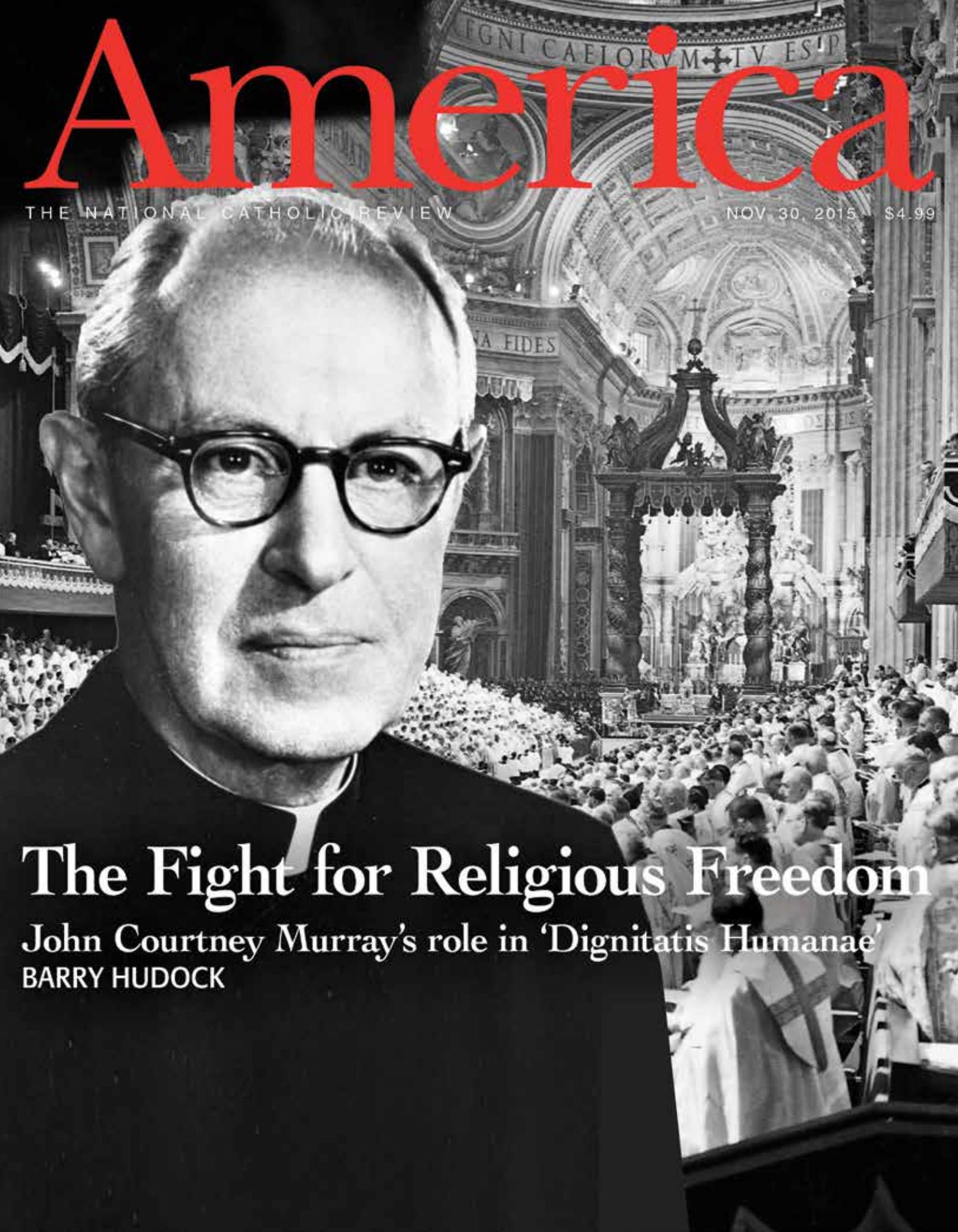


America



THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

NOV. 30, 2015 \$4.99

The Fight for Religious Freedom

John Courtney Murray's role in 'Dignitatis Humanae'

BARRY HUDOCK

OF MANY THINGS

I first came to **America** in the spring of 2003, when Thomas J. Reese, S.J., the 12th editor in chief, offered me a position as an editorial intern. One of the most talented Jesuits of his generation, Father Reese is a lifelong student of history and politics. So the first thing he did when I arrived was to school me in what this journal is, as well as what it is not, and how our own history informs how we seek to interpret the signs of the times in the present day. Longtime readers will know that it is impossible to really understand what **America** does without a sense of that history. For this reason, one of my first acts as editor in chief was to inaugurate a new department called Vantage Point, in which we republish articles from our archives that give a sense of how an earlier generation approached the same questions we are asking now, albeit in a different social and political context.

