His responsibility is to receive the collective memory from the old Receiver, who by virtue of his instructive role now becomes “The Giver.” Over time the Giver passes this memory to Jonas, and Jonas begins to see color and nuance, to know suffering and happiness, to appreciate that things have been and could be another way.

Lowry’s story is very creative, but the allegory isn’t very original.

It goes back at least to St. Augustine, from whose commentaries on Genesis we get a depiction of paradise, a prelapsarian world in which human beings do not act according to emotion, do not experience passion and do not disobey the Creator. So they live in perfect freedom (*libertas*), by which Augustine means obedience to God’s will as opposed to being governed by disordered desires, what Augustine calls concupiscence. In paradise human beings acted with complete rationality, which meant the absence of sexual desire and pleasure, as well as much of what we associate with everyday human emotions, including pain and happiness.

Augustine’s vision of human life before the Fall looks a lot like the world in which “The Giver” opens. The focus on rationality and absence of emotions suggests that harmony and concord once ruled, but that a single act of hu-

man disobedience—think apples and snakes—set everything on a dangerous trajectory.

This is the trajectory the elders in “The Giver” wished to reverse in creating their own version of rational paradise. However, as Jonas sees both the potential for good and ill that arises from a complex and colorful world in which humanity exercises free will

(*liberum arbitrium*), he realizes that the risk of suffering and the messiness of life are necessary if one wishes to experience love and happiness, even if they are at times fleeting.

“The Giver” puts into stark relief an uncomfortable truth that human freedom comes at a cost, and the cost is the risk of abuse and misuse of that very same freedom. Some people, like Augustine and the elders, believe that the solution to suffering and pain is

the elimination of choice and complexity. Perhaps some people, like Augustine and the elders, while well meaning, are wrong. If we all thought, spoke and acted alike, things might be better—maybe even perfect. Things might be simpler, more black and white. Yet they would not be authentically human. The truth is we are all givers and receivers of memory, inheritors of the history of salvation that beckons us to exercise our freedom for the common good. Paradise is not found in restricting freedom and suppressing emotion; it is found in following in the footprints of the most human (and divine) of all, Jesus Christ.

DANIEL P. HORAN

‘The Giver’
reminds
us that
human
freedom
comes at
a cost.



DANIEL P. HORAN, O.F.M., is the author of several books, including *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton: A New Look at the Spiritual Inspiration of His Life, Thought, and Writing* (2014).

PLANNING FAMILY

SEX, VIOLENCE & JUSTICE Contraception and the Catholic Church

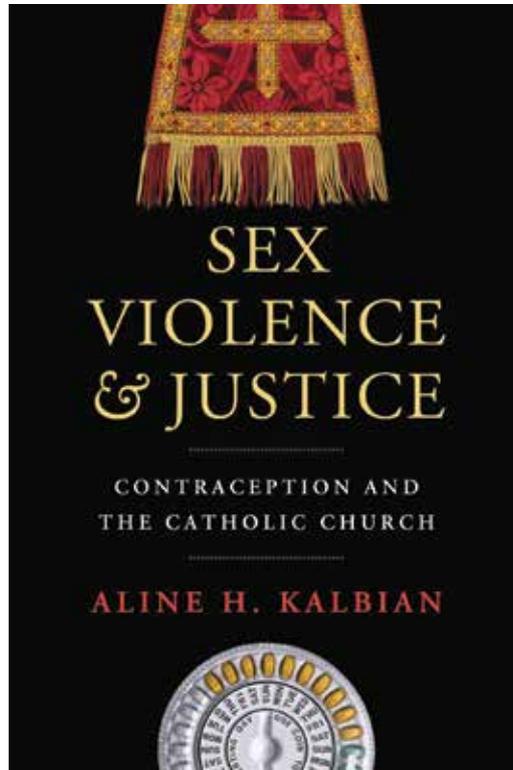
By Aline H. Kalbian
Georgetown University Press. 224p
\$29.95

With the ongoing concerns of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops over the contraceptive mandate and the upcoming 2014 Synod of Bishops on challenges facing the family, which will include discussions on contraception, Aline Kalbian's book is a timely and insightful contribution to this issue. It begins with a methodological explanation of the project (ch. 1), presents an historical overview of the justificatory strategies of Catholic teaching against contraception (ch. 2) and explores three case studies to illustrate ethical and conceptual frameworks and their interrelationship that guide contemporary Catholic teaching on contraception, which informs broader social and cultural discussions on sex, violence and justice (chs. 3-5).

