America
THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW
NOV. 3, 2014 $3.50

Eye on the Market

POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE ON INCOME INEQUALITY

ROBERT W. McELROY

OF MANY THINGS

In mid-October, four of the leading experts on the life and work of Flannery O'Connor gathered at Saint Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y., to discuss the Christian witness of the Southern Gothic writer, who died 50 years ago last summer. The symposium was co-sponsored by the seminary and **America**, the first in a series of events on Catholic literature, politics and the papacy. It was an honor to enjoy the company of these two women and two men, one of whom, Professor Bill Sessions of Georgia State University, was a longtime friend of O'Connor.

I must admit that when I first read *Wise Blood*, Ms. O'Connor's first novel and my introduction to her work, it left me cold. Where are the joy and peace that come from a conscious, living relationship with God and his church? Flannery O'Connor's stories, it seemed to me, were too brooding and violent, so different from the "buddy Jesus" I had encountered in C.C.D. in the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council.

Even stranger, it seemed, I had been assigned the book in my very first theology class at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass., where I studied briefly in the year before I entered the Jesuits.

Then, as is so often the case, events both confused and clarified my thinking. Our first class meeting was held on Sept. 12, 2001. Much like Hazel Motes, the protagonist of *Wise Blood*, we had been through the most ferocious storm and were suffering from exposure to the elements. As we discussed the horrifying events of the day before, I began to understand why we would begin our studies with a work by Flannery O'Connor. "Where was God yesterday," we were all asking. How could he let it happen? "God was there," one woman said, "in the hearts of the first responders and the other courageous men and women who gave their lives for 'friends' they didn't even know."

Flannery O'Connor would have agreed with that. She understood, contrary to what the neo-Scholastic philosophers were then teaching, that there is not a radical dissimilitude between the orders of grace and nature, between the exalted world of the supernatural and the mundane world of the here and now. In the time and space between the resurrection and the second coming, Ms. O'Connor knew, the world is largely one big mess. It can be hard to tell where the City of Man ends and the City of God begins.

The goal of discipleship, then, is not to have the right idea about God or to get every decision right, for our faith is ultimately not a set of propositions but a set of performances. To borrow a phrase from William T. Cavanaugh, our task as Christians is to enact the comedy of redemption amid the tragedy of the world. By "comedy," of course, I do not mean slapstick or mere irreverance, but the kind of performance that subverts our this-worldly ways, acts that make real the truth that we only win in any ultimately meaningful way by losing. Our power, in other words, lies in our powerlessness, gloriously transformed into transformative acts by the awful grace of God.

The strikingly different or unusual, therefore, as Judith Valente notes in her dispatch from Chicago in this issue, is often the way God reveals something essential. It is much like standing in front of a funhouse mirror; the distortion affords us a perspective we would otherwise never have and by that very fact allows us to glimpse the truth in a new way. It does not mean that we must abandon long-held ideas or church teachings about what it means to be human. It simply means that being human is not an idea but an experience that is at once universal and peculiar. Messiness, in other words, whether in Chicago or in Rome, is not to be feared, for it is not a detour but the path itself.

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A Jesuit Ministry

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Cover: Shutterstock.com/Alex Oakenman

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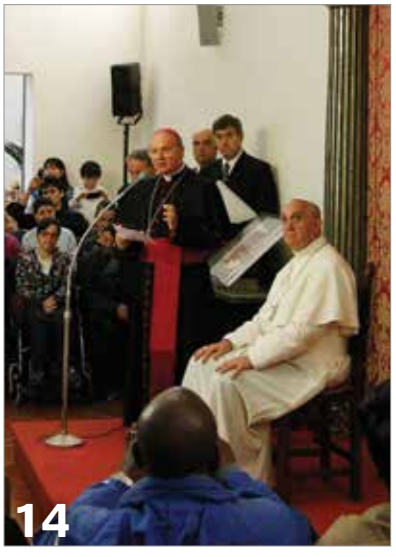
www.americamagazine.org VOL. 211 NO. 13, WHOLE NO. 5067 NOVEMBER 3, 2014



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BOOKS & CULTURE

ON THE WEB

Meghan J. Clark, right, talks about inequality and Catholic social teaching on **"America This Week"** on SiriusXM. Plus, Robert David Sullivan blogs on the midterm elections at "(Un)Conventional Wisdom." Full details on page 18 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.

Unreasonable Seizures

Many Americans may be surprised to learn their car, house, cash and jewelry can be sued by the government (e.g., United States v. One Pearl Necklace and United States v. Approximately 64,695 Pounds of Shark Fins). And, unlike people, personal property is not presumed innocent until proven guilty. A little-known practice called civil forfeiture enables law enforcement officials to confiscate assets that they suspect were obtained illegally, without charging, much less convicting, the owner with a crime.

The Justice Department created the nationwide civil asset forfeiture program in the 1980s as a way to go after criminal enterprises. Under the department's Equitable Sharing program, state and local police can keep up to 80 percent of the assets seized. The initiative was well intentioned: use the ill-gotten gains of lawbreakers to compensate victims and fund crime-fighting efforts. But, unsurprisingly, the practice is prone to widespread abuse. An investigation by The Washington Post documented many cases in which innocent Americans, often drivers pulled over for minor traffic infractions, had large sums of cash taken by the police on unfounded suspicions of drug trafficking. Those who can afford it pay an attorney and endure long legal battles to get their money back. But most cannot. Confiscation of cash and property has become a "routine source of funding for law enforcement" in the face of ever tightening budgets.

John Yoder and Brad Cates, former directors of the Justice Department's forfeiture office, called for the abolishment of the program, writing in The Washington Post (9/18) that it is "at odds with our judicial system" and "unreformable." Law enforcement officers provide a vital public service. Their efforts should be adequately funded with public money, not the police's own ill-gotten gains.

A Proper Vietnam History

History never dies. It lives in those who experience it, study it and try to reshape its future telling. If we celebrate it carelessly, its lessons will be lost. Therefore, the Pentagon's plan to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War with a $15 million multimedia celebration—including a website, exhibits, symposiums and oral history projects—needs an overhaul.

Its stated purpose, to "honor and respect Vietnam veterans and their families," is worthy. The war's context is much broader. That is why more than 500 scholars, veterans and activists have signed a petition demanding the right to correct the Pentagon's version of history. The portions of the program now online are already riddled with errors and omissions. The 1968 My Lai massacre is described as an "incident," as if it were an exception rather than one of many bloody scandals. The plan neglects the details of the great protests: the tear gas and beatings at the Chicago Democratic Convention in 1968 and the march on Nov. 15, 1969, of 250,000 anti-war protesters on the nation's capital.

The next step is clear: turn the project over to a non-profit organization, independent of the Pentagon, led by a committee of prominent, publicly identified historians, representing all viewpoints, to advise and direct the creators. Otherwise, the end result will likely be a selective narrative of the war that can be used by the government as propaganda to support similar conduct around the world.

A Treacherous Task

Gold remains a resource curse for the Mayan people of Guatemala even as mining the precious metal continues to create fortunes for others. In this century, it is Canadian mining interests that seek access to Guatemala's mineral wealth. Too often when powerful conglomerates secure access to a promising site, the wealth is extracted—and exported—but the ecological damage and poverty are left behind. For years, indigenous communities in Guatemala have resisted large-scale mining operations, and the resulting clash has sometimes turned violent.

An Amnesty International report released on Sept. 19 found that government policy, plowing ahead with mining agreements without consulting local communities, was exacerbating tensions in Guatemala's mining region. In what surely comes under the heading of thankless tasks, the Catholic Church in Guatemala has been asked by President Otto Pérez Molina to mediate disputes between mine operators and indigenous communities in order to head off the potential for more bloodshed. Local bishops have in the past vigorously defended Mayan communities, particularly the bishop of Huehuetenango, Álvaro Ramazzini Imeri, who has called for a moratorium on new licenses, complaining that mining interests only "leave crumbs" behind. He has been rewarded for his outspokenness with death threats.

While it is worthwhile to intervene to keep the peace, would-be deal brokers or breakers from the church will surely be challenged to balance conflicting interests. This could be an opportunity to bring Catholic social ethics into practical civic play or for the government and mining conglomerates to co-opt local church leadership. Church officials must take care that they are not being mined for mercy by corporate or government interests with hidden agendas.

EDITORIAL

Journalists in Danger

Two months ago, the Kurdish journalist Muhanad Akidi was captured by the Islamic State while reporting from the Iraqi city of Mosul. He was 37 years old and worked for a local news agency. On Oct. 13, he, his brother and two other civilians were reportedly executed by militants because they refused to pledge allegiance to the Islamic State. His murder follows the death of an Iraqi cameraman, Raad al-Azzawi, who was publicly killed by the Islamic State earlier in October.

The individuals who murdered Mr. Akidi and Mr. al-Azzawi are unlikely to be brought to justice. The same holds true for the men who beheaded the journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff. Unfortunately, most individuals who kill journalists are never held accountable—as many as nine out of 10. In the past 10 years, more than 500 journalists have been murdered, many in grisly circumstances. November 2 marks the second International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, which seeks to highlight the targeting of journalists and others for "exercising their right to freedom of expression."

This initiative builds on the work of the U.N. Security Council, which passed Resolution 1738 in 2006, which referred to the urgency and importance of protecting journalists. The resolution is welcome, but clearly has not had the desired impact. Continued attention to the right to freedom of expression, which is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is needed. The United Nations should consider developing international protocols for responding to the jailing of journalists, as recommended by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

The urgency of the issue is most evident in Syria. More than 70 journalists have been killed since the civil war began in 2011, and approximately 30 remain unaccounted for. Many war correspondents no longer travel into Syria for fear of kidnapping or murder. Journalists also face threats in nearby Egypt and Turkey. Since the military assumed power in Egypt, 44 journalists have been detained by the government. Three Al Jazeera reporters were convicted in June of conspiring with the Muslim Brotherhood and filing false reports. Lina Attalah, the chief editor of Mada Masr, an online newspaper, said, "There is a feeling that we are not able to practice the journalism we had hoped to after the revolution." In Turkey, the government continues to jail journalists at an alarming rate.

The tumult of the Arab Spring is one reason for the targeting of journalists, but the conditions of the new media age also play a role. Individuals equipped with cell phone cameras can now work as journalists, a development that can help launch democratic movements but has also put these individuals in danger. Meanwhile, the diminishment of traditional foreign news reporting, sponsored by newspapers and television stations, has led to a greater reliance on freelance journalists, who do not receive the same degree of institutional support. Many freelancers have to pay for their own protective gear and war-zone insurance.

The witness of these individuals remains as urgent as ever. Without a journalistic accounting of what is happening in Syria and Iraq, the public cannot make informed opinions about international interventions. The government should not be the only source of information, especially during times of war. As Jan Eliasson, deputy secretary general of the United Nations, has said, freedom of expression is "the lifeblood of democratic and informed discourse and debate." Today, the lack of reporting from Syria makes the rise of the Islamic State all the more difficult to comprehend. The United States should play a leading role in pushing for freedoms for journalists abroad. It should also review its policies toward journalists at home, who have been hamstrung by the vigorous prosecution of leaks by the Obama administration. The United States must lead by example.

Journalists do not always act for noble reasons. Some are motivated by professional vanity or the thrill of the hunt; but many exhibit sincere empathy for their fellow human beings. Before he was captured, James Foley wrote that he was inspired to "expose the untold stories" he encountered in areas of conflict. Many more journalists, like Mr. al-Azzawi and Mr. Akidi, die without being able to tell their own stories, but their willingness to work in countries with strict prohibitions on journalists is a testament to their courage.

Pope Francis has shown a special regard for journalists, reaching out to the families of both Mr. Foley and Mr. Sotloff and praying during a papal flight for a journalist killed in Gaza. The pope seemed to sense a connection with these reporters. Perhaps it was their concern for the person, for the stories of the poor and forgotten. The best journalists seek to give a voice to the voiceless, an impulse that all Christians can surely appreciate and should seek to protect.

REPLY ALL

Back to Basics

In "Preferential Options" (10/13), Congressmen Paul Ryan writes, "Before we can repair the safety net, we have to repair the thinking behind it." The safety net is needed to keep people from falling so far down financially that their basic needs are not met. Until we rebuild the net to that point, all other discussion is meaningless and can be disingenuous.

Lawmakers ended Aid to Families With Dependent Children, the federal assistance program for low- or no-income families, in 1996 and have been chiseling away on basic needs assistance ever since. And Mr. Ryan wants to chisel more. If people's basic needs are not met, they function more in hunker-down mode than venture-out mode. Based on his studies of Appalachia in the late 1960s, the sociologist R. A. Ball called this the "analgesic subculture," where people tend to act to relieve pain rather than to work toward goals. The same is true of kids in school. Hungry people don't function well in a competitive culture.

JIM LEIN
Online Comment

Voice of Courage

I want to thank the author who goes by the pseudonym Joan Miller for her beautiful piece, "Remain Here With Me" (10/13), about her journey recovering from rape. Much of the church and world has no idea how to deal with this particular pain or, especially, how to talk about it. I give my thanks to the author for talking about it anyway and leading with so much courage. Thank God for the tears of her husband, and a thousand graces for her ongoing healing.

MICHELLE JONES
Online Comment

Trust Lost

"The N.F.L. Fumbles" (Editorial, 10/6) failed to mention the recent ESPN "Outside the Lines" report alleging that the Ravens owner Steve Bisciotti attempted to cover up the truth about Ray Rice and his horrific assault on Janay Palmer. Mr. Bisciotti's actions are especially disturbing, given that he is a trustee of Catholic Charities of Baltimore. Sadly, he has completely failed to uphold the values of Catholic Charities, which runs many shelters and programs for women who have experienced domestic violence, including Anna's House in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. For Catholic Charities of Baltimore to continue to serve as a powerful voice for survivors of domestic violence, it needs leaders who can be trusted to offer their full support to these women and children. Steve Bisciotti does not fit this description anymore.