The article by the late Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., in this issue seems a perfect fit for this month, in which the U.S. Catholic bishops are meeting to discuss what approach to take to the public debate during the 2016 presidential contest. Much that Cardinal Dulles wrote more than 20 years ago is still relevant and useful, even if he departs from our current house style by using political terminology to describe his fellow Catholics. Two years ago, **America** stopped using terms like “liberal” and “conservative” to describe our fellow Catholics in an ecclesial context, mainly because in our present sociopolitical environment, such terms tend to do more harm than good. That probably was not the case in 1990. That is just one more example of how **America** seeks to respond to our concrete, present realities while remaining true to what is constant.

This has been a momentous autumn: the papal visit to the United States, the meeting of the Synod of Bishops on the family in Rome and now the U.S. bishops’ meeting in Baltimore. The sheer

volume of content we have produced in print and online is staggering. In the midst of all that, it might be helpful to recall that **America** exists to provide a forum for catholic opinion. As another of my predecessors, Joseph A. O’Hare, S.J., put it in 1975:

As a journal of opinion, this review seeks, in each issue, not only to inform, but also to interpret. The interpretations—the opinions—of the editors can be found in the editorials, including those shorter “current comments.” The views in these unsigned statements reflect not so much a collective statement but rather the result of a collective process...that has emerged from the weekly editorial meeting. Along with these unsigned editorials, individual editors also write signed pieces: articles, columns, reviews. These represent the views of the individual....

The articles we choose to publish, on the other hand, may not represent the viewpoint of the editors either collectively or individually.... Finally, since the most sensitive opinions in each issue are expressed in the book reviews, it should be clear that the reviews do not represent the opinions of the editors.

Forty years on, Father O’Hare’s ground rules still hold: “A Catholic journal of opinion should be reasonably catholic in the opinions it is willing to consider,” he wrote. “Which is not to say that catholic means indiscriminate. It does mean, however, that we will publish views contrary to our own, as long as we think they deserve the attention of thoughtful Catholics.” In other words, if we’ve done our job right, you should find something in every issue that affirms your worldview as well as something that challenges it.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

America | **MEDIA**
A JESUIT MINISTRY

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Cover: A photo of John Courtney Murray, S.J., from the **America** archives superimposed on a photo of the opening session of the Second Vatican Council in St. Peter’s Basilica, Oct. 11, 1962. CNS photo / L’Osservatore Romano.

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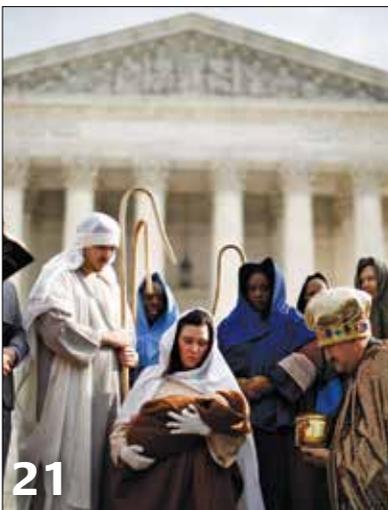
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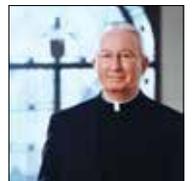
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ON THE WEB

James Alison and Grant Kaplan assess the legacy of cultural critic **René Girard**. Plus, learn more about the **Joseph A. O'Hare, S.J., Post Graduate Writing Fellowship** for graduating college seniors. Full digital highlights on page 37 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



Health Care's Growing Pains

The United States is in the middle of the third open enrollment period since the restructuring of the national health insurance market under the Affordable Care Act. Some of the news so far is hopeful. The percentage of the population that is uninsured has been reduced to below 12 percent, more than 5.5 points down from the rate before the A.C.A. mandate went into effect in 2014.

On the other hand, insurers in many states are raising premiums and increasing deductibles. A number of plans are seeing increases north of 20 percent; in a much smaller number of states, premiums have actually decreased. With the rate of enrollment growth leveling off, insurers are discovering that their risk pools are less healthy and thus more costly than originally projected. Some of the higher costs will be offset by increases in the tax credit insurance subsidies provided by the A.C.A., but many people will still need to shift plans to find something affordable. While it is too soon to declare this the beginning of the dreaded A.C.A. "death spiral," in which the cost of plans, even after subsidies, is high enough to discourage enrollment by the healthy (which would drive the costs higher still), it is certainly reason to be concerned. One of the needs it highlights is for better data and more thorough analysis of the situation in order to identify and learn from places where the program is functioning more smoothly.