Kalbian's methodological point of departure uses a religious ethics framework which seeks, through feminist analysis, to gain insight into "the justificatory and rhetorical moves that a religious tradition makes as it responds to cultural and social forces." Through this method, Kalbian pursues two goals. First, she explores how contraception shapes perceptions of sex, violence and justice. Second, her detailed historical and contextual analysis of the Catholic church's arguments against contraception highlight various conversation partners that inform its teaching— theological, scientific, cultural and social—and overlapping principles of justification. Combined,

these indicate the fluidity of justificatory schemes, even within a particular religious tradition.

Drawing heavily from John Noonan's seminal historical study, *Contraception*, Kalbian explores the "variety of justifications" that have shaped Catholic discourse on contraception, especially since "Humanae Vitae."



These justifications focus on various contextual considerations and evaluative principles from the Decalogue— thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery and thou shalt not steal. While the initial focus of Catholic teaching against contraception was on marital morality and procreation, it has evolved to include concerns for violence and justice. This historical overview indicates that,

though the teaching against contraception has remained consistent, the justification for that teaching has evolved and continues to do so.

Kalbian uses three cases to illustrate "overlapping justifications" in Catholic teaching on contraception. The magisterium focuses its prohibition against condom use to prevent H.I.V./AIDS infection, even in the case of serodiscordant couples, on the principle guiding sexual morality to prevent promiscuity. Others have argued condom use may be a moral obligation on the basis of respect for life, justice and the common good. These two perspectives are distinguished by different principles and methods of justification. An inductive, casuistic method focusing on the principles of justice and respect for life seems more methodologically conducive to an ethical response to condom use in the case of H.I.V./AIDS than does the magisterium's deductive, reductionist approach that focuses on the principle of sexual morality.

Whereas the magisterium emphasizes a deductive method and the principle of sexual morality to guide its response to H.I.V./AIDS and condom use, it uses an inductive method and the principle of justice to allow the use of emergency contraception in the case of rape. A methodological and contextual shift in the church's perspective views rape as an act of violence. Since rape is not a marital sexual act it is not subject to the same criteria of evaluation as is a sexual act. Kalbian opines that this sensitivity to the classification of an act based on context has methodological implications for evaluating contraception in other contexts as well.

The third case focuses on contraception in the context of population and development and the principle of justice. Catholic social teaching on justice and the common

ON THE WEB

The Catholic Book Club discusses the novel *We Are Not Ourselves*.
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good provides the evaluative framework for assessing population control. The church relies upon social, scientific and economic data to defend a “pro-natalist” stance that encourages families to reproduce and argues against the effectiveness of contraception to regulate population growth.

I draw attention to two broader questions that Kalbian’s study raises, which need to be explored further and will shape ongoing conversations and justification strategies on contraception for the Catholic church in particular, and religious ethics, in general. The first question, which is of particular concern to feminist analysis, is the interrelationship between gender and power structures and their relationship with the church’s only approved method of contraception, natural family planning. According to church teaching, N.F.P. promotes “mutual love and decision making” between the spouses within the marital relationship. While this may be the ideal of a marital relationship, it does not reflect the cultural and relational context of the vast majority of married couples throughout the world whose relationships exist within, and are shaped by, patriarchal cultures. In this existential context, it may be oppressive for the church to prescribe an approach to regulating fertility that creates an undue burden, especially for women.

Second, justice and ecological concerns invite deeper reflection on the correlation between overpopulation, which the church denies, and climate change. Kalbian notes that Pope Benedict “is relatively silent about whether or not population growth is of serious concern.” This silence indicates a lacuna in the magisterium’s methodology and use of science to inform its normative teachings. There is substantial scientific evidence on the direct correlation between the increase in world population and the increase in carbon emissions that cause climate change. Furthermore, there is substantial evidence to indi-

cate that contraception limits population growth and N.F.P. is an often ineffective means to regulate fertility. Patriarchy and climate change are just two issues surrounding contraception that invite urgent conversations within the Catholic church and have methodological implications for religious ethics that analyze the interrelationship between sex, violence and justice. Kalbian