ANDREW BLAIR
Online Comment

Pro-Life in the Pews

As a mom to 5- and 3-year-old boys and a 1-year-old girl, I can relate to the parents in "Suffering Children," by Brian Doyle (10/6). I try to go through Mass with my kids in the pews and without food or toys, but I know they aren't taking in much. But they are taking in some of it. I can see it in those fleeting moments when one of my boys will kneel and put his hands together, even if it only lasts three seconds. But going to Mass with three small children is always a great sacrifice. As parents, we try so hard to make our children behave, or at least not disturb the others around us, and no matter the effort, someone is usually disturbed. Our priest reminds the parishioners that our commitment to being pro-life extends beyond the nine months in the womb and includes the rambunctious phases of toddlerhood. As baptized Christians, my children have the right to go to Mass, and it is my responsibility to ensure they do, even when it's inconvenient to others and us and difficult to "suffer" through.

KRISTINA ADAMS
Online Comment

Doing Good

I read with interest Amy-Jill Levine's commentary on the parable of the Good Samaritan, "Go and Do Likewise (9/29). I was taught that a parable has one goal.

With this parable Jesus answered the question a lawyer had posed, "Who is my neighbor?" After the lawyer admitted that "the one who treated him with compassion" proved to be neighbor to the waylaid victim, Jesus advised him, "Go and do the same"; that we do so as well is the goal of the parable.

Certainly, as Dr. Levine points out, some implications are overlooked, e.g., the motives of the priest and Levite, which she explores. But the text does not reveal these motives. As a professional historian, I emphasize that no one can draw conclusions about their motives, which may very well have been praiseworthy. The text reveals that the Samaritan was "moved with pity" and cares for the victim. This pity saved a life and was praised by Jesus and the lawyer and millions down the centuries. Why the priest and Levite were not similarly moved we cannot know.

RICHARD J. KEHOE, C.M.
Philadelphia, Pa.

Different 'Beliefs'

I began to read "Justified Reason" (9/22), by Adam Hincks, S.J., with expectation. Articles about the compatibility of science and faith are badly needed. Alas, while his piece sounds good to the believer, it would be mostly (and correctly) countered by the nonbeliever.

One of Hincks's main ideas, that scientists also employ faith, in that they accept the work done by others, misses the crucial point. While a collaborator often "believes" the work of his/her colleagues, they can always redo the work to check it. Thus, scientific "belief" differs substantially from religious faith.

While science can never explain everything, it can point out areas of thinking no longer tenable. It can tell theolo-

gians which of their ideas are not correct and point them toward more fruitful paths of thinking. That theologians haven't been taught much science is a problem that needs to be dealt with. All seminaries should have fairly in-depth science courses with explanation of how to use it to understand our faith.

CHARLES KELLER
Los Alamos, N.M.

Shared Grief

In response to "A Complicated Grief" (9/22), by Kerry Weber, I would like to reveal my understanding of the theology of grief. Between June 1990 and December 1994 I lost a mother-in-law, sister-in-law and my wife to illness. I say this not to imply that my suffering and grief was greater than anyone else's but only to affirm that there have been times in my life that produced grief and whose memory still causes instances of grief.

My own belief is that while we may never fully understand tragic events, the experience is part of the continuing process of our being created. An analogy is the agitation placed upon a piece of pottery as it is fired in a kiln. The result of this trial by fire is a beautiful piece of art. In some mysterious way, suffering and grief appear to be part of the means of preparing us to enter heaven.

As Christians, we can also take comfort that our God, in the person of Jesus, wept upon finding the body of Lazarus in the tomb. And, could we find a more understanding figure than Mary, who caressed her Son's body as it was taken down from the cross?

JOE BARMESS
Pickerington, Ohio

Evolving Theology

I appreciated that Matt Malone, S.J., shared Cardinal Francis George's thoughts on the intimate relationship between faith and reason (Of Many Things, 9/22). Our modern scientific story of the 13.7 billion-year unfolding of our universe reveals to us some new understandings as to what it means to be human. The paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., described the human consciousness as billions of years of evolution "looking at itself and reflecting upon itself." The cosmologist Brian Swimme says, "We are the human form of that power that gave birth to the Universe and guided its unfolding." New understandings such as these, by their very nature, will affect our very human efforts to articulate our faith.

JOHN SURETTE, S.J.
La Grange Park, Ill.

STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to **America***'s coverage of the Synod of Bishops on the Family, held in Rome from Oct. 5 to 19:*

For me it is a justice issue. Is the church dealing justly with the members of second marriages (or same-sex marriages)? When these families—call them illicit if you absolutely must—are established in faithfulness and create loving conditions and foster interpersonal commitments, how can the Catholic hierarchy deny their goodness and their reality? Inclusive mercy would never seek to deny such family members the help of the sacraments, and respect for human dignity should assure all persons of good will a place at the table.

FORREST TODD PARKINSON

Sin has entered all parts of society, especially where it can do the most damage—the family. When we force individuals to stay in an unhealthy or sinful relationship (sin is not necessarily infidelity, it can also be a failure to honor God), are we demonstrating love—or power and authority? The church must model love and compassion or we won't have the opportunity to reach those who are hurting in broken relationships where sin has taken over.

JANE ANNING ADAMS

It seems sometimes that we as a church are too ready to discard those who don't meet the ideal. So we toss around phrases like "defective catechesis," disordered this and that. So finally, bewildered, they seek shepherds elsewhere. If we cannot give hope to the "least of these," they will out of desperation and thirst for God leave to find pastors who will bind their wounds and help them bear their burdens.

KENT LOWE

"Hazmat suits are the new normal."

CARTOON: HARLEY SCHWADRON

SYNOD ON THE FAMILY

A Year of Discussion Begins as Drama Continues With Final Report

After several days of animated debate over its official midterm report, the Synod of Bishops on the Family agreed on a final document more clearly grounded in traditional Catholic teaching. The assembly failed to reach consensus on the especially controversial questions of Communion for those who are divorced and civilly remarried and the pastoral care of gay and lesbian people that had brought heightened attention to the synod.

The synod's last working session on Oct. 18 also featured a speech by Pope Francis that ended with a prolonged ovation from the synod fathers. The pope celebrated the members' frank exchanges—even disagreements—while warning against extremism in the defense of tradition or in the pursuit of progress. "Personally, I would have been very worried and saddened if there hadn't been these temptations and these animated discussions," the pope said, "if everybody had agreed or remained silent in a false...peace."

Discussions in the synod hall had grown heated after the release of a midterm report that used strikingly conciliatory language toward people with ways of life contrary to church teaching, including divorced and civilly remarried Catholics, cohabitating couples and those in same-sex unions. The summaries of working-group discussions, published on Oct. 16, showed a majority of synod fathers wanted the final document to be clearer about relevant church doctrine. The final report, which the pope ordered published almost at once after the synod's conclusion, featured many more citations of Scripture, as well as new references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

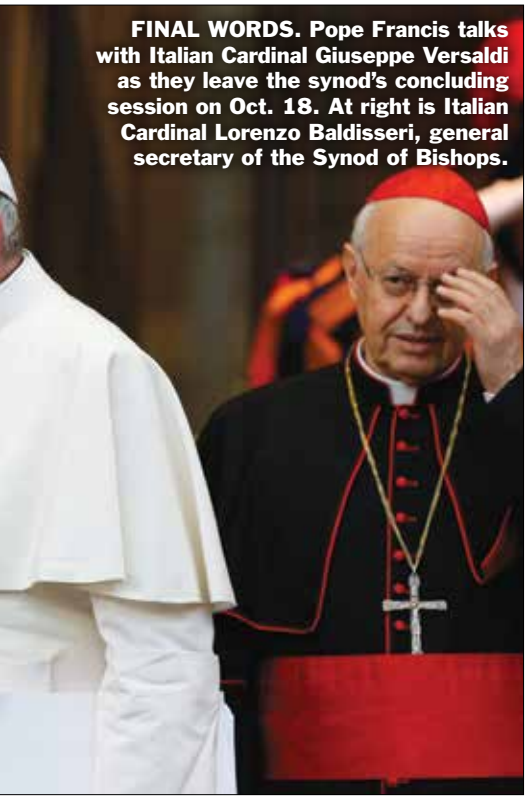
Synod fathers voted on each of the document's 62 paragraphs. Breaking with a 49-year old tradition in a move toward transparency in the synodal process, Pope Francis decided to publish the votes for each of the paragraphs in the final report so that the local churches and the Catholic clergy and faithful could see the level of support or opposition on each question. Three paragraphs failed to gain the two-thirds supermajority ordinarily required for approval of synodal documents.

Two of those paragraphs dealt with a controversial proposal by Cardinal Walter Kasper of Germany that would make it easier for divorced and civilly remarried Catholics to receive Communion. The document noted disagreements on the subject and recommended further study.

The document's section on pastoral care for gay and lesbian people, which also fell short of supermajority approval, was significantly changed from the midterm report. The original section heading—"welcoming homosexuals"—was changed to "pastoral attention to persons with homosexual orientation," and a statement that same-sex unions can be a "precious support in the life of the partners" was removed. The synod approved a proposal for streamlining the process for the annulment of marriages, including the introduction of an administrative process for annulments.

Federico Lombardi, S.J., the Vatican spokesman, told reporters that the absence of a supermajority indicated a lack of consensus and a need for more discussion. He noted that the final report did not carry doctrinal weight but would help set the agenda for the ordinary general assembly of the Synod of Bishops to be held in October 2015.

While reassuring the assembly that the church's unity was not in danger, Pope Francis warned against five temptations he saw at work: a "hostile rigidity" that seeks refuge in the letter of the law; a "destructive do-goodism" based on a "false mercy," which is a special temptation for "progressives and liberals"; transforming "bread into stone" and hurling it "against sinners, the weak and the ill" by imposing "impossible burdens"; coming down off the cross by "bending to the spirit of the world rather than purifying it"; and neglecting the "deposit of faith" by seeing oneself as its owner rather than its servant and neglecting reality by using "a smooth language in order to say a lot without saying anything."



FINAL WORDS. Pope Francis talks with Italian Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi as they leave the synod's concluding session on Oct. 18. At right is Italian Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, general secretary of the Synod of Bishops.

IRAQ

Winter Nears In Kurdistan

Conditions for Iraqi Christians and Yazidis, who escaped from Islamic State militants into Iraq's Kurdistan region, remain difficult as winter approaches, and Catholic Relief Services and other church agencies are stepping up their response accordingly. They are helping to "winterize" the sometimes haphazard shelters thrown together by displaced Christians and are beginning to plan for a long-term settlement within Erbil and other communities in Kurdistan where the internally displaced Iraqis have fled.

Sean Callahan, chief operating officer for C.R.S., returned in mid-October from a tour of conditions in northern Iraq, where thousands of Christians and members of other religious and ethnic minority communities have found refuge. "There's been a lot of challenges, I think, for the displaced people because the numbers have come so quickly, particularly when [I.S. militants] took over Mosul." As a result of the exodus, he said, "many, many people" are living in any available space on church compounds in Erbil. According to Callahan, families have created shelters in church halls and schools. "They are also in unfinished buildings in many cases, schools that were going to go up, government buildings. People have basically gone into any area where they can get a little shelter."

Church agencies are rushing to prepare these temporary shelters "so they can at least last through the winter."

"Even though we sometimes think of the Middle East as always being warm," said Callahan, "in this area of Iraq, there's some altitude and they actually get snow in some areas."

Callahan believes it may be at least two years if not longer before Mosul residents can consider returning home. Many have lost everything. The hesitancy to return, he explained, is attributable not only to Islamic State brutality but also to the betrayal by former neighbors and friends of these Iraqi Christians. Many abandoned homes were looted by Muslim neighbors—many who had been considered friends. "People in the local community, frankly, did not come to their defense," Callahan said.

As a longer term strategy, C.R.S. will begin contributing to the creation of more durable shelters and seeking to create job opportunities for the displaced Christians and Yazidis. "The idea is to have a site where they are still in Iraq, still in the Middle East, and hopefully they can resettle and continue to live there," Callahan said, "even if they don't feel security in either the short term or the long term in going back to where they were in either the Nineveh Plain or in places like Mosul."

Callahan expects that many here hope to emigrate, which will further reduce the rapidly diminishing Christian population in Iraq. "They're really traumatized; they are afraid for the security of themselves and their children," Callahan said. Many told him they would go to the United States in a heartbeat if they could. Callahan suggested U.S. legislators need to take a hard look at U.S. refugee quotas, currently set so low that emigration to the United States is not a real option for persecuted Christians in Kurdistan.

Callahan said authorities of the Kurdish Regional Government have been "tremendously supportive" but are hard-pressed by the crisis and are not receiving the support from the Iraqi central government that they had counted on. He added that one little-observed aspect of such a humanitarian catastrophe is the hardship imposed on host communities. Not only are Kurd

PERMANENT STATUS? An Iraqi child, who fled from ISIS militants in Mosul, outside her tent at a camp in Erbil in September.

fighters expected to defend their vulnerable guests from further attacks, but normal life for Kurds has become in some respects as disrupted as it is for the fleeing Christians. Many schools in Erbil, Callahan pointed out, have been taken over by displaced Christian and Yazidi families, and it is unclear how the school year for Kurdish children can proceed. **KEVIN CLARKE**

Pakistan: Death Sentence Upheld

A five-year court odyssey for a Pakistani Christian mother of five will continue after an appeals court in Lahore, Pakistan, on Oct. 16 upheld a death sentence for "blasphemy." Asia Bibi, 45, has been imprisoned since 2009 while appealing her conviction. Accused by co-workers after a dispute over a communal water source, she was convicted under Pakistan's infamous blasphemy laws. The Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement, which defended Bibi, said it will submit a final appeal to Pakistan's Supreme Court, noting this process "could last a number of years." A statement from the group described the decision as biased, adding that the center's team "is very much [disheartened] and we are worried about the other cases of blasphemy which are under proceeding in the different courts of Punjab."

Ebola Orphans

Ever since Frank Mulbah's mother died of Ebola in Monrovia, Liberia, in August, no one will go near him. "I went to my relatives after my mother died, but they chased me away, even after I told them that I didn't have Ebola," said Frank, 12, who tested negative for Ebola at the hospital where his mother died. As Ebola continues its rampage across Liberia and elsewhere in West Africa, thousands of children are taking a double hit: losing parents to the fatal virus and then being shunned by relatives, who fear they will catch the disease. The United Nations estimates the virus has orphaned nearly 4,000 children across the region, and that number could double in coming weeks. Aid groups fear the orphans are at risk of starvation and disease. The children also could pose a risk to others by spreading the disease if they are allowed to roam free without being tested for the virus.