The A.C.A. has significantly improved the availability of health insurance, but it clearly needs to be adjusted in the light of experience. An imperfect law ought to be the starting point for reasonable political argument toward practical reforms. The difficulty in doing so should not discourage us from working on health care but rather encourage us to ask more from our legislators.

Smart Oversight

The new movie "Spotlight," focusing on The Boston Globe's coverage of sexual abuse by members of the Catholic clergy in Boston, reminds us of the need to be vigilant about abuse in the church—and indeed anywhere. And the Catholic Church has made great strides in combating abuse. That is why Pope Francis' comments about the alleged cover-up by the recently installed bishop of the Diocese of Osorno, in Chile, were disheartening. "Please, don't lose your calm," Pope Francis said in October to a group of pilgrims at the Vatican in remarks that later became public. "Osorno is suffering, yes, but for being dumb."

Bishop Juan Barros had been a protégé of the Rev. Fernando Karadima, a charismatic priest who has been

accused of sexual abuse. Father Karadima has denied any wrongdoing but was nonetheless ordered to a life of "prayer and penance" by the Vatican, which clearly found sufficient cause to do so. (One victim accused then-Father Barros of being present during an incident of abuse.) The anger in Chile over this case was so intense that a raucous crowd showed up to protest at Bishop Barros's installation Mass. But Osorno, said the pope, "has let its head be filled with what politicians say, judging a bishop without any proof."

The case of Bishop Barros is complex. But there are credible accusations involved, and not everyone who opposes his installation as bishop is "dumb." Peter Saunders, a lay member of the papal advisory committee on abuse who himself is a survivor of abuse, called the pope's comments a "grave error." Sexual abuse needs to be confronted at every turn in our church. The smart thing to do would be not to dismiss complaints but rather to continue to focus the church's spotlight on this great sin.

Forgive Us Our Debts

As the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy approaches, many parishes and dioceses are preparing to celebrate and commemorate this time. Some will sponsor lectures or prayer groups. Jubilee doors will be opened and the sacrament of reconciliation will be encouraged. But as Pope Francis reminded us in the formal document announcing the jubilee, the Year of Mercy is not simply a time of prayerful meditation. It is a reminder of God's mercy, and it calls us outside of ourselves; it calls us to action. The pope wrote: "Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy.... And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy."

The Italian bishops' conference has taken this message to heart in a creative way. They have pledged to help pay the utility bills of needy families in Rome and, if possible, other large Italian cities, throughout the year. The Rev. Paolo Gentili, director of the Italian bishops' conference's Office for the Pastoral Care of the Family, said that the church has "always given, but is now called to give something even more concrete, to forgive debts, to give oxygen to the families." This effort to forgive debt as an act of mercy is a reminder both of the true needs in our society and of our power to meet those needs with God's help and a willing community. Dioceses, parishes and individuals are called to think deliberately about how to live this year of mercy so that its effects will last far beyond the jubilee.

Our Brother's Keeper

The release of a new and shocking report concerning the impact of economic change on vulnerable citizens could not have come at a better time. It comes in the wake of the papal visit and before an election year, when both the American people and leaders of the church are examining their economic and moral priorities. Pope Francis has challenged both the church and Congress to direct their energies toward serving the weak and the poor.

A team of economists—Anne Case, a professor of economics at Princeton University, and Angus Deaton, her husband, also a Princeton economist and a Nobel Prize-winner—have published “Rising Morbidity and Mortality in Midlife Among White Non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st Century” about white Americans, ages 45 to 54, who died between 1999 and 2013. To the researchers’ astonishment, the death rate among these men and women rose dramatically, while the rate for other demographic groups in the United States and their European counterparts remained the same.

This increase has been attributed to drug and alcohol poisoning, suicide and chronic liver diseases. Although these maladies struck others as well, members of this group are marked by a lack of education; they either dropped out of high school or did not pursue a college degree. These findings are disturbing because, in recent years, job-related illnesses followed by inadequate medical response have ravaged this age group. Many of their contemporaries have thrived, but since the 1990s physical and mental health issues and the struggle for daily survival among this battered-by-life minority have taken their toll. As Mr. Deaton told *The Washington Post*, “Half a million people are dead who should not be dead.” These figures are “about 40 times the Ebola stats. You’re getting up there with H.I.V./AIDS.” He describes these victims as white Americans who have “lost the narrative of their lives.”

Other countries, particularly in Europe, survived economic changes because of strong social safety nets. In contrast, jobs in manufacturing and construction in the United States have all but vanished; the less-educated unemployed lack the resources that would allow them to have the lives they imagined.