JAMES T. KEANE

SIBLINGS AND RIVALS

BROTHERS What the van Goghs, Booths, Marxes, Kelloggs—& Colts—Tell Us About How Siblings Shape Our Lives and History

By George Howe Colt
Scribner. 480p \$30

Among the many plotlines chased by the media before and after the Super Bowl this past February was the news that quarterback Peyton Manning, of the Denver Broncos, didn’t arrange tickets for his own family and friends. That job was given to his younger brother and fellow quarterback Eli, whose New York Giants had lost their first six games on the way to a 7-9 record. Call it brotherly loyalty with just a touch of rub-your-nose-in-it malice. The previous year’s Super Bowl had an even more gripping family drama, as two siblings faced off as head coaches, with John Harbaugh of the Baltimore Ravens triumphing over his little brother Jim and the San Francisco 49ers across the field.

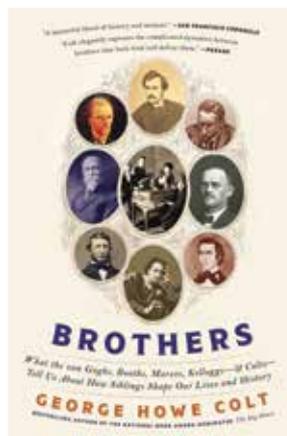
As George Howe Colt notes in *Brothers*, since before the dawn of recorded history, humanity has been obsessed with filial relationships. One doesn’t read far into the Bible before

has done a great service in providing a methodological framework to systematically analyze and move such conversations forward.

TODD A. SALZMAN is a professor of theology at Creighton University. He is the author of *The Church in the Modern World: Gaudium et Spes Then and Now* (Liturgical Press, 2014) with co-authors, Michael G. Lawler and Eileen Burke-Sullivan.

Cain and Abel engage in a competition ending in fratricide. The same is true in the legends of other cultures: Hector dies covering for Paris’s misdeeds in the *Iliad*; Beowulf’s unkindest cut toward Unferth in Anglo-Saxon lore is that “you killed your own kith and kin”; even in the closest thing Americans have to a national epic, the Godfather Trilogy, none of Michael Corleone’s misdeeds ever haunt him more than his own most unbrotherly response to Fredo’s betrayal.

In *Brothers*, Colt approaches this universal theme of brotherly love and competition from two different directions. He plumbs the depths of his own relationships with his three brothers through wistful and sometimes openly sentimental remembrances, but also tackles their struggles and less charming memories. Alongside, he explores in intimate detail the relationship between other famous brothers throughout history, focusing primarily on five family dramas; the Marx brothers; fellow actors John Wilkes Booth and his pro-Union brother Edwin; the van Gogh siblings; ill-fated John Thoreau and his brother Henry; and the hilariously feuding Kelloggs of cereal fame. Along the way,



we are reminded of many other famous brothers in history, including the Waughs, the Kennedys, the Darwins and the DiMaggios of baseball lore.

Colt's own stories will be partly familiar to fans of his award-winning 2004 family memoir, *The Big House*. Ironically, however, it is in the second approach that Colt's book truly shines. Recollections of one's childhood can feel saccharine or overly sentimentalized (or, in our contemporary milieu, mined for exaggerated emotional traumas), and Colt's account of his life with brothers is no exception. While their lives are interesting and often touching, there is a touch of the sepia tone in these memories that feels a bit overdone. As they enter adulthood and try to retain and build on their childhood relationships, their lives become more gripping.

But in Colt's tales of famous brothers in history there is no end of fascinating anecdotes or telling details that augur future successes and failures.

The Booth brothers alone deserve a book: John Wilkes Booth is perhaps the most notorious figure in American history, and yet, Colt tells us, not even the most well-known Booth of his time. That honor went to his brother and great theatrical rival Edwin, a renowned Shakespearean actor who once led the younger "Johnny" onto stage after a shared performance and asked the crowd, "I think he has done well. Don't you?" Their differing views on the Civil War formed the least of their quarrels, and John's own prodigious artistic talents were forever compared to those of his more dignified brother. It is chilling to remember that John Wilkes murdered Abraham Lincoln in, of all places, the theatre.