Hunger's Paradox

Providing food aid to people in need is not enough to eradicate world hunger, Pope Francis said in a message marking the celebration of World Food Day on Oct. 16. An overhaul of the entire framework of aid policies and food production is needed so that countries can be in charge of their own agricultural markets, he said. "For how long will systems of production and consumption that exclude the majority of the world's population even from the crumbs that fall from the tables of the rich continue to be defended?" he asked. "The time has come to start thinking and deciding based on each person and community and not from market trends," he said. The United Nations estimates that 842 million people worldwide are chronically hungry. Pope Francis said it is "one of the most tragic paradoxes of our time" that there can be so many people going hungry in a world where there is an "enormous quantity of food wasted, products destroyed and price speculation in the name of the god of profit."

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Mexico's Missing

The Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph said on Oct. 14 that it hoped that a **$9.95 million settlement** of abuse claims "can bring about some closure to those hurt by abuse in the past." ✦ Alaska's Gov. Sean Parnell said in a statement released on Oct. 12 that his administration will appeal a U.S. District Court decision that invalidates the state's constitutional **definition of marriage** as the union of one man and one woman. ✦ The Catholic Church in Poland urged "constant prayers" on Oct. 13 after one of its missionary priests, the **Rev. Mateusz Dziedzic**, was kidnapped by rebels in the Central African Republic. ✦ In a letter issued on Oct. 15, bishops in the Mexican state of Guerrero asked government officials to prioritize finding **43 missing teacher-trainees**, who appear to have been detained by corrupt police and delivered to members of a drug cartel. ✦ Sister Teresa Fitzgerald, a Sister of St. Joseph who directs Hour Children, an organization that assists women in prison and their children, has won the $1 million **2014 Opus Prize** for faith-based humanitarian work. ✦ Pope Francis moved a predecessor **closer to sainthood** on Oct.19, closing out the Synod on the Family with a beatification ceremony for Pope Paul VI.

DISPATCH | CHICAGO

When Spirit and Anatomy Don't Match

Jordan Becker has close-cropped dark hair, a trim goatee and bulging biceps from lifting weights daily at the gym. Becker did not always look this way. A photograph of Becker at age 4 shows a smiling little girl with ringlet curls in a frilly dress. "My mother had to pay me to wear that dress," Jordan says.

Just over a year ago, when he was still in the Army National Guard as a woman, Becker began taking testosterone and had his breasts surgically removed. He is one of an estimated 1.3 million Americans who are transgender—people who believe their spirit and their psyche don't correspond with their anatomy.

For churches that have spent the past several decades struggling with how best to minister to gay and lesbian people and respond to calls for same-sex marriage, transgender people represent the next moral frontier. Those seeking to transition to another sex also pose complex pastoral questions. They frequently say they knew from an early age that their body didn't fit the gender they were born with. If God created all beings, how could God have gotten it wrong, they ask.

"I lay in bed at night asking, 'Why does God hate me?'" Jordan once told me. A suicide attempt followed. How does that compute with a loving, merciful God?

Emboldened by shows like Amazon's "Transparent" and Netflix's "Orange Is the New Black," which feature transgender characters, Becker and others increasingly are speaking out publicly about their lives. They include a number of transgender Protestant ministers as well. Recently, a Carmelite order of nuns in Canada accepted a hermaphrodite woman born with physical characteristics of both sexes. She is now taking hormones to become a woman.

I'll leave the theological questions to those more expert. But perhaps any discussion of transgender realities can begin with the question of what truly constitutes our personhood. In Catholic teaching, the difference matters a lot. "The harmony of the couple and of society," says the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out." Yet many are asking whether our anatomy is really such a defining factor. As Becker says: "I was the same person the day before I started my transition as the day after. It doesn't matter what's in my pants or under my shirt."

> If God created all beings, how could God have gotten it wrong?

I am moving along my own learning curve about transgender individuals. Several months ago, I reported a story on Chicago's efforts to curb the spread of H.I.V. among young gay men. At one clinic, a person with a man's haircut wearing men's clothes came for testing. To me, Sam was obviously a woman.

"Sam identifies as a male," a hospital worker told me later.

"Yes, but what is Sam anatomically?" I persisted.

"What difference does it make?" the worker said. "It's what Sam says that matters."

Later, covering a different story, I met a Catholic sister from Kentucky who told me she has ministered to transgender individuals since the 1990s. The sister from Kentucky says she has two messages for transgender people: "God loves you, and God wants you to be who you are."

Then I began working out at the gym alongside Becker, who told me: "It's like a light bulb went off in my head. God doesn't hate me. God is using me for something special."

The theologian James D. Whitehead and his wife Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, a developmental psychologist, have written extensively about human sexuality. Transgender individuals, they write, test our concept of normal. "But…normalcy carries little weight in biblical stories that tell of transformations that unseat our confident grasp of reality. Paradox and miracles are the stuff of Scripture. Does not the odyssey of a transgender person fit this narrative of grace?"

Becker has had to give up his dream of a military career; the service will accept gay but not transgender people. Still, he lives with hope. Sexuality is perhaps far more complex and mysterious than we have yet imagined. I look to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., who marveled at the beauty in the extravagant and unconventional. "Glory be to God for dappled things...all things counter, original, spare, strange," Hopkins wrote. Many are now asking: will the church one day say the same?

JUDITH VALENTE

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

HELEN ALVARÉ

Francis 101

Like many people, I hear the words of Pope Francis as an invitation to query what new things the Holy Spirit is doing today. There must be a million ways to structure this inquiry, a million lenses. I'm not choosing the most common lens—what Francis might mean for the institutional church—but rather what he might mean for a personal call to holiness. Like many people, I am a middle-class North American spouse and parent, in a country with a troubling amount of fragmentation and want. My tentative answers (and more plentiful questions) may strike a chord.

The first risky business is trying to sum up the sign and the message that is Pope Francis. Painting with a broad brush, I see a call to personal humility, to viewing one's life as a particular set of gifts to be placed at the service of others. I see a call to envision every single human being as an invitation to understand better who God might be. And I imagine all of this wrapped in a big dose of joy, thanks to the love of a personal God who empowers human beings to give and receive love and joy.

Several particular things about Francis' papacy drive both my vision of his message and my struggle to "bring it home." At the risk of being trite (or maybe there's no risk at all; I'm just another human being naturally responding to universal human gestures)—I am moved by the way Francis integrates body and soul, material and spiritual, eternal and temporal—in other words, his physical and verbal "touching" of human wounds: poverty, imprisonment, family breakdown, disfigurement, homelessness, sickness and death. In the same vein are his choices regarding the use of material things; he uses them to invite people into relationship, to invite them to see past him to God.

Two applications to my middle-class North American life stand out. The first concerns material things. God forgive me, this is pedestrian; but I feel pretty constrained by the many hours it takes to work in order to pay for the basics: food-clothing-shelter for a family in a still-chancey economy, children's education and some savings for old age.

I have to query my choices about time and money and the stuff I buy.

But I am reminded forcefully, in light of the sign of Pope Francis, that I have to query my choices about time and money and the stuff I buy. Are they an invitation to relationship or a barrier? Do they empower service or prevent it? Do they keep the poor in mind? Pope Francis visually demonstrates the good Samaritan imperative, in his case responding to the "neighbor" who shows up in St. Peter's Square or in his many inboxes. How can I?

Respecting other people's needs, I find that I need to stop my spinning world a few times a week and explicitly ask who needs a call. A note? Some money? Am I giving until it hurts at least some? As for buying stuff, I draw many lines while trying still not to turn this kind of decision making into its own materialistic religion. As a practical result, "shelter porn" (home decorating) and all glitzy magazines are out, as are nice cars, pricey furniture, labeled clothes and any house with more space than a family intensely uses for itself and guests needing a place to stay.

This stuff not only eats up too much time and money but signals to onlookers that I might think we are not radically equal, that I might not be open to knowing them. In our second-hand/consignment everything, food that makes family and friends happy to eat, education and clothes (for lots of public speaking and teaching) that say (I hope): I respect the setting and the company, and love, not hate, beauty and fun in the world.

A second application involves putting my body, not just my mind and my money, in service to others. I take Pope Francis to teach that I can't really understand Christian love—an integrated body/soul love—if my body stays uninvolved. I need to hold the sick, move furniture for the poor, scrub my kids' bathroom and be an onsite friend to the lonely. I think this is why in the past, I have felt most "myself," when, right after appearing on television or returning home after a big presentation, I'm scraping fries off my kitchen floor (yes, I have sons) or moving furniture for a Catholic Worker project.

Is this enough? No. Somewhere in my head is the idea that it's not near enough until I'm living directly among people with less, giving until it hurts a lot more and relying on God to provide tomorrow what my many work hours supply today. God help me, I will.

HELEN ALVARÉ

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Market Assumptions

Pope Francis' challenge to income inequality

BY ROBERT W. McELROY

In a tweet read around the world this past April, Pope Francis told over 10 million online followers, in nine different languages, "Inequality is the root of social evil." The pope's diagnosis did not go over well with many American Catholics, who criticized the statement as being radical, simplistic and confusing. This pushback stands in stark and telling contrast to the otherwise enthusiastic reception the new pope has met in the United States. From the moment of his election, Pope Francis has captured the attention of the American people with his message and manner, even as he has challenged us all to deep renewal and reform in our lives. Americans take heart in the pope's call to build an ecclesial culture that casts off judgmentalism; they applaud structural reforms at the Vatican and admire Francis' continuing focus on the pastoral needs of ordinary men and women.

But that Francis' teaching on the scandal of economic inequality in our world has inspired a decidedly mixed response has not deterred the pope from speaking on this theme, one very close to his heart, repeatedly and forcefully. What Pope Francis tweeted in just seven words he had elaborated on at length five months earlier in his apostolic exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel" (No. 202):

> The need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed.... As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world's problems, or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills.

Pope Francis identifies this inequality as the foundation of a process of exclusion that cuts immense segments of society off from meaningful participation in social, political and economic life. It gives rise to a financial system that rules rather than serves humanity and a capitalism that literally kills those who have no utility as consumers. Inevitably, such exclusion destroys the possibility for peace and security within societies and globally. The cry of the poor captured in "The Joy of the Gospel" is a challenge to the "individualistic, indifferent and self-centered mentality" so prevalent in the cultures of the world; it is a call to confront the evil of economic exclusion and begin a process of structural reform that will lead to inclusion rather than marginalization.

Commentators from the worlds of politics, economics and business have weighed in to identify the defects and limitations of the pope's prescription for justice in the world. Some of these commentaries have been superficial and highly politicized; others have been thoughtful and incisive. The emergent critique of Pope Francis' message about inequality focuses on three major themes. The first is that the pope does not understand the importance of markets. The second is that Francis' critique is aimed at a type of capitalism far different from the economy of the United States. The third is that the pope's perspective has been skewed by his Latin American roots and is out of step with the teaching of prior popes. Thus Francis' criticisms of world economies are alternatively naïve or misplaced or doctrinally extreme.

But a sustained reading of Pope Francis' words on inequality and the barrage of criticism that has greeted them raises another possibility, namely, that the backlash against the pope's message did not arise because he failed to recognize the centrality of markets, the nature of economies like the United States and the trajectory of authentic Catholic social teaching, but precisely because he did recognize the realities, and in doing so has raised fundamental questions about justice and the American economic system.

Specifically, the pope's writings on inequality and economic justice point to the fallacies inherent in a series of major cultural assumptions that are deeply embedded in American society. These assumptions touch upon the meaning and significance of economic inequality itself, the moral standing of free markets and the relationship between economic activity and membership in society. Only by examining the legitimacy of each of these assumptions in turn can the importance of Pope Francis' critique and challenge be appreciated. Only by examining the cultural mindset that these assumptions taken together have created can it be understood why they collectively undercut the possibility for greater justice in the American economic system and world community today.

The Natural Order

The first cultural assumption is that current levels of domestic and international economic inequality are a natural part

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NAMESAKE. Pope Francis leads a meeting with the poor in the archbishop's residence in Assisi, Italy, Oct. 4.

CNS PHOTO/PAUL HARING

of healthy economic life. The logic behind this assumption is simple: Any economic system that seeks to enhance growth must incentivize individual initiative and effort. For this reason alone, economic inequality will be evident and substantial in every nation that values growth and opportunity.

Economic inequalities are natural, under this assumption, in another more fundamental sense as well. Economic inequality arises from the right of men and women to use their talents as they choose and from the claims of justice that reward individuals for their contributions to specific enterprises. Societies may have an obligation to provide a threshold of economic support to their citizens, but to go further and seek to limit economic inequality would not only cripple economic growth but violate fundamental norms of justice.

But in Catholic thought this assumption, which is so comforting for American culture, is utterly unacceptable. Catholic thought begins not with the need to maximize economic growth or with individual claims to recompense, but with the equal dignity of every man and woman made in the image of God. In the words of the Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (No. 29):

> Their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace.

Grave inequalities within and among nations are automatically suspect in Catholic thinking and constitute not the legitimate natural order but a profound violation of that order.

It is vital to note that the council is not talking about the less-controversial right to some minimum threshold income in this passage; it is explicitly talking about disparities in income. Catholic teaching has long recognized that the most profound harms of economic inequality lie not merely in the material realm but in the social, psychological and political effects that flow from great economic inequalities. Those who are marginalized economically are also marginalized educationally, residentially and in their opportunities for meaningful work. As a result, as Pope Francis concludes,

they are actually excluded from society: "Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised—they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the exploited, but the outcast, the 'leftovers.'"

Pope Francis' assertion that egregious levels of inequality constitute a profound injustice rather than a necessary part of the natural order is the central friction that underlies the rejection of the pope's message within the United States. When the richest nation on earth has the highest level of post-tax-and-transfer income inequality among highly developed countries, that is injustice, not the natural order. When the 85 richest individuals in the world have more wealth than the 3.5 billion poorest, that is injustice, not the natural order. The cultural currents in American life that treat grotesque levels of inequality as inevitable in a market economy constitute an ideology of justification and complacency, and they are irreconcilable with the sense of complicity in injustice and the imperative to reform that flow from any meaningful application of the Gospel to economic relations in our world.

When the richest nation on earth has the highest level of income inequality among highly developed countries, that is injustice, not the natural order.