Paul Krugman, another Nobel Prize-winning economist, writing in *The New York Times* on Nov. 9, sees that “despair appears to be spreading across Middle America” with troubling consequences for society as the wounded cannot deal with the failure for them of the American

dream. Universal health care, higher minimum wages and aid to education could do a lot to help, but it would not cure existential despair. Another *Times* contributor, Richard A. Friedman, blames doctors who enable addiction: “An opioid overdose epidemic is at the heart of this rise in white middle age mortality” (Nov. 8). These drugs were intended for cancer pain; but now primary care physicians who lack appropriate training and are egged on by aggressive marketers use them for purposes other than those intended.



The website *nakedcapitalism.com*, which offers “fearless commentary on finance, economics, politics and power,” has accumulated several hundred letters that expose the pain afflicting this population. One writes, “But in the end, it sucks to be discarded by society like a piece of trash.” Another, flooded by alcohol and pain, clutches the gun that “makes suicide much simpler.” Another describes himself as a “good person who got crushed by this so-called ‘society’ and saw no other way out.” They rarely mention religion. One ex-banker, devastated by his “failure,” nurtures a collection of painkillers to do their job as his “shove off” date approaches.

In the Book of Genesis, Adam asks Cain where his brother, Abel, is. Cain replies, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” But until society acknowledges these stories—until we help people recover the “narratives of their lives”—we are not even in a position to ask Cain’s question. The presidential candidates’ debates have mostly shied away from the inequality issue, apart from promising to cut taxes for the wealthy.

Other advanced countries, which provide a much better safety net for people in economic hardship, have not seen an increasing mortality. We should learn from them. Drugs that can be abused must be prudently prescribed. Colleges and universities could reconsider their recruitment strategies and reach out to non-elite populations.

Media agencies that can sponsor investigative reporting have a special responsibility to shine light on those dark corners where the poor and sick huddle. Perhaps we need another Michael Harrington, whose *The Other America* (1962) introduced John F. Kennedy and then Lyndon B. Johnson to the “invisible poor.” Finally, church leaders could redirect their influence and resources—in synods, diocesan publications, church-owned television networks and parishes—to rescuing our dying brothers and sisters. That is our obligation as “keepers.”

REPLY ALL

Puerto Rico's Problems

Re "Help for Puerto Rico," (Current Comment, 11/9): The government solution to Puerto Rico's problems in the 1950s was to provide generous tax incentives for the pharmaceutical industry to manufacture on the island. But government incentives can be capricious, and they very frequently come to an unhappy end. Wait until they stop paying investment bankers to drive Teslas.

A "U.N. solution" to the current crisis would be highly unlikely to survive challenge by creditors in the U.S. courts. If the people of Puerto Rico want a solution, they should look to the examples of Chile and Singapore.

JOHN WALTON
Online Comment

Starved Spirits

Robert David Sullivan raises some important points in "Defining Needy" (11/9). Candidates (well, Democratic candidates) offer competing proposals for college tuition assistance, debt relief, etc. But where are the competitive proposals, including radically different models, to address school systems with 40 percent dropout rates and graduates who lack basic literacy skills, producing our national illiteracy rate of 14 percent?

The connections between illiteracy and unemployment, incarceration and chronic dependence on public assistance are well documented. How do we assure that more of our children take that first step out of neediness, and become literate?

As Pope Paul VI wrote in "Populorum Progressio," "Lack of education is as serious as lack of food; the illiterate is a starved spirit" (No. 35).

JOSEPH J. DUNN JR.
Online Comment

Contraception and Dishonesty

I disagree with Helen Alvaré ("The Federal Mystique," 11/9). Whether or

not you like the Catholic Church's position on contraception matters greatly—for two reasons. The first is that "Humanae Vitae" has been divisive and is largely ignored by Catholics. The second is that by flatly condemning contraception, the church has forfeited its opportunity to make statements more nuanced and truthful.

Church teaching focuses on the costs and disadvantages of contraception without talking about the costs and disadvantages of not using contraception. This is dishonest. Failing to discuss the issue of power in the matter of contraception is also dishonest. And dishonesty destroys one's credibility, whether a person or an institution is speaking.

LISA WEBER
Online Comment

Artificial and Fraudulent

"Humanae Vitae" is actually very nuanced, no matter how many deplore it. In rejecting artificial contraception as contrary to human dignity, it points out that it is an artifice, as in "a scheme or artifice to defraud," making what appears to be a total offering of self anything but that. Nothing good can come from fraud or deception.