The less murderous but equally sad tale of the brothers Thoreau is just as well researched and told. Henry came home from Ralph Waldo Emerson's house one day at the age of 24 to find John, the saintly older brother he idolized, dying of "lockjaw" (tetanus). Two

weeks later, Henry experienced lockjaw himself, for reasons entirely psychosomatic—today, psychologists would attribute it to "survivor guilt." According to Emerson, Henry Thoreau never made another friend in his life, but instead immersed himself in nature. In fact, he first retreated to his famous cabin at Walden Pond to write an account of a voyage he had taken with his brother six years before. "Without John's death," Colt writes, "Henry might never have become Thoreau."

Colt's other tales are less maudlin, but also indicative of his central thesis, that the sibling relationship is one of the most formative in any life. Anyone who grew up sharing a room with brothers, of course, can attest to the evolutionary advantage it gives you; you're blessed with role models and antagonists from the start. As Colt notes, some experts have estimated that young siblings have a fight every 17 minutes, a figure he calls "low, if my childhood is any indication." I know a

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prominent American Jesuit who once likened his experience of sharing a room with older brothers to Johnny Cash's proverbial "Boy Named Sue": "Well, I grew up quick and I grew up mean/ My fists got hard and my wits got keen." And I shall not lie, it was a childhood boon to me when my own older brother got braces, because one shot to the mouth drew first blood in every fight after. Payback, dear readers, for the 11 stitches I earned when he dropped me while attempting to feed

me to the neighbors' terrifying dog. *Sic semper tyrannis!* We've gotten over it.

All this talk of brothers, of course, no doubt raises the necessity of Colt writing a sequel, for many of us might have another question for the author: "Brothers, sure, they'll play their part, but what might you tell the poor fellow who grew up with *sisters*?"

JAMES T. KEANE is an editor at *Orbis Books in Ossining, N.Y.*, and a former associate editor of *America*. He is the proud sibling of two brothers and the long-suffering victim of five sisters.

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By Abdullahi Ahmed an-Na'im
Oxford University Press. 232p \$27.95

This book is a dry, almost too careful, yet important inquiry into the nature of Muslim participation in American society, particularly in the political and juridical realm. It is written by an accomplished Sudanese-American law professor at Emory University in Atlanta, dedicated to young Muslims in the United States. Despite this hortatory stance (and to some extent because of it), Abdullahi An-Na'im makes a true contribution to the woefully under-represented literature on Americans of Muslim faith.

Na'im offers important ideas and a bold call for change. He is generally upbeat about the future of Muslims in American society: "For American Muslims who want to embrace their citizenship in the United States—along with their right to religious self-determination—the outlook is promising."

For the most part, An-Na'im's stubbornly refuses to delve into stereotyping or "charges of 'un-Americanness,'" but he could have gained by giving more of the community's fascinating history

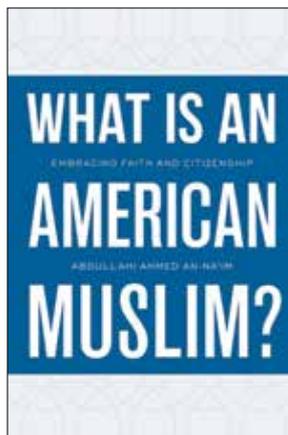
(which dates from the first recorded Muslim immigrant Haj Ali, who led a camel train toward Arizona for a future president of the American Confederacy in 1857). The lively history of Muslims in these lands could have leavened the turgid political science. It is too bad, as well, that An-Na'im took a pass on confronting the writings of Sayyid Qutub, who spent two years in Colorado in the 1950s and joined the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt on return, railing against sexual looseness in America. Qutub has been cited as an influence on Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Fuzzy abstractions at times hurt Na'im's arguments. Still, to the reader determined to find some gold flickering in the mica, and willing to climb over the excess of subheads throughout the text, there are rewards.

This short, but densely packed book is divided into four main subjects: the complex identity of Muslim Americans, their practice of citizenship, "religious self-determination" and legal dimensions. Interestingly, An-Na'im views identity—both as self and as citizen—

not in some sacrosanct vacuum but with a "relational dimension." This is not Ralph Waldo Emerson's way of looking at self-reliance; it is, however, a Mediterranean's way. One might say the self is better known and served by being reliant, and having others rely on it. It is also refreshing to be reminded by An-Na'im that "the subject of reason and reasoning is one of the dominant themes of the Quran." In fact, he says, the Quran shows the whole purpose of divine revelation is "to inspire deliberation and reflection." Rationality, cogitation, balance—these are primary to this careful author.