The Sacred Market

The second cultural assumption widely held in the United States is that the freedom of markets is a categorical imperative rather than an instrumental freedom. No element of Pope Francis' teaching on justice and the economy has received more criticism than his call for rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets. Defenders of American capitalism have advanced two separate arguments to counter the pope's critique. The first is that the economic systems in the Western world are not in fact absolutely autonomous but instead are subject to regulations that safeguard important human rights. The second is that the free market is the best engine for generating wealth for all segments of society and for embodying the fundamental human right to contract and undertake economic initiative.

Both of these arguments have important elements of truth. Western markets are not free in an absolute sense but reflect elemental safeguards for human dignity. In addition, markets are a central mechanism for the wealth creation that has lifted millions of people out of poverty over the past several decades, especially in China and India. Finally, free markets do express and nurture the important human freedom of economic initiative and contract. For all these reasons, relatively free markets are conducive to establishing economic justice in the world.

But as Catholic social teaching has made clear throughout the past half century, free markets do not constitute a first principle of economic justice. Their freedom is merely instrumental in nature and must be structured by society and government to accomplish the common good. In "Centesimus Annus," in which St. John Paul II skillfully integrated a modern appreciation for markets into Catholic social teaching, he made clear that any market system must be "circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality, and which sees it as a particular aspect of that freedom, the core of which is ethical and religious." And pointing to the wreckage of the financial collapse of 2008, Pope Benedict XVI observed in "Charity in Truth" that both distributive and social justice are essential to complement the commutative justice of markets, because "if the market is governed solely by the principle of equivalence in value of exchanged goods, it cannot produce the social cohesion that it requires to function well." The sustained conviction of Catholic doctrine is that the dignity of the human person is the mean and the measure of every system and institution, and that markets must be structured to reflect that perspective.

It is in light of this fundamental stance that Pope Francis speaks to the question of markets and condemns the absolutism of those who resist structural reforms that will bring greater fairness and serve human dignity. He identifies a "sacralized" approach to existing market structures, which resists all calls for change and reform in the name of freedom and efficiency. Seen through this sacralized prism, any attack upon the status quo is portrayed as a pathway to state centralization, an encroachment upon personal freedom or an invitation to economic stagnation.

This same sacralization of free markets has marked the pushback faced by every major reform moment in American economic history—during the Populist and Agrarian reform movements of the 19th century, the Progressive reforms of the early 20th century and the reforms of the Great Depression. At each of these moments, those seeking reform were met with an absolutist defense of the markets that labeled any alteration in market structures as an assault on freedom and prosperity. Ironically, it is these same reforms that market defenders point to proudly today as evidence that our market structures are not absolutist.

The freedom of markets is essential to a vibrant and just economy, but it is an instrumental freedom, not a categorical imperative. Markets exist to serve the human person and human communities. It is the obligation of society and government to structure markets so that they best carry out that role.

Makers Versus Takers

The final cultural assumption is that there is a fundamental divide in American society between those who contribute to society economically and those who do not. This trend was captured in a narrative that emerged in the 2012 presidential election that there are two groups in America: "the makers" and "the takers." "The makers" are those who pay more in taxes than they receive in government benefits. "The takers" are those who receive more in benefits than they pay in taxes. While there was a great deal of imprecision about what benefits counted in this calculation and whether those who had contributed economically in the past but were now retired or disabled should be counted as "takers," the overarching theme was that a large segment of American society continually drains the American economic system.

This theme has been accentuated by the growing levels of inequality in the United States, and the decreased economic mobility of those born into the lowest income quintile of the population. As a consequence, the very exclusion that Pope Francis warns of has eroded public discourse and unity within American society. The poor, who were a central focus of political action and public concern during the 1960s and '70s, have now been swept to the side of public debate. Programs that benefit the poor must be justified by their collateral benefit to the middle class. And a commonly unarticulated, yet deeply

resonating theme of this cultural shift is the notion that the poor are largely responsible for their own poverty.

The notion that a society can be divided into "the makers" and "the takers" embodies precisely the individualism that Pope Francis condemns. It asserts that wealth creation is an individual undertaking, ignoring the enormous role that societal contributions make to every business enterprise. It is a denial of the core assertion in Catholic teaching that all creation was created by God and given to humanity, collectively, and that material goods have a universal destination that must not be undermined. The ideology of makers and takers regards market outcomes not merely as an efficient first-level filter through which material goods are distributed in society but as a moral arbiter of worthiness, effort and talent. And it constitutes a subversive influence in American society, one that sows division and discord.

One great irony of the myth of the makers and takers is that structures of inequality have raised enormous obstacles to meaningful job opportunities for so many young men and women. Pope Francis has pointed repeatedly to this dearth of productive jobs, saying:

> We cannot resign ourselves to losing a whole generation of young people who don't have the strong dignity of work.... Not having work does not just mean not having what one needs to live...the problem is not being able to bring bread to the table and this takes away one's dignity.

Unless structural economic reforms are undertaken to remedy existing obstacles to greater employment, the cycle of economic and social exclusion that is at the center of the pope's challenge to existing economies will only increase.

The United States, over the course of its history, has harnessed individual creativity, vast natural resources, market freedom and social cohesion to produce the most powerful economy the world has ever known. But like the rich man in the parable of Lazarus, we are blinded to our obligations to the poor and the marginalized by cultural assumptions that are irreconcilable with the Gospel. In the United States, these distorted assumptions convince us that extreme poverty is inevitable in our nation and our world, that structural reforms of our markets will decrease growth dramatically and lead to the centralized state and that the poor deserve the hand they have been dealt.

Pope Francis, in his vision of the inclusive society, has given us the opportunity to challenge these assumptions directly with the force of the Gospel and the substance of justice. It is essential that the Catholic community in the United States, both as followers of Jesus Christ and as citizens who love our country, bring this message of inclusion with all of its power to bear upon the questions of poverty, exclusion and inequality.

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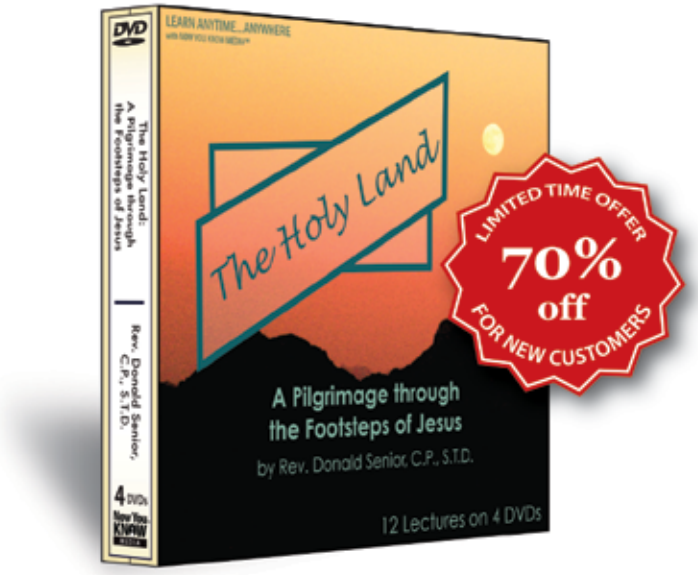

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A New 'Song'

Recovering ancient Israel's spirituality of sex

BY BRIAN PINTER

Students new to biblical studies are unfailingly astonished when they first encounter the Song of Songs. Fawn-like naked breasts, a woman's black hair cascading like a flock of goats, pure white teeth like ewes and a lover's hand under his beloved's head in an enchanted garden—these are just a few of the sensuous images described by the author in vivid detail. All this has proven too hot for most readers over the centuries. To cool things down, interpreters have advanced allegorical renderings that cast the song as a metaphor for the love between God and Israel, and later God and the church. These interpretations are beautiful and profound, but as one of my Old Testament professors joked, "If it's an allegory about the love between God and Israel or the church, it's a little kinky!"

THE LIVING WORD
Scripture in the Life of the Church

In recent years scholars have moved toward recovering the interpretation of the text as wisdom literature, intended to teach young Hebrew women propriety in love and sex. This wisdom-love poem carries a challenging but affirming message for young people today as they attempt to navigate the confusing currents of romance in a culture of casual sex.

Our ancient Israelite ancestors in faith had great respect for the powerful energy of romantic love and sexuality. The poet writes: "Love is as strong as death, passion as fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame of Yah(weh)" (Song 8:6); "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it" (8:7); "Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?" (6:10). Consequently, many books of the Hebrew Scriptures are replete with rules, taboos and veritable fences around sex. They understood that erotic energies need insulators and transformers to cut down the dangerously high voltage.

THE SONG OF SONGS, 1946, TITLE PAGE. PHOTO: AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY/CLARE MANIAS

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We who live in the post-sexual-revolution era tend to view those biblical proscriptions as restrictive, superstitious and repressive. Perhaps to some extent they were. But if given the chance, the sages of Israel might respond to our "enlightened" attitudes toward sex by pointing out that our culture's acceptance and tacit approval of random hook ups (no-strings-attached sex, often under the influence of alcohol or drugs), "friends with benefits" and pornography is laughably naïve. The ancients understood that the arrows of Eros were arrows of fire and lightning—elements not to be treated lightly. Within our own church, the sexual abuse crisis has made painfully clear the damage that can be caused by the misuse of sexuality. And consider the countless times that the cavalier use of erotic energies is implicated in divorce, disease, sexual assault and other forms of violence. What then can the wisdom of the Song of Songs teach about this divine fire driving each of us?

Sex as Sacrament

The fact that a text like the Song of Songs was composed, was included in the canon of Scripture and has long been considered wisdom literature demonstrates that ancient Israel affirmed the beauty and power of sex and saw the energy of the romantic relationship as a profoundly spiritual one. We must ask ourselves then—does Christian sex education recognize this reality and provide our people with the perspective to see their romantic longings through the lens of the soul? Perhaps; but more often than not the spiritual dimension of sexuality is not named or explored.

Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., a widely respected lecturer and spiritual writer, contends that churches never attained a very healthy spirituality of sexuality. Father Rolheiser suggests that we moderns have reduced sexuality to genitality, detaching it from the heart, family, fertility, community and church. The Scriptures, however, make it clear that these passionate longings come directly from God, who commands humankind to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gn 1:28). In the theology of Genesis, sexual energy is a part of God's garden of delight. The Song of Songs, which employs abundant garden imagery, reaffirms that reality and celebrates sex. A major task of churches in the 21st century will be to rediscover and reintegrate sexual energies as part of our spirituality, to reimagine a context that understands sex as a sacrament and to mentor people of all life stages in the art of soulful romance. Fortunately, we need not reinvent the wheel in this work; the Song of Songs provides a theological, biblical starting point accessible across generations.

THE STORY OF 'SONGS'

Although credited to King Solomon, who reigned in the mid-10th century B.C., scholars suggest that the Song of Songs was written in the period following the Babylonian exile (587 B.C.). While compiled between the fourth and second centuries B.C., many of the poems in the book might be centuries older. The Song of Songs is an example of a larger genre popular in the ancient Near East—love poetry. Also known as the Canticle, the Song is perhaps the most celebrated and commented-upon book in Scripture. St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote seven sermons on the first verse alone, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." The poems and dialogues between the lovers capture the passion and ecstasy of romantic love through nature imagery. It is said that Rabbi Akiva, a first-century A.D. Israelite scholar, once observed, "The entire universe is unworthy of the day that the Song of Songs was given to Israel."

THE SONG OF SONGS. DETAIL FROM PAGE 5. PORTUGUESE, 1946. PHOTO: AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY/ CLARE MANIAS

To Those Who Wait

The Song of Songs implicitly recognizes what Carl Jung said about energy in general—it is not friendly. Everyone who has ever fallen in love understands the possessive control that romantic fires assert. The lovers of the Song speak to the intoxicating feelings of longing and infatuation that are part and parcel of new love, a longing that dominates them day and night. Chapter Three, for example, relates a dream sequence in which the young woman is searching for her beloved: "Upon my bed at night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer" (3:1). And the young man, intoxicated by his lover's beauty, says in longing, "Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, and the scent of your breath like apples, and your kisses like the best wine that goes down smoothly, gliding over lips and teeth" (7:8–9). The lovers' desire for each other is overwhelming, but the text also speaks to how they carry this tension with difficulty but integrity until the time is right.

The Song recognizes that the ways of love cannot be forced, cannot be acted upon prematurely, cannot be short-circuited. Three times in the book, a plea is repeated by the female lover to her friends, "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and does of the field, do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready" (2:7; 3:5; 8:4). Just as a premature warming and opening of a cocoon will reveal a butterfly not yet developed and ready for flight, erotic, romantic longing consummated too soon can destroy blossoming love. The Song vividly—and in alluring detail—describes the ecstasy of physical union in love, but also counsels patience; for if lovers move too quickly, if they do not carry erotic tension chastely, they will miss out on a beautiful, soulful experience.

Beyond 'Dumpster Love'

Finally, the Song can serve the needs of our era as it did the ancients—as initiatory wisdom to those new to the ways of love and the pulse of sexual energies. Sharing the insights of previous generations with those coming of age today might help young people to recognize and avoid what a former student of mine called "Dumpster love." Reflecting on the soul-destroying impact of pornography and the hook-up culture—two challenging and frightening realities that teenagers and young adults must face—this 17-year-old young man said, "Rather than wait for the deeply spiritual bonds made by marital sex, we cognizantly accept a lesser pleasure, like food from a dumpster, to tide us over. Our hunger drives us to desperation, rather than action."

Absent any awareness of or guidance about the deeply spiritual and emotional dimensions of their sexual appetites, many have reduced what is God's greatest gift of communion between two human beings to a mere bodily function that has to be satisfied. Such spiritual degradation should come as no surprise in a culture and a church that has no process for initiating our young men and women into the proper use of the erotic impulses that hit them at the onset of puberty.

Throughout history, native and aboriginal cultures have taught their young people to situate sexual energy properly within themselves and have sacralized this moment as a part of intensive, demanding initiation rites. Young men especially are taught, sometimes through a public and painful circumcision ritual, that their sexual apparatus is not merely a new plaything. Granted, no one is suggesting we return to that particular model, but our current way of dealing with this coming-of-age issue amounts to holding our breath and hoping for the best. This has left us with devastating results. The Song of Songs provides us with a precedent for recovering this key initiatory moment in a young person's maturation.