FRED CLOSE
Online Comment

Poisonous Attachments

Stephanie Pacheco ("Gospel for a Middle Class," 11/9) is correct in writing that "worldly goods are not dismissed" in the Gospel; the correct question is our attitude towards them. For me the other Francis (Francis de Sales) provides a helpful perspective when he writes in his *Introduction to the Devout Life* about apothecaries (pharmacists):

There is a wide difference between having poison and being poisoned. All apothecaries have poisons ready for special uses, but they are not consequently poisoned, because the poison is only in their shop, not in themselves; and so you may possess riches

with out being poisoned by them, so long as they are in your house or purse only, and not in your heart. It is the Christian's privilege to be rich in material things, and poor in attachment to them, thereby having the use of riches in this world and the merit of poverty in the next.

The middle class does not have the moral freedom that arises from giving up worldly goods. Instead, our use of riches must be weighed on a moral scale. We will always have the power to do good with the wealth that is given to us.

MR. AND MRS. HERBERT ELY
Online Comment

Abraham's Call

Re "Violence Continues Over Sacred Sites" (11/2): It is a common error, but I was dismayed to find it in **America**—the misinterpretation of Abraham's call concerning his son Isaac (Gn 22: 2-5). By omitting just a few words, one changes the meaning and marvelous significance of Abraham's relationship with God. He was not called to sacrifice his son but to offer him as a sacrifice. He was aware of the difference, hence the words to his servants, "We will worship and then come back to you." Being perfect, God does not change his mind. He was testing Abraham's faith, and at the same time Abraham had the temerity to test God. So he raised the knife, unaware of how God would react but confident that he would not allow the sacrifice. That is what makes it such a compelling story.

JOHN A. BUTLER
Potomac, Md.

Stopping Suicide

Thanks to Richard G. Malloy, S.J., for "Still Seeking Hope" (10/5), which will surely help educate others and diminish the stigma associated with death by suicide. As a mother who has lost an adult child to suicide, a pastor and a suicide prevention activist,

I know that the author walks on holy ground when he shares his story and thus makes it possible for others to share theirs and move forward.

But I do take issue, strongly, with Father Malloy's assertion that "there is nothing anyone could have done to stop" someone who decides to die by suicide. It is difficult for those of us who have lost someone in this way to discover that, had we known and understood more, there are things we could have done—but the same is true of death due to physical injury or illness. We may not know enough at the time, but as research develops and education continues, we find that there is lots we can learn and much we can do to change the trajectory of suicidal ideation, so that numbers of deaths and the tremendous suffering that follows are reduced. There is no comfort, and potential great harm, in the claim that suicides are inevitable.

MARY CRAIG
Online Comment

Silenced in Seattle

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets" (Mt. 23:37). I couldn't help but think of Jesus' lament upon reading "Activist in the Chancery," by John A. Coleman, S.J. (10/5), a review of *A Still and Quiet Conscience*, by John A. McCoy. In reference to Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle, Father Coleman quotes Msgr. Michael Ryan, who said, "The American hierarchy has produced very few great men. He is one of them." The fact is that Archbishop Hunthausen was targeted by the Vatican for the great "sin" of being antiwar and for opposing the buildup of nuclear weapons, especially the Trident submarine, during the Reagan administration. He even went so far as to attend a public protest against nuclear buildup and withheld his taxes, giving them to charity, as a way of protesting the buildup of our nuclear arsenal.

For this outrageous and blatant Christian activism, he was ultimately

f STATUS UPDATE

On America's blog The Good Word John W. Martens responded to the current debate about Communion for the divorced and remarried by providing a scriptural analysis of the question ("Jesus' Teaching on Marriage and Divorce," 11/2). Readers weigh in.

It seems to me that what is at question here is not the sanctity of marriage but the treatment of those who have been wronged.... I for one think we should wrap our arms around them and reflect God's love and mercy as a church and not stand in the way of who God

calls to communion with him.

JUSTINE DANIEL YEARGIN

What came to my mind was that it seems one can interpret Jesus' words however you want. I would say that giving up, destroying a family, is the devil's new way of winning; divorce and remarriage should not be easy.

JAMIE FORD

"We do not want a church that will move with the world. We want a church that will move the world"—G. K. Chesterton.

JULIE FITZGERALD

disgraced and symbolically stripped of his office as archbishop of Seattle. All of this reminds us that today, as in Jesus' day, institutional bureaucracy within the church will often act to thwart legitimate prophets in our time.

THOMAS SEVERIN
Connellsville, Pa.