Na'im makes no bones about what kind of state should most appeal to a practicing Muslim: a secular one. And perhaps this is no surprise, given the horrific sectarian bloodlust unleashed, for example, in Syria. "I believe that the secular state—more so than even the so-called Islamic state—provides the best environment in which one can be a Muslim by choice and personal conviction, which is the only valid way of being a Muslim," he states. That last is an important addendum: much of the West still sees Islam as a religion uniquely built on force (as if there had never been Crusades!), with a decidedly skewed interpretation of the notion of *jihad*, which means not holy war, but struggle.

He asks a key question: *What is, should be, or is likely to be the role of Sharia in secular societies?* Though his examination is too complex to summarize here, about the charge that Muslims want to superimpose Sharia law in the United States secular courts, An-Na'im makes clear, "There is absolutely no indications of such an effort in practice." Indeed, even if there were, at one percent of the population, how could Muslims ever achieve it?



Most American civil law is consistent with Sharia, but that does not mean the state is enforcing Sharia, “any more than banning the death penalty means a government is enforcing Catholic doctrine.” An-Na’im often sounds the clarion for Muslim Americans to exercise their First Amendment rights reasonably, respectfully and smartly. The State can cooperate and still be consistent with its constitutional requirements in several areas, like diets (*halal*) in public schools, religious holidays, or even extended leave granted for a grieving Muslim widow. Proactively, An-Na’im recommends, for example, Muslims establishing their own banks that do not charge interest on loans (following Quranic injunctions against usury).

Family law is dicey for Christians, Jews, atheists and anyone who has ever gone through a divorce court. Muslims are no exception, and An-Na’im guides the reader though some of the thickets. Child visitation rights can be particularly thorny for a religion that gives the father much more precedence than the mother—the exact opposite of most American civil court tendencies.

Though only 10 percent of the first wave immigration from Arab lands (pre-1924) were Muslim, in the third and fourth Waves (post-1967) 60 percent are Muslim—a huge change. The total American Muslim population today is 3.48 million (Pew Research, 2013). Two-thirds of current Muslim Americans are immigrants. The two countries sending the most Muslims to the United States are not Arab ones but rather Pakistan and Bangladesh.

On the complex issue of assimilation, Pew surveys in 2007 and 2011 found that almost two-thirds of Muslim Americans see no conflict between practicing their faith and living and contributing to a modern, secular society. Thus An-Na’im underscores the chief intent of his book: “I am calling on American Muslims to take a proactive, affirmative view of their citizenship of the United States.”

One of the problems in disseminating Islam is at the local leadership level. Local imams, it seems, receive theological training in the old country, but not to lead American congregations. There is no American “seminary” so to speak. An-Na’im deemphasizes, if not deval-

ues something extremely valued in old world Islam, the concept of the *umma*, or unified community: “Unity is an illusion, one that has been a source of horrendous suffering and bloodshed throughout Muslim history.” This is an arresting thought, and applies with no small measure to the other monotheisms.

Perhaps the most intriguing part of the book is the chapter on legal dimensions of being a Muslim in America. The ever-balanced An-Na’im recommends what he calls “civic reason.” Employment discrimination, rather frequent in the years following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, was the basis of a 2006 suit against Alamo Rental Car, which forbade woman employees from wearing a Muslim headscarf at the sales counter. The rental company lost. On the other hand, in 2009 the City of Philadelphia successfully overturned a lawsuit of a policewoman who wanted to wear her *hijab* on duty. The distinguishing factor? Apparently, a headscarf in a patrol car brought “undue burden” to the city, while one at the Alamo counter did not.

Unilateral repudiation of marriage ties by the husband (*talaq*), the notion of an inadequate dowry (*mahr*), and the fact that in traditional Islamic law “the modern legal concept of custody does not exist” present strong challenges to being Muslim in these United States. Nevertheless, An-Na’im recommends accommodation to the law of the land, which could not, in any case, allow a practice such as *talaq*.

In an uncharacteristically stirring conclusion, An-Na’im urges his community to “re-imagine” itself. And he goes further. Change Islam, with pride in it, of course, and its durability. Rethink separate places of worship for men and women in mosques. There is no better place to do so than these shores.