Our ancestors in faith provide us with a vehicle that delivers this ancient wisdom—the sage, the wise person who speaks with the authority of experience. We will need mentors and teachers who have done their own soul work, who are emotionally whole, who have grown into a mature sexuality and who reverence and respect the power of sex. We will need to create sacred spaces and sacred times where candid questions can be asked and informed answers can be given. And we will need to move beyond the unfounded fear that if we talk with young people about sex, they will be more apt to do it. If the coming-of-age young person does not get thoughtful, soul-centric and accurate information about sexuality and romance from trusted adults, he or she will look for answers elsewhere.

The Canadian naturalist and writer Trevor Herriot, in his book *The Road Is How*, shares this insight about the Song of Songs:

> The Song proposes that we all become lovers and invites us to revisit in our own souls that anthropological moment of deciding how we will look upon our bodies and the earth. These cannot be objects to be used for selfish pleasure and gain—not if we are lovers. To love life, love another, love a place, is to know that the flesh of the body and the flesh of the earth are one; and that this unity is good and holy, testifying to a truth uttered in our very language of the body.

As we seek a more healthy, mature integration of sexuality into our lives, as we seek to recover our understanding of our sexuality as divine fire, as we seek to befriend and bless our erotic drives, we can look to the Song of Songs as our wisdom and guide, ancient but timeless. A

Looking to the 2015 Synod

The Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family, which closed on Oct. 19, approved a final report that, with the pope's endorsement, will soon be sent to the 114 Catholic bishops' conferences worldwide and to the patriarchates and major archbishops of the Eastern Catholic churches.

The sending of that text from the secretariat of the synod to the local churches marks the opening of a most important phase in the new synodal process established by Pope Francis in 2013. The report, which will be accompanied by a questionnaire, is meant to serve as a working document for the discussion that is to take place in the local churches over the next year.

Bishops are expected to discuss this report not only among themselves in bishops' conference meetings but also in their own dioceses, with their priests, the lay faithful and especially with families.

Archbishop Bruno Forte, the Italian theologian whom Pope Francis appointed special secretary of the 2014 meeting of the synod, stated this publicly on Oct. 13. He recalled that the major progress at the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) came between its first and second sessions, when the bishops returned home and discussed the topics under debate not only among themselves but also with theologians and the faithful in their local churches. He believes something similar can happen with this Synod of Bishops on the Family, which is being conducted in two separate sessions, one year apart. "We hope that in this year the laity will make their voices heard, and that the bishops listen," he said.

The cardinal archbishop of Paris, André Vingt-Trois, one of the president-delegates at the October meeting, revealed that in preparation for the 2014 synod he had set up small groups (around a dozen people in each group) in every parish throughout his archdiocese to discuss the themes that were on the agenda for that synod. "I will now do the same in preparation for the 2015 synod," he told a press conference in the Vatican.

Cardinal Péter Erdö (Hungary), who had the key role of relator at the 2014 synod, said he had done something similar in preparation for the that gathering. He had groups of married couples in almost every parish in his Budapest archdiocese whom he asked to discuss the themes for the recently concluded assembly. He plans to do likewise for the next one.

> The major progress at Vatican II came between the sessions.

Archbishop Forte emphasized the importance of discussing the 2014 synod's final report over the next year at the local church level and said this could really enrich the debate in the whole church and could well produce new ideas and proposals, even some hitherto not considered. He said the bishops' conferences in the different countries are expected to send feedback from these discussions in their local churches to the Synod's secretariat in the Vatican in due course. These contributions will then be used in the drafting of the working document for the 2015 synod.

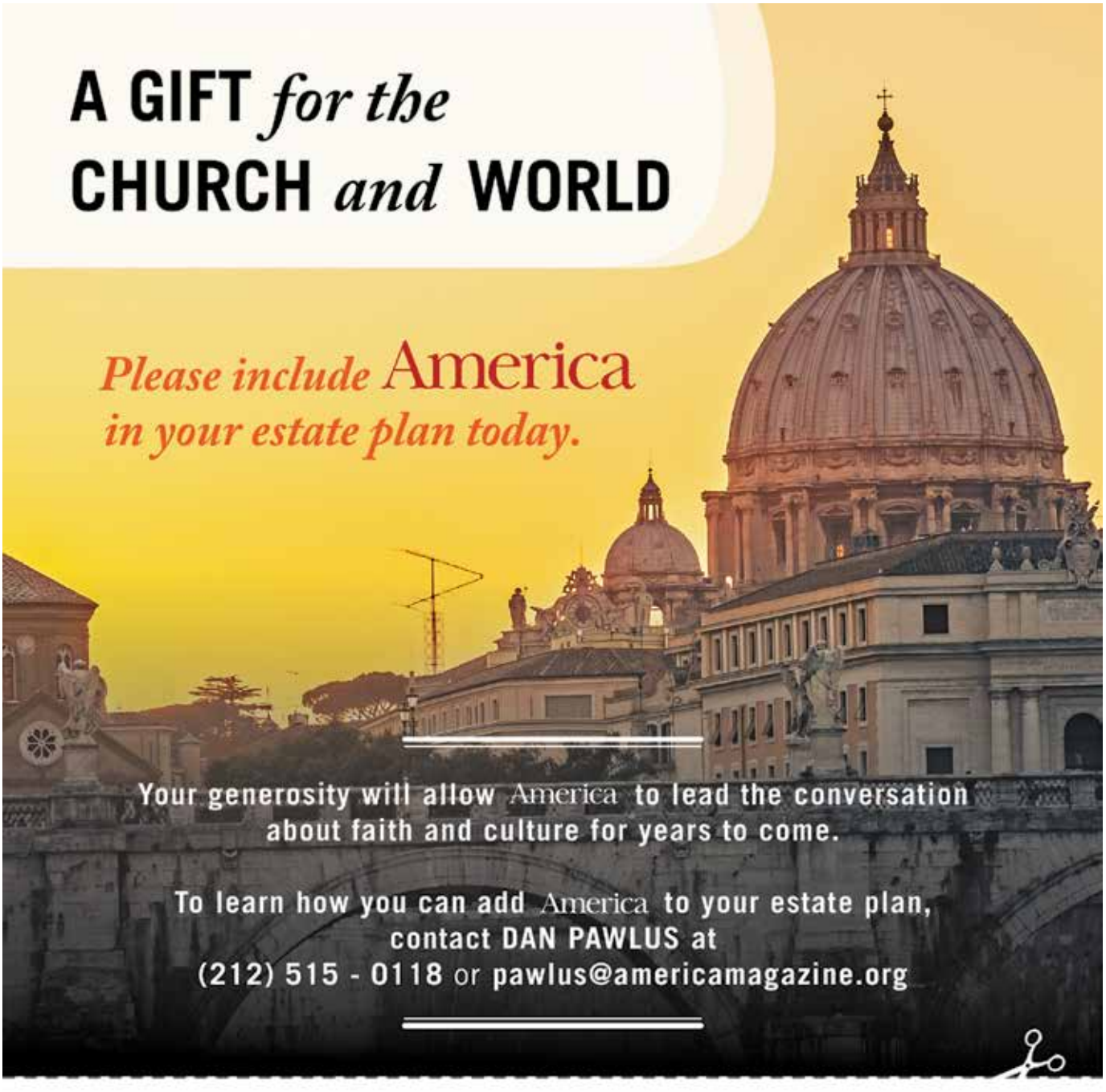
Next year's synod will be held from Oct. 4 to Oct. 25. It will be an ordinary general assembly, which means many more bishops will participate than in this year's meeting, which was an extraordinary assembly. They will be elected by the bishops' conferences or the corresponding bodies in the Eastern Catholic churches.

Cardinal Lorenzo Baldiserri, secretary general of the Synod of Bishops, said the theme chosen for the next meeting is a broad one: "The vocation and mission of the family in the church and in the contemporary world." Cardinal Erdö, in his midway report on Oct. 13, said, "The dialogue and meeting that took place in this assembly will have to continue in the local churches, involving their various components, in such a way that the perspectives that have been drawn up might find their full maturation in the work of the next ordinary general assembly."

It is clear, then, that the next 12 months will not only be an important and challenging period for the local churches; it can also be a very enriching one. Their contributions can make a difference to the final outcome of the meeting in 2015, which is expected to come up with proposals for the pastoral response of the Catholic Church to the many different and sometimes complex questions that have been identified in the final report of the assembly just ended. Next year's general assembly of the Synod of Bishops will present these proposals to Pope Francis, and he will make the final decisions.

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.*



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The Art of Leaving

The blessings of an uprooted life

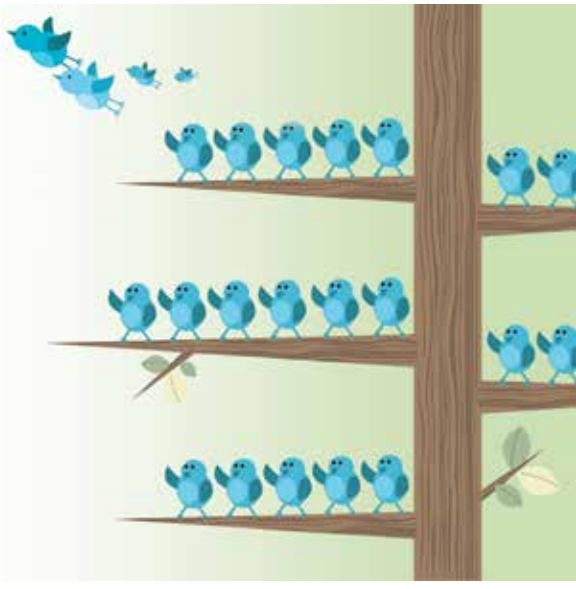
BY JESSICA MESMAN GRIFFITH

When we left Virginia a year ago for Northern Michigan—driving 19 hours with two kids and two cats—I vowed I would never pack a box again. My husband and I are academics, but we must rival military families and missionaries in frequency of relocation. I have lost count of our moves.

We live on the school calendar, but for us, summer is a time not of rest but upheaval. Seniors graduate and strike out on their own, and the rest of the students pack their bags and leave until fall. Friends and colleagues work summer jobs in distant places or travel home to be with their families, or they take other jobs and move away for good. We spend our summers saying goodbye. As often as not, we are the family leaving. I never get rid of boxes anymore. I break them down and stack them in the basement or the garage, knowing we will need them again.

And we do. Sometime around May I heard that one of the new faculty cottages on the campus of the boarding school where my husband teaches was available. I was lured by the extra bathroom, eat-in kitchen and dishwasher. In late August we packed up the boxes and resettled in a house down the street.

My 8-year-old daughter has lived in eight houses in four states. I used to think with every move, this is the house that will be our children's childhood home. In my first house as a newlywed, in South Bend, Ind., I invested months creating a nursery for the anticipated children that would grow up there. We moved when our first was 6 months old. Years later we bought a swing set for our backyard in Virginia—a tangible sign of commitment. We ended up paying the college to haul it away when we left for Michigan.



I am sorry I can't give my kids what I had growing up—stable years with the same friends growing up together on the same streets, with grandparents, aunts and uncles a short drive away. Where I come from, kids grow up to live around the corner from their mommas. I did not leave southern Louisiana until I was 26 years old, when I moved to Pittsburgh to go to graduate school. Even going 90 miles away to Louisiana State University was a bold statement of independence. Moving to northern Louisiana was unheard of. But north of the Mason-Dixon? It just was not done.

The truth is I never meant to stay away so long. It was not supposed to be forever. So I mourn for myself too—mourn what my children don't know to mourn—the withering of roots, the weakening of family ties across generations, the loss of connectedness to a specific landscape, a community, a culture. When, upon meeting me, people ask where I'm from, they often marvel that I have no accent, and it wounds me. I do not feel like a turncoat but like an exile. I suffer from intense homesickness and a longing to replant my roots in the marshy soil where I took my first steps. Yet it seems it is my destiny to head always farther north instead of back south.

Of Pilgrims and Parents

As a parent there is tremendous pressure to provide stability and roots for our children, but the truth is, I want it for myself, too. Many of my generation are living at home with their parents for financial reasons, and I often envy them. But are there benefits, too, to rootlessness, to adaptation and change? What are the blessings in the vagabond life?

In an effort to make our itinerancy more desirable and romantic, I have clung to certain stories and aphorisms: *We are all pilgrims headed elsewhere. Our hearts are restless 'til they rest in*

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/SLDESIGN/AMERICA

JESSICA MESMAN GRIFFITH *is the author, with Amy Andrews, of the memoir* Love & Salt, A Spiritual Friendship in Letters, *and a regular contributor to Good Letters, the Image Blog. She lives in northern Michigan with her husband, the writer Dave Griffith, and their children.*

God. I've sold my children on tales of explorers and orphans and outlaws and restless hobbits who seek adventure.

I think of Jesus' injunction to the apostles in Lk 9:3: "Take nothing for your journey. No staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic." With our family and closest friends hundreds of miles away, we have been overwhelmed again and again by the kindness of people I barely know—the neighbor who baked me lembas bread at Christmas when she heard how much I loved Tolkien, the friend who built our children a tree house in the woods behind the new place. Without the daily support of our families, I have been forced to build relationships instead of fences—something that doesn't come naturally to me. Everywhere we've lived we've forged a new family of friends and neighbors.

When we inevitably have to say goodbye to those friends and neighbors, I try to show my children how to take the parting hand with grace. I have stopped promising the kids we will visit the friends they make who move away or the friends we leave behind. There are too many to visit now. Their pen pals are scattered all over the map, coast to coast, in all directions. It is no longer realistic to make promises like that. I remind them and myself that, as C. S. Lewis said, Christians never really say goodbye; we say "see you later."

Most important, when the homesickness becomes unbearable, I go to Mass. The familiar smells, sounds and language of the liturgy have always comforted me, like the smells of my mother's house. But there is something deeper too. Even when there is no incense or stained glass and the songs are unfamiliar and the sanctuary smells like musty carpet, I am reminded that I am part of a family who will never be separated, no matter the space or the time.

These are a few of the gifts of rootlessness.

Still. Just once I'd like to see the perennial gardens I foolishly plant at every house come to fruition. I want to keep my friends for longer than an academic year. I want to see my dad grow old. I want to go home.