Education's Purpose

Re "Why Educate" (Editorial, 9/28): Defining education as having a college degree is dubious at best, and when considered in the context of being a good person with a good soul, the definition should be rejected outright. Since the days of Abraham Lincoln, it has been possible to get an education outside of universities while spending

very little money, although it does require an incredible amount of work and determination. Through the public library system, the government makes education accessible to all. Google, Coursera and the like make it possible to gain knowledge without cost. And traveling abroad, interacting with new and different people and experiencing things outside one's comfort zone can happen equally well with or without a university stamp of approval.

Education and institutions of higher education should not be conflated to be the same thing. Continuously educating oneself is a responsible part of being in this world.

DAVID RYAN
Online Comment



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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

TERRORISM

Pope Calls Paris Attacks ‘Blasphemy’ Says Dialogue Must Continue

NOUS SOMMES TOUS FRANÇAIS. People gather in Republique square in Paris on Nov. 14 to remember victims of the terror attacks.



Using God’s name to try to justify violence and murder is “blasphemy,” Pope Francis said on Nov. 15, speaking about the terrorist attacks in Paris. “Such barbarity leaves us dismayed and we ask ourselves how the human heart can plan and carry out such horrible events,” the pope said after reciting the Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter’s Square.

The attacks in Paris on Nov. 13—carried out, the French government said, by three teams of Islamic State terrorists—caused the deaths of 132 people and left more than 350 wounded. The attacks, Pope Francis said, were an “unspeakable affront to the dignity of the human person.”

“The path of violence and hatred cannot resolve the problems of humanity and using the name of God to justify this path is blasphemy,” he said.

The archbishop of Paris, Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, issued a statement condemning the assault on his city, praising first responders and urging unity. “Faced with the violence of men, may we receive the grace of a firm heart, without hatred,” he said. “May the moderation, temperance and control that has been shown so far be confirmed in the weeks and months to come; let no one indulge in panic or hatred. We ask that grace be the artisan of peace. We need never despair of peace if we build on justice.”

In Rome, Federico Lombardi, S.J., told Vatican Radio, commenting on suggestions that the violence might interrupt the beginning of the church’s Jubilee Year

of Mercy: “This is...no time to give up the Jubilee, or to be afraid. We need the Jubilee more than ever.”

“Be on guard,” he said. “These murderers, possessed by a senseless hatred, are called ‘terrorists’ precisely because they want to spread terror. If we let ourselves be frightened, they will have already reached their first objective.”

In the aftermath of the attacks, President François Hollande vowed to “be unforgiving with the barbarians from Daesh.” By Nov. 15 France had begun bombing raids on the self-proclaimed capital of ISIS, Raqqa in Syria.

In the days after the attack, news of small reprisal gestures against Syrian refugees in Europe began to surface, and the Internet became cloudy with ugly calls for retaliation against Muslims and celebrations of the mayhem in Paris among Daesh sympathizers.

Thomas Rosica, C.S.B., the Holy See’s English language attaché, warned against using the events in Paris to interrupt Muslim-Christian dialogue: “The life of every human being is sacred, both for Christians and for Muslims,” he said.

“There is plenty of scope for us to act together in the service of fundamental moral values. The lessons of the past must help us to avoid repeating the same mistakes. We must seek paths of reconciliation and learn to live with respect for each other’s identity.”

After meeting with Pope Francis on Nov. 14 in Rome at an event commemorating the 35th anniversary of the Jesuit Refugee Service, its international director, Thomas Smolich, S.J., joined his prayers with the pope’s for the victims and survivors. He added,

“We would want to make sure that what happened last night is not globalized to say, ‘This is all of Islam; this is all the Muslim faith.’ These are people within a group of people who are doing evil things for reasons that don’t make a lot of sense to us.”

Father Smolich said, “I think it’s very important to realize that people who are coming to Europe right now... are fleeing the same situations. They have left barrel bombs in Aleppo; they have left random attacks in Damascus,

in Iraq, in other parts of the world.

“They are coming to escape what has unfortunately come to Europe.” The refugees, he said, merely want to realize “the same freedom of living that we hope to enjoy here in Europe.” J.R.S., and particularly J.R.S. France, he said, has worked to welcome and integrate new arrivals to Europe, a process even more important now in the light of the suffering in Paris and potential reactions to it “so we can truly build one human family.”

“We have to acknowledge those emotions so we’re not paralyzed or overwhelmed by it,” he said.

Acknowledging the issues surrounding race is important for the church “because our faith gives us no other choice,” Father Massingale said. “Reality gives us no other choice. We must deal with the signs of the times.”

While the church now is a mix of 60 percent white and 40 percent Latino, African-American and other ethnic groups, census figures indicate that by 2043 white will no longer be the majority race in the United States, he said. Those statistics have “wide-ranging implications” for the church’s formation and evangelization programs.