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Invitation to the Feast

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), OCT. 12, 2014

Readings: Is 25:6–10; Ps 23:1–6; Phil 4:12–20; Mt 22:1–14

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son” (Mt 22:2)

There is no more compelling image for the city of God than that of the banquet, drawing as it does on the common experiences of good food and drink. I remember the cities I have visited by the food I ate in them, so this picture of the feast resonates at a deep, human level. Feasts recall times of joy in our lives, of families gathered together eating in celebration. Isaiah envisions a future in which “the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.” But it gets better: “And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever.” This city you remember not only by the food and wine, but by the universality of salvation and the conquering of death.

Since everyone must want to attend, how do you score an invitation to this feast? It’s easier than you think. You’ve already been invited. Jesus tells a parable about “a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son” and sent out his slaves to invite people to the feast. Those who were called to the celebration, though, “made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.” This is a strange reaction to a party invitation. Who avoids a royal banquet to focus on the mundane stuff of daily life?

Even more bizarre, who grabs the slaves of the king and kills them because they were offering invitations to a banquet? Jesus’ parable draws out the absurd implications of refusing God’s call.

And the nature of the rejected kingdom makes the behavior even stranger. At the heart of the City of God is permanent festivity. The church fathers attest to this: “Our whole lives are a feast day” (Clement of Alexandria); “We have unending holiday” (John Chrysostom); “Festivity is everlasting in the house of God” (Augustine); “Ours...is an eternal festival” (Jerome). God’s feast is a celebration that transcends current travails, yet the call to join the celebration is treated with indifference, disdain and finally rage.

In spite of rejection, the slaves went and found people to fill the wedding hall, “both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.” But there is another jarring aspect to the parable, which many commentators think might reflect a secondary parable tacked on to the wedding feast. Though the slaves invited everyone, good and bad, and filled the hall, the king “noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’” This guest, invited in when others failed to respond, was at the banquet yet nevertheless lacked something. The king instructed his attendants to “bind him hand

and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” a traditional image in Matthew for hell.

The parable ends with Jesus’ words, “for many are called, but few are chosen” and these words bind the stories of the wedding feast and the improperly robed wedding guest together. When we examine the narrative of the parable, it is clear that “many” refers to everyone, for everyone is invited, the good and the bad; the “few”



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on Jesus’ parable: have you accepted your invitation and are you preparing for the banquet?

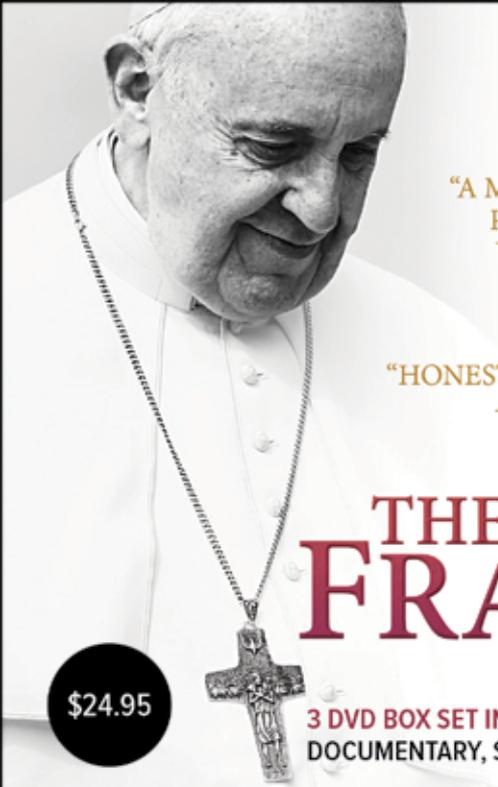
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refers to those who receive the invitation and genuinely accept it, who are chosen by freely choosing God. But to be chosen, it does not suffice to be called. Even more, once one answers the call, one must choose to be ready for the festival, to be prepared for the joy, to dress for the event.

The point of Jesus’ final line is not to minimize the number of the saved, but to point out that there are fewer who respond to, persevere in and prepare for the kingdom than are invited. Everyone is invited, everyone is welcome, but the decision as to whether you come or what you do when you arrive is up to you. Get ready, though, for it’s not just the party of the season, or the century; this is the party of eternity.

JOHN W. MARTENS

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