On Our Way

There's a chapter I love in Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* called "Wayfarers All." I remembered it as an ode to the vagabond life and the pilgrim spirit in us all, but when I re-read it to my daughter recently at bedtime, I saw that it is quite the opposite. It is about the particular gift of rootedness, of staying put and the power of art-making to heal a restless soul.

The chapter begins with the River Rat watching with great irritation and envy as other animals make plans to leave his beloved English countryside and head south for the winter: "The Rat was a self-sufficing sort of animal, rooted to the land, and, whoever went, he stayed; still, he could not help noticing what was in the air, and feeling some of its influence in his bones."

Then poor Rat is utterly seduced by a charming seafarer who strolls into town with his romantic tales of distant ports. By the time Rat finishes lunch he is in a trance-like state, ready to leave behind his home for a life of adventure. This alarms his dear friend the Mole. To talk Rat down, he chats with him about the everyday, and all the beloved familiarities a new season brings:

> The harvest that was being gathered in, the towering wagons and their straining teams, the growing ricks, and the large moon rising over bare acres dotted with sheaves…. By degrees the Rat began to sit up and to join in. His dull eye brightened, and he lost some of his listening air.

Mole, seeing his chance, slips Rat a few sheets of paper and a pencil, remarking: "It's quite a long time since you did any poetry.... You might have a try at it this evening, instead of—well, brooding over things so much."

> The Rat pushed the paper away from him wearily, but the discreet Mole took occasion to leave the room, and when he peeped in again some time later, the Rat was absorbed and deaf to the world; alternately scribbling and sucking the top of his pencil. It is true that he sucked a good deal more than he scribbled; but it was joy to the Mole to know that the cure had at least begun.

The story takes a great shot at that enduring myth of bohemianism—that we must live free and wild and detached to make art. Great lives have surely been led this way, the Mole seems to understand, but it's not the only way. It's also possible that the continuity and peace of a settled life enable us to channel our restless longings into something beautiful, something that lasts.

♦♦♦

As we moved our boxes down the street to this second Northern Michigan house, the students returned for the fall semester, and I watched the tourists scatter for their southerly homes, knowing I must winter here. I was standing in the kitchen, wondering how I might muster the enthusiasm for organizing yet another set of cabinets, when two students arrived to collect the few things I had stored for them in our previous basement. It was just a few things and no trouble at all—the sorts of extras you might want for a dorm room but not for the train ride back to Brooklyn: a lamp with a candy pink shade, an oversized teddy bear, a suitcase full of towels. The students were musicians, and to thank us, they offered to play a couple of songs in our new living room. We gathered the children on the couch as one of them tuned her banjo and began to sing, with much more depth and longing and conviction than I would have imagined possible

from a teenaged girl, the folk song "Wayfaring Stranger."

I am a poor, wayfaring stranger
traveling in this world below
Yet there's no sickness, toil or danger
in that bright world to which I go.

I'm going there to see my momma
she said she'd meet me when I come
So I'm just going over Jordan
I'm just going over home.

In the spring, these students too will graduate, and our paths may never cross again. My own family may again be on the move. But I hope I don't forget the day we gathered in that unfamiliar living room, and they sat on the little stools at my daughter's art table to offer us a kind of blessing.

If I can't make a gift of staying put, as Rat did, maybe this is how to make a gift of an unsettled life: to take our offerings—our songs, our stories, ourselves—door to door, to give whatever we can make to another, so that even if only for a short time, we are no longer strangers, but fellow pilgrims going home. A

Out of the Rubble

Life and death after Typhoon Haiyan

BY DENIS MURPHY

Some said that their houses "exploded" when the 20-foot-high storm surge hit. Parents and children were torn from one another's arms. The boats and nets used by the people to earn a living were gone. For days there was little food or water.

Across the Philippines more than 6,000 people were killed last November when one of the strongest typhoons ever recorded fell full force on some of the most ill-prepared and impoverished people in the world. Typhoon Haiyan struck the fishing village of Costa Brava on the shoreline of Tacloban City especially hard and leveled the village. In my work through the Urban Poor Associates, I visited many of the survivors, nearly all Catholics, and asked about how they related to God in the midst of this tragedy.

ART: BOB WIACEK/SONJA KODIAK WILDER

The story the people tell is that a few days after the storm, a woman who lived far away and who had no connection with Costa Brava had a dream in which a statue of the Sacred Heart told her to come and find it under the rubble left by the typhoon. She went to the area. Local people say they saw her walk directly to a spot, dig there and recover the statue. There was a hole where the statue's wooden heart had been fitted, though the wooden heart has not been found. The woman wanted to take away the statue, but the people stopped her and put the statue on the altar of the chapel in the center of the village. To be more precise, they placed it in what remained of the chapel—the rear wall, along with a portion of the roof that reaches out over the altar. The

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discovery prompted others to go out and to dig, in an effort to find all the sacred statues they could find and put them on the altar alongside the Sacred Heart.

It may be the strangest group of statues ever brought together. There is a life-size statue of the Blessed Mother without hands; a statue of St. Dominic without a head (we thought it was Jesus until we saw the rosary around its neck). There are angels without wings and numerous smaller statues of saints, all maimed in one way or another. In the center stands the Sacred Heart with the hole where its heart once was.

The local people I spoke with, whether young or old, see in these statues a message of death and resurrection. One woman at a community meeting explained: The statues "were all 'dead' and then God found them under the stones and rubbish and brought them back to life. And so it is with us. We were dead during the storm and now we live. God has given us back our lives. He has shown us mercy." As she spoke, the people around her nodded agreement. Another time I asked three young girls why they prayed in the chapel instead of in one of the city's big churches. They told me God had brought people back from the dead in this place. A young theologian might say the poor people have hopelessly mixed up the physical realities of death and life, living people and statues. An older theologian might say, "Let's listen first."

If God wanted to give the people a sign that he was with them in their suffering, could he have chosen a more tender and apt way to do so than to remind them that Jesus and Mary, and all the saints had been with them, had died with them and come alive again with them? Jesus and Mary suffered the pain of the typhoon just as the people had. Their images had emerged, changed, but still able to stand. How could God come closer to the poor fishermen and their families than to meld their lives with those of these images of his son and all the saints?

People told us there were miracles in the chapel. Miracles or not, the people believe God has done wonderful things for them. The most prominent reaction is gratitude. Crowds come on weekends to pray in the chapel. Priests say Mass there. Someone has put up a sign that quotes the Lord in Exodus, "Remove your sandals, this is holy ground" (Ex 3:5).

We stood there a long time looking from one statue to another wondering what God's message could be and how to move forward. We were like visitors standing before the crèche at Christmas time. In the crib, as in Costa Brava, God's message is both simple and complex. These characteristics seem to be the signature marks of God's works. And so we are witnesses to this experience of God making himself known anew, even as, all along, he had remained with us in his own exquisite manner. A

TELEVISION | ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

UNCIVIL SOCIETY

Politics and the American sitcom

Fifteen years after the premiere of "The West Wing," there are more television shows about politics than ever before, with "Scandal" among the biggest hits on broadcast television and a half-dozen others in production on various platforms. But the trend is not likely to boost interest in this fall's real-life elections.

It turns out that the key to a successful television show about politics is to take out the policy. Passing legislation and delivering social services are not as dramatic, or as funny, as scheming and outwitting opponents just to stay in office. This cynical view did not fit the traditional sitcom, but as that genre has hardened its edges, the world of politics has become a more attractive topic.

At its peak in the 1970s, and before the misanthropic "Seinfeld" redefined the genre, the American sitcom was all about empathy. "All in the Family" teaches the virtues of tolerance, and "M*A*S*H" attacks the dehumanization of war. On the police comedy "Barney Miller," the arrestees have stories that would challenge anyone's "lock 'em up" attitude, and on "Taxi" even people in New York City usually turn out to be decent souls.

But during the same era, the Vietnam conflict and the Watergate scandal made politics seem sordid and, at best, amoral. It is not surprising that no highly successful '70s sitcom is set in the world of politics.

By the '80s, prime time was getting more cynical, and political stories occasionally popped up. The police drama "Hill Street Blues, " for example, uses mayoral politics as a source of dark comedy (one candidate falls to his death after pushing on a window in a tenement to show how unsafe it is). Much as the legal drama "The Good Wife" does now, such shows contrast the silly goings-on in government with the life-and-death stories playing out on the streets and in courtrooms.

As for sitcoms, the increasingly contemptuous attitude toward politics is typified by an episode from the last season of "Cheers," called "Woody Gets an Election," in which the psychiatrist Frasier Crane runs the simple-minded bartender's campaign for city council just to see how gullible voters are. ("Just say the word 'change' about a hundred times," he advises Woody before a debate.)

A few years later, network television finally developed a hit series about politics. It helped that by 1999 television audiences were so splintered that "The West Wing" could become a Top 10 show even when the great majority of Americans were bored or irritated by it. But attempts to duplicate that idealistic drama have been unsuccessful. (This season, CBS is trying again with "Madame Secretary.") Instead, politics has been in the background in prestige dramas: not only "The Good Wife," but in shows as diverse as "The Wire" and "Battlestar Galactica."

Meanwhile, political storylines have popped up in less dramatic programs. In a past season of "Modern Family," Claire, a housewife, runs for city council; and on this past season's "Parenthood," a cancer survivor, Kristina, runs for mayor of Berkeley, Calif. Both campaigns seem mostly about the women rebuilding their self-esteem, and both lose to men who are "professional" (i.e., unscrupulous) politicians.

Women are also the protagonists in the two most prominent political sitcoms now in production: NBC's "Parks and Recreation," which will return this winter for its final season, and HBO's "Veep," which aired its third season this past spring.

"Parks and Recreation," which premiered in 2009, stars Amy Poehler as a workaholic serving in the local government of the fictitious small town of Pawnee, Ind. Poehler's character, Leslie Knope, starts out as a well-intentioned but deluded politician. In the pilot, she chairs a town meeting and stares uncomprehendingly when the crowd cheers a speaker's disdain for "politics." ("What I hear when I'm being yelled at is people caring loudly at me," she babbles to the camera.) The first season or two of "Parks" is centered on Leslie's attempts to turn an abandoned construction site, with a dangerous pit, into a park, and how the bureaucracy thwarts even this modest goal.

That premise could not last for long, partly because Poehler is too appealing to be stuck playing a dope. By the third season, the pit is filled in, and Leslie shows off her organizational skills by reviving Pawnee's harvest festival. The aerial shot of the townspeople enjoying carnival rides and comfort food may be the apex of the series.

Though Leslie's dedication has been turned into an admirable trait on "Parks and Recreation," the show sticks with the current sitcom message that friends and family, not the larger community, are what counts. Outside

TOWN HALL TV. Amy Poehler and Aziz Ansari in "Parks and Recreation"

PHOTO: TYLER GOLDEN/NBC

of Leslie's beloved parks department, the other town officials in Pawnee are generally mean-spirited incompetents, and the citizenry is simply grotesque. (Typical complaint: "I found a sandwich in one of your parks, and there was no mayonnaise on it!")

In the finale of most recent season, Leslie moves up to a job in the National Park Service—"probably the only branch of government worth a damn," says her libertarian colleague Ron Swanson, continuing the show's presumably unintentional message that government works best when it provides entertainment and recreation, as opposed to more essential services for the unwashed masses.

"Veep" is another show with a boutique-size audience but the potential to become a cult classic. "Seinfeld" alumnus Julia-Louis Dreyfus is masterful as a superficially appealing but narcissistic politician, Vice President Selina Meyer.

At first, Meyer struggles to prove her relevance by shepherding an environmentally friendly "clean jobs bill" through Congress, but compromises make the legislation meaningless. "Veep," like "Parks," improves in its second season by making its protagonist more effective. Selina gets involved in foreign policy—more glamorous than trying to address unemployment. She advocates for a military operation that costs an American soldier one of his legs, leaving her rattled whenever she sees someone sitting with one leg curled up and out of sight. We never see the soldier; the rules of "Veep" would demand that he turn out to be unworthy of empathy, and that would be too dark even for this series.

As "Veep" proceeds, its emphasis shifts to Selina's campaign to move up to the Oval Office. In contrast to "Parks," the citizens who show up on the series are not particularly dumb. On one of the best episodes of the series, a grassroots activist for child care is treated shabbily by the Meyer campaign—because, as a political strategist puts it, "children are of no value." The activist decides not to go public with the incident, instead hoping that she can later collect a chit from Selina. A knack for figuring out the angles, it seems, is the only entrée into the world of public service.

"Veep" concluded its third season with Selina at the height of her political power but still in a precarious position. As her character has become more savvy, she also has become more paranoid. In the season finale in June, she says of her remaining rivals for the presidency: "Can't we just take them out? Is Jack Ruby still alive?"

Both "Parks and Recreation" and "Veep," as well as "Scandal" and "The Good Wife," have been praised for smart humor and for strong female protagonists in a medium that had mostly limited women to scatterbrained or passive roles. Television is richer for shows like these. But as for encouraging community service or boosting enthusiasm about getting to the polls...well, we might be better off avoiding prime-time politics during the first week of November.

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THE MOVIEGOERS

In early September I realized that I wasn't a Christian…or at least not much of one. It was a bit of a jolt actually, considering the fact that I'd always presumed it was a pretty foundational part of my identity and worldview.

My existential epiphany occurred while having dinner with a friend who was an artist and a devout Christian. Not knowing much about Catholics, she asked me about my faith and how it informed my thoughts on art/culture.

Big question.

I mentioned a couple of ideas on the nature of art, courtesy of Jacques Maritain via Flannery O'Connor. But I confessed that I didn't think that the intersection of faith and culture was a particularly crowded one at the moment. I imagined it to be more like a deserted corner in a forgotten part of town where stray pages from old books by O'Connor, Graham Greene, C. S. Lewis, et al. swirled around in the breeze. I told my friend that the challenge today is to find ways to communicate the substance of belief in a post-textual world that doesn't see the relevance of faith beyond vague discussions of spirituality. I then pulled out a favorite quote from Walker Percy's *The Message in the Bottle.* "Christendom seems in some sense to have failed. Its vocabulary is worn out."

Big mistake.