“The landscape of both the church and society is being significantly and dramatically altered,” Father Massingale said. “If we are going to be Catholic, our future can only be a brown one. The church is browning. It’s inexorable.”

The massacre of nine African-American worshippers in a Charleston, S.C., church is just the most recent reminder of the racial divide in America, he said, adding that

there is other “subtle racism” exposed when anonymous comments are posted online in response to news stories involving race and ethnicity.

“Racism is a soul sickness,” he said, “a profound warping of the human spirit that enables us to create or tolerate callousness or indifference toward each other. Racism is a soul sickness that says some lives are worth less than others and some are beyond our concern. We are called to lament, to grieve, to mourn, to be aware because that’s what leads to racial conversion.”

Catholics can confront the sin of racism in a pastoral way by first recog-

U.S. CHURCH

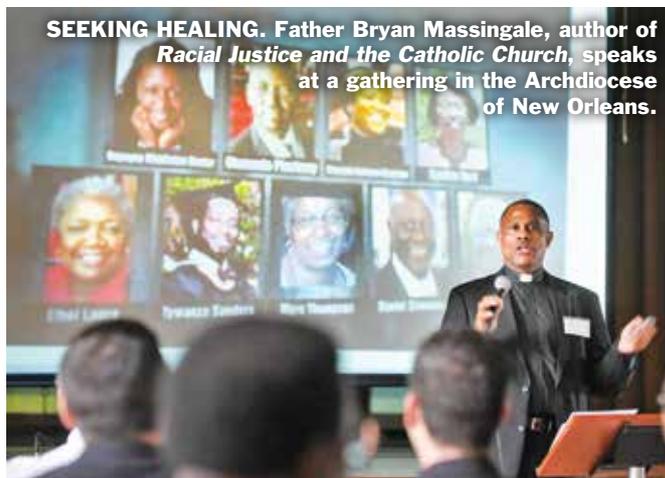
Breaking Silence on Racism

A “seismic shift in demographics” in both society and the U.S. Catholic Church in the coming decades will create a church that is far less white, the Rev. Bryan Massingale told an audience in New Orleans on Nov. 6. The church will be unprepared to deal with that reality, he continued, unless it addresses “the ongoing struggle for racial equality.”

Father Massingale made the comments in an address to priests, seminarians and other officials of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The author of *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* and a professor of ethics and theology at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Father Massingale said the church must become “a proactive agent for racial justice” if it is to “remain viable and relevant in the 21st century.”

He said the issues of racism and racial justice are not spoken of frequently by priests because the topics are so sensitive.

“When we get together, there is a tendency for silence,” Father



SEEKING HEALING. Father Bryan Massingale, author of *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, speaks at a gathering in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Massingale said. “We don’t dare say anything because we don’t want to say something wrong or make someone upset. We don’t want to go there. Most of all, as priests, we want to be liked. Your parish is your family. You don’t want to alienate people. So, you’d rather keep silent than run that risk.”

Just as the topic of sexuality is sensitive, discussions about race “become emotional and visceral.” In his years of teaching a course on racial justice at Marquette, Father Massingale said it was not uncommon for “students’ eyes to glaze over. They can’t take any more in.”

nizing their own “fears, blindness and need for education, growth and healing,” he said. “But there can’t be fire in the pew if there’s ice in the pulpit.”

Help for Abuse Victims

The U.S. church still stands ready to help the victims of sexual abuse by members of the Catholic clergy, according to Bishop Edward J. Burns of Juneau, Alaska, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Child and Youth Protection. “Victims of abuse have helped us see the errors of the past,” Bishop Burns said on Nov. 10. “It’s important that we assist them in the healing process.” He added: “We express our gratitude for the way they’ve called us to look at ourselves, and see that there is a need to change, to be contrite, and to assist in the healing process. It’s important that we continue to work together in order to be sure that there is a safe environment within the church, and that we never grow lax in assuring that all our children are safe.” The subject of sexual abuse by members of the clergy is being brought into the headlines again with the release of the new movie “Spotlight,” which deals with the Boston Globe’s investigation into abuse by Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Boston.