"I'm tired of Christians who aren't willing to proclaim the truth of the "Gospel," she said, slightly annoyed. She then challenged me to reconcile my comments with numerous truth claims found throughout Scripture. I tried to lighten the mood momentarily by making a cheeky remark about Catholics, evangelization and not really knowing the Bible. (Note to self: the term *sola scriptura* doesn't lend itself easily to humor.)

When that failed to defuse the situation, I did what Walker Percy would have done: I took her to the movies.

In John Michael McDonagh's "Calvary," Brendan Gleeson plays Father James LaVelle, a parish priest in a small seaport village in County Sligo, Ireland. A widower with a grown daughter, Father James came to his vocation late in life and is, by all accounts, a "good priest."

'Calvary' feels like the movie version of what Percy called a 'philosophical novel.'

In Ireland after the sexual abuse scandal, however, that alone might be enough to get him killed. In one of the most memorable opening scenes from any film in recent memory, Father James is confronted in the confessional by a parishioner who describes how he was raped repeatedly as a child by a priest. He vows to get his revenge by murdering a "good priest" and tells Father James to get his affairs in order and meet him on the beach in a week's time to be killed.

As Father James makes his normal rounds around the parish during the week that follows the confession, we discover that his parishioners are a contemptuous rogues gallery of characters, all of whom seem to embody some modern-day form of extreme brokenness. Whether it's the young, murderous, sociopathic cannibal he visits in prison or the misanthropic local doctor or the gay rent-boy who speaks as if he stepped out of a James Cagney film, Father James is confronted by a distorted, insane, fun house mirror vision of humanity at every turn. And yet everyday he's out among his flock, not as some pious saint but as an imperfect shepherd engaging his sheep as his own day of reckoning draws near.

Though it might sound like a whodunit, "Calvary" actually feels more like the movie version of what Percy called a "philosophical novel." It's the film Camus might have made if he were Irish Catholic and still held onto some vestige of belief.

As the credits rolled, my friend and I sat in stunned silence. We eventually made our way back to the street and I broke the quiet. "O.K., so I might not be much of a Christian," I told her, "but that is about as Catholic a film as you'll ever see." She smiled as if contemplating the distinction.

I then stopped and told her I had a confession of my own. "This is the third time I've seen the film in the past few weeks," I said, "and you're not the first person I've dragged to the theater to see it."

For a moment, she looked slightly confused by my admission, as though she were reconsidering just who this Catholic with such evangelical zeal was.

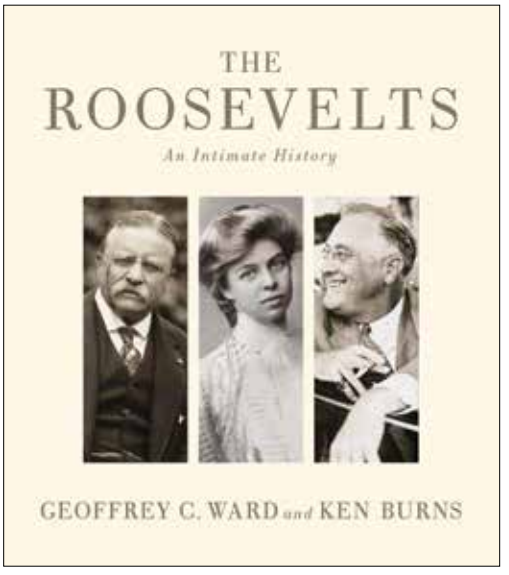
BILL McGARVEY

BILL McGARVEY, *a musician and writer, is the author of* The Freshman Survival Guide, *owner of CathNewsUSA.com and was the longtime editor in chief of BustedHalo.com.*

THE REFORMERS

THE ROOSEVELTS
An Intimate History

By Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns
Knopf. 528p $60



Blood is often thicker than politics.

In the spring of 1915, former President Theodore Roosevelt, his political career in tatters, was sued for libel for claiming in a speech that New York's state Republican boss pushed "corrupt and machine-ruled government" as much as the Democratic bosses of Tammany Hall.

Few of his old G.O.P. political allies came to his defense. But Franklin Delano Roosevelt—an up-and-coming Democratic star married to the former president's niece, Eleanor—did testify on Teddy's behalf.

On the stand, Franklin was asked about his connection to the defendant, whom he'd admired his whole life.

"Fifth cousin by blood and nephew by law!" said Franklin with a grin. A jury soon threw out the libel suit.

A grateful Teddy later told his equally ambitious kin: "I shall never forget the capital way in which you gave your testimony."

Though they sometimes differed on politics, the Roosevelts—as presented in the ambitious and engrossing book by Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, an excellent companion to their new PBS documentary—shared a keen sense of family legacy, progressive politics and a compulsive need to be at the center of American life during the first half of the 20th century.

This massively illustrated 500-page book focuses on Teddy, F.D.R. and his wife Eleanor Roosevelt, providing what the authors call "an emotional archeology" to their respective times in and out of the White House. By comparing and contrasting the two sides of the Roosevelt family—Teddy's clan based in Long Island's Oyster Bay and Franklin's family in upstate Hyde Park—the authors come up with many enlightening details that remind us how far and deep the bonds of political dynasties can extend.

Overall, the book, unfolding in vignettes and episodic profiles, is very effective and often moving as it explores both the public triumphs of these three remarkably influential figures and their personal sufferings. We are reminded again that despite their limitations—Teddy with his childhood asthma, Franklin crippled by polio at midcareer and Eleanor with her chronic emotional self-doubt—these Roosevelts had a soaring spirit

November Requiem

Wood sways and mutters; palsied shutters bang.
The call has come. Stripped of starlight, night
dwindles to gritty lavender and gray;
mad jags of wind keep drowning out the surf.
We dress, then slog through beach plums to the bay.

Three days before, we calmed ten bottlenoses,
then led an exodus into the channel
to confront the bellowing Atlantic.
We roared, and told Eyewitness News that "tides
or virus-damaged ears" had made them frantic.

Now we return; salvation did not last.
Just yards from shore, they do not move at all
except to veer away as we draw near,
their faith in our benevolence betrayed
and their desire for surrender clear.

A. M. JUSTER

A. M. Juster *'s fourth book was* Tibullus' Elegies *(Oxford University Press 2012); next year the University of Toronto Press will publish his translation of Saint Aldhelm's* Riddles *with his commentary, the first on the text.*

and drive that helped define their eras.

The Roosevelts details the lives of two of our most extraordinary presidents, but the lynchpin holding together this family saga is the equally extraordinary life of Eleanor, which spans virtually every decade of this book. Emblematic of the rising role of women in American society, Eleanor carves out her own identity from a secondary status. As the connecting figure in this narrative, she possesses a deep understanding of the ambitions that compelled both her famous uncle and husband and its impact on their family.

"Men and women who live together through long years get to know one another's failings: but they also come to know what is worthy of respect and admiration in those they live with and in themselves," she later wrote after F.D.R.'s death in 1945.

All three key Roosevelt figures—Theodore, Franklin and Eleanor—were reformers at heart. This book's fascinating photos and well-researched text reflect their individual progression as well as the growth of the United States from an isolationist rural former colony to an international power greater than the once pre-eminent British empire.

As a progressive Republican, T.R. defended the rights of workers, broke up the trusts of robber barons and championed the idea of national parks as a lasting gift for the future. F.D.R. created the modern social safety net with Social Security and other domestic programs and prevailed over two of the biggest crises ever faced by a president—the Great Depression and World War II. And Eleanor gave voice to the underdog during her husband's presidency, eventually becoming a world-renowned figure in her own right. After F.D.R.'s death, she skillfully chaired a United Nations committee that established the landmark "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and became a leading liberal voice within the Democratic Party.

In this story, the relationship of fathers and sons, the expectations of greatness and the difficulties of living up to a famous name is a constant dynamic. War and violence are often rites of passage in this family, especially for "Rough Rider" Teddy, celebrated for his 1898 charge up San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American war. The authors suggest his incessant urge to prove himself on the field of battle stemmed from T.R.'s shame that his father hired two surrogates to fight on his behalf during the Civil War. No one would ever call T.R.—a lifelong "man in the arena"—a coward, regardless of the costs. Before he died fighting for his country in World War

I, Quentin Roosevelt, the youngest of Teddy's four sons, acknowledged that all were in uniform because "Well, you know it's rather up to us to practice what father preaches."

While war was something to be avoided for Franklin Roosevelt—whose reluctance to enter World War II was influenced by the thousands of U.S. casualties from the earlier Great War—Teddy repeatedly exhibited a bloodlust for battle. "All men who feel any power of joy in battle know what it is like when the wolf rises in the heart," T.R. exulted after slaughtering his enemy. In the television version of "The Roosevelts," the historian Clay Jenkinson bluntly calls Roosevelt "a killer" who did it with the repetitiveness and thoughtlessness of a Gatling gun. More subtly in the book, the authors quote a Rough Rider friend of T.R.'s recalling his "just reveling in victory and gore" and let Teddy's words speak for themselves.

Legacy plays a constant defining role with the Roosevelts. Sometimes they are its beneficiary—with F.D.R. repeating the successful path of T.R. as both an assistant secretary of the Navy and later as governor of New York before ascending to the presidency. Yet expectations weigh heavily on others in the clan. At times, the sons of F.D.R. seemed more like props in their father's story—gripping the president's arm at public events so he wouldn't fall while on crutches—than finding a place on which to stand on their own.

As skillful multi-media historians, Ward and Burns also project light on the little-known fractures and competing egos within the Roosevelt family. Before he first ran for office in Dutchess County as a Democrat, F.D.R. privately asked for the approval of T.R., the nation's leading Republican, who wished him well. But after T.R.'s death, his namesake son was an outspoken critic of F.D.R.'s New Deal, resenting how Franklin had become the Roosevelt family standard-bearer. Alice Roosevelt Longworth, T.R.'s oldest child, even suggested F.D.R. was a "mollycoddle" for not overcoming polio as her father did with asthma.

Yet, also important, Ward and Burns explain how overcoming suffering, whether physical or emotional, was a hallmark of all three Roosevelt protagonists, ultimately forging a steely determination to lead. Eleanor in particular seemed inspired by the example of both her uncle and her husband, as she changed from a quiet, insecure girl to a role model for future first ladies, including Hillary Rodham Clinton. As she explained, "Anyone who has gone through great suffering is bound to have a greater sympathy and understanding of the problems of mankind."

THOMAS MAIER *is the author of five books, including* When Lions Roar: The Churchills and The Kennedys *published this fall.*

G. RONALD MURPHY

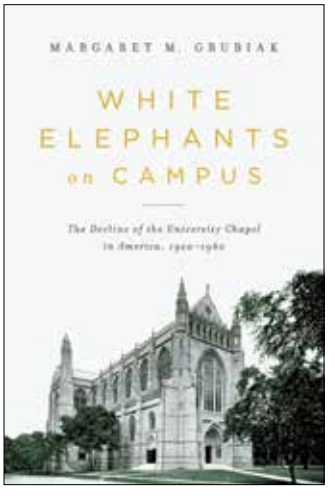
EMPTY PEWS

WHITE ELEPHANTS ON CAMPUS

The Decline of the University Chapel in America, 1920–1960

By Margaret M. Grubiak
University of Notre Dame Press.
184p $28

When I first saw the gothic chapel at Princeton University many years ago, I was quite taken aback. It was large, beautiful inside and out with a spectacular stained glass window over the altar, and seemed surprisingly Catholic for a university that I had always taken to be professionally secular, neutral and mainly disinterested in religious matters. Margaret Grubiak's book offers a great deal of enlightenment on the unusual circumstances and controversies over chapel construction and gives intriguing thoughts on the reasons for their decline. When finished with the book, I actually wished for an extension of it into current times to see what has since been the fate of the "white elephants." But presumably that will have to wait.



Grubiak restricts herself in two ways to make the material manageable. The first restriction is that of the time period of great chapel building, or non-building in the case of Johns Hopkins, to 1920-1960; the second is her limitation to several chapels of the great private universities. The book covers principally the chapels at Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Pittsburgh and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with an epilogue about the controversy concerning the cross in the Wren chapel at William & Mary. There is no discussion of the situation of chapels at Catholic or other presently confessional universities, though the Catholic reader will recognize some of the arguments and will find some of the controversies surprisingly familiar.

Grubiak maintains that the construction of the large university chapels, in many cases more than 200 years after their founding, came as a response to feeling a real and present threat to the identity of the university as an American Protestant establishment. This threat she traces to three intermingled developments: the acceptance of the German

research model of a university; the increasing numbers of the student body with non-Protestant or non-Christian religious beliefs; and the ascendancy of science and secularism. In the face of all these developments, exacerbated by the applications of non-Yankee sons of immigrants, something had to be done to reaffirm the Protestant, Christian identity of the university. Architecture, at the center of the campus if possible, was one way.

In the antebellum college of the 19th century, religion had been "the central, authoritative, and cohesive force." In other words, it had given each college a distinctive identity. The colleges had been founded and supported by Protestant denominations mainly to provide the churches with educated clergy: Columbia, Anglican; Harvard, Massachusetts Puritan; Yale, Congregationalist; Princeton in alignment with the Presbyterian church. By the late 19th century, however, the German model of the university had become an ideal. This meant that research and search for the truth was the priority, rather than the more traditional American liberal-Protestant view that the purpose of education was moral citizenship, with the humanities and religion making the main contribution to the education of the "whole man." Even with more science and research, the colleges still wanted to maintain a generalized Christian orientation for its now quite religiously mixed students, though without any professed sectarian leaning. Due to the extreme difficulty of holding nondenominational chapel services of any real interest to those present, obligatory chapel was discontinued at Harvard in 1886. Yale followed suit in 1926, and Chicago dropped the requirement "just eighteen months before the completion of its immense, 2,500-seat chapel in 1929." With the dropping of the requirement of chapel attendance, the white elephant chapel was on its way.

Princeton. The argument at Princeton was over the style of the chapel. Clearly medieval and neo-Catholic style, it had its adherents and opponents. One adherent was Woodrow Wilson, who thought the chapel "added a thousand years to the history of Princeton." The defense was based on the academic principle that older is better, on universities' not well concealed appreciation of age and precedence in academia. The counterargument was that the chapel was not clearly Presbyterian, the chapel appealed to the emotions and had a non-Protestant sense of religious mystery. And what was the preacher to make of an altar? The riposte: the chapel was quite similar to King's College Chapel at Cambridge, (and anything relating to Oxford or Cambridge can't be bad).

Harvard. In the Yard, Widener Library rises up on one side with its high staircase and impressively wide facade of 12 Greek columns, containing within all the secular treasure of knowledge. The architect wanted to balance that horizontal challenge with an equally impressive appeal to the vertical and transcendent and thus erected a neocolonial church with an enormously tall spire. The architectural dialogue between the two is impressive. But there were problems. Many wanted to see that Harvard had freed itself from the shackles of religion, even from its admittedly ecumenical Puritan ones. The problem was handled by making the church the campus memorial to the dead of World War I. The Yard thus has two monuments defining it, Widener Library and Memorial Chapel. Widener is used constantly. The author implies that the Chapel, despite President Lowell's grand concept of Harvard's values, may even in the 1930s no longer have reflected those of the students and alumni. A white elephant?

Yale. At Yale there is no chapel at all to balance the library. Students had been obliged to attend chapel until the fatal year 1926, and it was at that point that an immense chapel with a capacity of 5,000 seats had been proposed. President Angell was deeply afraid that the absence of compulsory chapel would mean the secularization of Yale, and so favored a beautiful edifice to attract students. The donors were not interested. Instead the Stirling Library was constructed, for all the world a neo-gothic church, except not a church, a library. Grubiak gives a wonderful tour of the church-library ending with the lending desk as the "altar" and the enthroned icon of alma mater above it as a medieval icon of the Virgin in the "apse."

The University of *Pittsburgh* carries the idea of the library as church still further, with students sitting at desks under gothic arches and vaulting in the Cathedral of Learning. Here however Grubiak has omitted the Heinz Memorial Chapel, which, it could be argued, though small, is at least a chapel—quite a beautiful one.

It will not be necessary to mention Hopkins here, since the grand plans for a central chapel, though well illustrated in the book, were never funded.

M.I.T. Grubiak finishes with a look at Eero Saarinen's chapel at M.I.T.. In a section entitled "Educating the Moral Scientist," she cites the need after Hiroshima and Nagasaki for sciences and technology to realize the power and moral responsibility they possess for what they introduce into the world. A new chapel was necessary, according to M.I.T.'s President Killian, to "give attention to man's spiritual life," and he wanted a chapel that would be appealing to Catholic, Protestant and Jew. World War II was having its effect on chapel building. Saarinen's chapel, also well illustrated in the book, is a simple drum-shaped edifice, with rhythmically curved walls admitting light reflected off water in the moat.

There is something elemental and almost "scientific" about it that is reflected admirably in its interior, with a central

skylight admitting a dazzling shower of light particles down onto a block-like central altar. It seems fine for M.I.T. But then the author reminds us, the capacity of the chapel is small, only 115 to 150 people. This 1951 chapel has defended itself from being called a white elephant by its deliberately limited size and elemental beauty. Grubiak, though admiring its beauty, still calls it a white elephant, though I think she is being influenced by her previous arguments referring more to the prewar chapels that were aimed at maintaining the faith of the several Protestant ascendency. This chapel is indeed small, but a gem for the three faiths for which it respectfully elicits reverence. Not a white elephant; maybe a silver fox!

The book ends with an epilogue on the foolish-seeming debate over the cross on the altar in the Wren chapel of William & Mary. The cross ended up in a plastic display case on the side of the church. At least for historical reasons, why is a cross inappropriate in the chapel at the school? In any case, with that inappropriate plastic box, Margaret Grubiak's intriguing book brings us full circle. I recommend it to any religious educator.

G. RONALD MURPHY, S.J., *is professor of German at Georgetown University.*

LARRY MADARAS

UNDERCOVER CATHOLIC

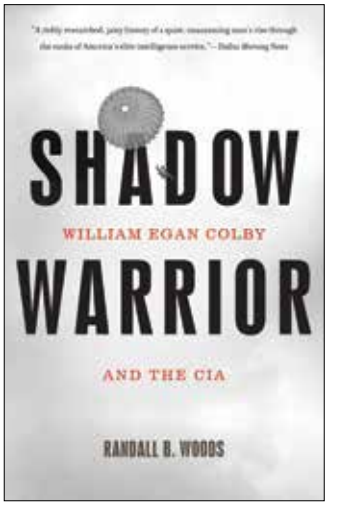
SHADOW WARRIOR
William Egan Colby and the CIA

By Randall B. Woods
Basic Books. 576p $18.99

William Egan Colby was born in 1920. Both his parents were devoted Roman Catholics and supporters of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and internationalist foreign policy. He graduated from Princeton University in 1940 and after the Pearl Harbor attack, Bill left Columbia Law School and joined the Army.

In 1943, he became a protégé of Wild Bill Donovan's O.S.S. and served as a special operator, trained to work with resistance forces, twice parachuting behind enemy lines in France in 1944 and a third time in Norway on a sabotage mission to destroy German railway lines.

In 1945, he married the socialite Barbara Heinzen, a practicing Catholic, and eventually fathered five children. In the next four years, Bill graduated from Columbia Law School, practiced law first in Wild Bill Donovan's firm in New York, later in Washington D.C., as a liberal on the National Labor Relations Board. Then a friend offered him a job in the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency in 1949, where he would spend the next 27 years of his life.



As the Cold War hardened, Colby spent his first two years in Stockholm, Sweden, to help set up an anti-Communist paramilitary organization to counter any Soviet attempts to occupy the country. But it was in Italy where he spent the majority of the 1950s. As an undercover State Department official, a staunch Catholic and a liberal Democrat, Colby funneled money to the left-leaning anti-Communist Christian Democrats, preventing a takeover by the Communist Party. At the same time he waged a fierce struggle with Ambassador Claire Boothe Luce, who supported the more conservative right-wing parties.

In 1959, Colby became the C.I.A.'s deputy chief and then chief of station in Saigon, Vietnam, where he stayed until 1962. Charged with the task of supporting the Catholic Diem regime, the Colby family established a political and personal relationship with President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Nhu. Two reform programs—Agrovilles and Strategic Hamlets—were attempted. Both failed because the peasants were relocated, without any compensation, to inferior farm lands. Nor were they given arms to protect themselves, because the South Vietnamese government was afraid of encouraging an internal revolt. After three years of failed attempts at nation-building, Colby returned to Washington, D.C., to head the agency's Far East division.

When he returned in 1968, Vietnam had become the focal point of American foreign policy. The Johnson administration had escalated the ground war with over 550,000 American troops engaged in most of the fighting. On Jan. 31, 1968, Vietcong troops attacked 40 major South Vietnamese cities, including Saigon. Though a military defeat for the enemy Vietcong, it was a major propaganda victory for them.

In response, Colby introduced a new strategy, the Phoenix Program, in an attempt to eliminate the Communist cadres that had infiltrated the villages and hamlets in South Vietnam. Colby believed that it was more effective than fighting a conventional war. More than 20,000 Vietcong (using Colby's figures) were eliminated. While the anti-war left protested that this was an assassination program, Colby maintained that he was merely responding to the Vietcong, who had assassinated, according to one esti-

mate, 40,000 South Vietnamese between 1957 and 1972. Clearly Colby had escalated nation-building from an economic reform program to one of military force.

When he returned to the United States in 1971, Colby found himself the target of anti-war groups. A wanted poster with skull and bones and a grotesque portrait of Colby was circulated across the country. After several reorganizations, President Nixon appointed him director of the C.I.A. in September 1973. It was a thankless task. The C.I.A. was being bombarded on all sides. Anti-war activists viewed Colby and the agency as assassins. President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger were angry and distrusted the agency for its failure to predict the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war between Egypt and Israel. They were also upset, as were many traditional C.I.A. agents on the right, when Colby revealed some of the "family jewels" to House and Senate special committees, which included details about recent economic operations against the left-leaning Chilean government that brought about a right-wing military dictatorship. Agency leaders also thought Colby went into too much detail about the Phoenix program.

Colby's testimony before the congressional committees had a tone of remorse about the measures used to justify the killings. On one occasion, when Gerald Ford's White House staff tried to dissuade Colby from giving classified information to Otis Pike's House Intelligence Committee, Kissinger cracked: "Bill, you know what you do when you go up to the Hill? You go to confession."

On the morning of Nov. 1, 1976, President Ford informed Colby that he was reorganizing his national security team. The D.C.I. was replaced by the less controversial George H. W. Bush. Colby was offered the post of ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which he declined. After leaving the president's office, he immediately called his wife, Barbara. It was a holy day of obligation. Instead of attending Mass at a Benedictine church where their sons had gone to school, they received Communion at the parish church near their home so as to avoid the press.

Colby's post-C.I.A. life was almost as spectacular as his life as a spy. He wrote two books, *Honorable Men*, defending the agency from the excessive criticism of the congressional committees, and *Lost Victory*, which anticipated the revisionist views of the Vietnam War that say we could have won the war if the Nixon administration had supported the South Vietnamese government with full military force after the truce was broken in 1973. He resumed his legal practice and became involved in the campaign for a nuclear freeze, doing penance in the same way as President Lyndon B. Johnson's former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. He also teamed up with the former chief of K.G.B. foreign counterintelligence in the development of the computer game "Spycraft."

In 1984, he suddenly announced to his wife of 39 years that he wanted a divorce. Shocked, she responded, "We can't. We are Catholic." According to his most recent biographer, Randall Woods, the marriage was not a happy one, especially for Bill, who found his wife constantly engaged in meaningless conversation while their lives were full of constant social engagements, all of which annoyed the introspective and taciturn husband. Supposedly he realized the mistake he had made several weeks after their marriage. Until his divorce however, Colby was a staunch practicing Catholic. Two of his daughters made their first holy Communion at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Italy, where Bill had been stationed as a C.I.A. agent chief. After his divorce, he renounced his Catholic faith when he married an attractive career government employee 27 years his younger.

Colby's death was as mysterious as his life. On the night of April 27, 1996, he took his green canoe down the Severn River in southern Maryland. Eight days later his body was found downstream near the canoe. Did he commit suicide, as one son argued in a video about his life? Was he "whacked," as his most recent biographer, Randall Woods, maintains? Or did he die from a heart-attack, as the Prince Georges' County police officially wrote?

LARRY MADARAS *is a retired history teacher.*

Living Stones

DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA (A), NOV. 9, 2014

Readings: Ez 47:1–12; Ps 46:2–9; 1 Cor 3:9–17; Jn 2:13–22

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3:16)

The Lateran Basilica in Rome is not the home parish for many of us, though some might have visited it. It is the pope's own cathedral, but we are parishioners at churches closer to home, with less ancient and lofty origins and nicknames like St. Joe's and St. Mike's. Our home parish is where we attend Mass, run the scouting den and bake cookies for the fall festival. For all of its foibles and problems, our home parish is, well, home. We can speak of the church in abstract terms, but the church is embodied in particular people, who together make up the body of Christ, and the particular buildings in which we worship.

So the feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome appears remote, celebrating a building far away in which most Catholics have never set foot. Yet for all its antiquity, including the beautiful fourth-century baptistery, and its centrality for centuries as the cathedral of Rome and, once upon a time, the pope's home, the Lateran is just a particular manifestation of the home parishes we find scattered throughout the world. It is a physical symbol of the spiritual body of Christ, the stones a sign of the "living stones" (1 Pt 2:5) that make up the church.

God does not need buildings to dwell in, but we need places to worship in order to offer our sacrifices to God and to worship with the people of God, who are not abstractions but ordinary flesh and blood people. Churches create a locus for worship and a forum for the community of God to gather.

These are ancient needs. Temple language, which permeates the Old Testament, reflects the need for a holy place to worship God. The temple is a place of God's holiness and a place where God's people can grow to be holy. In the vision of the future temple foreseen by Ezekiel, life-giving waters flow from the temple, bringing life to the trees around it "because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing." The future temple was later re-envisioned in the Book of Revelation, in which John says, "I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (21:22).

It is God who is our ultimate desire. Church buildings, whether in Rome or down the street, do not create this need for God or satisfy our desire for holiness, but they do offer a place for us to gather and meet these needs. Jesus himself was often at the Temple to worship, and his criticisms of the Temple were not of the place as such, but of the way the house of God was treated as a marketplace. Jesus also points forward to the true temple of God when he says that his body, raised from the dead, will be the true temple.

The Apostle Paul continues to use a temple metaphor to speak of the whole church as the body of Christ, describing the church in Corinth—though it could be any particular parish church today—as "God's building." Each Christian is a part of this building, built on the only true foundation, Jesus Christ, "for no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." Paul goes on to speak of all the members of the church as "God's temple," in which "God's Spirit dwells." This temple must be treated with care, for "God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Think of your parish church: how does it build up the body of Christ?

ART: TAD A. DUNNE

In stone and mortar, and in spirit and truth, we embody the church of Jesus Christ, as the body of Christ, given up for us and dwelling in us. A particular church in Rome, the Lateran Basilica, is a specific symbol of all of these images of the church and speaks to one other sign: the unity of the Catholic Church across the world, which might worship in a humble cement block structure, a 1960s open style or a beautiful local basilica, but is everywhere the same people of God gathered together as the body of Christ in order to worship the living God, who himself is the true temple.

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America (ISSN 0002-7049) is published weekly (except for 13 combined issues: Jan. 6-13, 20-27, April 28-May 5, May 26-June 2, June 9-16, 23-30, July 7-14, 21-28, Aug. 4-11, 18-25, Sept. 1-8, Dec. 8-15, 22-29) by America Press Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019. Periodical postage is paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Circulation: (800) 627-9533. Subscription: United States, $56 per year; add U.S. $30 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. $56 per year for international priority airmail. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, P.O. Box 293159, Kettering, OH 45429.

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Synod of Bishops on the Family

Moderator:

Clare Ferraro
President of Plume, Viking Press
and Hudson Street Press

Panelists:

Dr. Natalia Imperatori-Lee
Associate Professor of Religious
Studies at Manhattan College

Dr. Linda Lemura
President of Le Moyne College
First female lay president in
Jesuit higher education history

Rev. James Keenan, S.J.
Professor of Moral Theology
at Boston College

Representatives of Families
from Xavier

When

Saturday,
November 8th, 2014
9am to noon

Where

Main Church

Activities for children will be provided in the West Room

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