Deferred Deportation To Supreme Court

The Obama administration will seek a ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court after a federal appeals court struck down the president’s program to protect more than four million immigrants from deportation. The ruling on Nov. 9 upheld a Texas-based federal judge’s injunction against President Obama’s executive order to protect immigrants who came to the United States as children or the immigrant parents of

NEWS BRIEFS

The former Creighton University president and former president and publisher of **America**, **John P. Schlegel, S.J.**, died on Nov. 15 in Omaha, Neb., of pancreatic cancer at the age of 72. + “Time is of the essence” to get **humanitarian aid** to the people of Ukraine as winter sets in, a group of Ukrainian religious leaders said in an appeal to President Obama on Nov. 9. + The Eucharist is not just a reward for the good but also **strength for the weak** and nourishment for those who hunger for love, forgiveness and mercy, Pope Francis said in a message to participants of the National Eucharistic Congress in Mumbai, India, on Nov. 12-15. + On Nov. 6 Patriarch Louis Sako of Baghdad, of the Chaldean Catholic Church, called upon Iraq’s President Fuad Masum to veto a law that would force some **Christian children to convert to Islam**. + Darren Posey, country representative for Catholic Relief Services in Burundi, said on Nov. 9 that “**outright conflict**” could still be avoided if the East African country’s rulers heed church appeals for dialogue and compromise. + A federal bankruptcy court in Wisconsin approved the **Archdiocese of Milwaukee’s plan of re-organization**, calling for \$21 million to be paid to 355 survivors of sexual abuse.



John Schlegel, S.J.

children who are U.S. citizens or legal residents of this country from deportation. The order had expanded a 2012 program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and creates the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents. Earlier this year, 19 faith-based organizations filed a friend of the court brief advocating for people seeking relief from deportation. “The United States has a legal interest and a moral duty to preserve the unity of families,” said Bill Kelly, S.J., secretary for social and international ministries at the Jesuit Conference.

A Death in Chicago

A funeral service was held at St. Sabina Church on the South Side of Chicago for 9-year-old Tyshawn Lee on Nov. 10. The church is about a mile

from where Tyshawn was lured into an alley and shot in the head and the back on the afternoon of Nov. 2. The Rev. Michael Pflieger told the congregation that it’s not true that Tyshawn was in the wrong place at the wrong time. “Tyshawn was on his way to play basketball in the park near his grandmother’s house,” the priest said. “Our children have the right to walk down our streets. Our children have the right to play in the park. Our children have the right to sit on their porches. Our children have the right to be safe wherever they are in the city of Chicago. The murderer, the executioner, the assassin was in the wrong place at the wrong time.” As of Nov. 11, there were 428 murders reported in Chicago in 2015. Eight of them occurred between Tyshawn’s death and his funeral.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

DISPATCH | BEIJING

China's 'Teflon President'

You heard it here first: I predict China's President Xi Jinping will be Time magazine's Person of the Year. Certainly some will argue for German Chancellor Angela Merkel because of her response to the European refugee crisis. Russia's Vladimir Putin's moves on Syria and general annoyance of the United States will mean he'll also receive some consideration.

But it's not Xi's oft-cited similarity to Mao Zedong that will put him on the cover. It's his political resemblance to the late U.S. President Ronald Reagan. Xi's likeness to Reagan is neither physical nor stylistic.

The Teflon coating he seems to be accruing is not a result of dodging scandals, as Reagan did in the 1980s. Instead, Xi has moved from strength to strength in 2015, despite an increasing number of challenges both domestic and international, maintaining a firm line on China's world view and demand to be treated as a superpower. Xi is increasingly resistant to criticism and grows more confident in executing his policy goals, including fighting corruption, enforcing China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and keeping the public calm as the country faces its first long-term economic slowdown in over 30 years.

This autumn Xi met most of the world's most important leaders, either traveling abroad or welcoming them to Beijing. Xi hosted Putin, along with South Korean President Park Geun-hye, during China's celebration of the

70th anniversary of the end of World War II in early September, complete with large-scale military parade.

Xi rode that wave of pomp and circumstance to the United States, where he met President Barack Obama. The meeting demonstrated part of what has become Xi's style: concrete commercial results delivered from countries with which China has otherwise complicated, if not difficult, relations. Although military relations between

Xi's likeness to Reagan
is neither physical
nor stylistic.

the two countries have become tense since the visit due to China's expansion of a disputed island in the South China Sea, China bought \$38 billion worth of Boeing aircraft during the visit, providing each leader with evidence that the U.S./China trade relationship was on track and benefitting workers on both sides of the Pacific.

Most surprising was Xi's trip to the United Kingdom in October, where Prime Minister David Cameron treated the Chinese leader as if he were visiting royalty. Cameron was later criticized for his supplicant's posture throughout the visit, intent on positioning the United Kingdom as a worthy trade partner and tourist destination. The two sides signed business deals worth about £40 billion (\$60.2 billion).

Xi returned to Beijing, where he met Germany's Merkel. She was able to fly home with an order for 30 Airbus jets, worth €17 billion (\$18.57 billion). As if a queue had formed out-

side of the Chinese leadership complex Zhongnanhai, French President Jacques Hollande followed a few days later. While he visited Beijing mostly to discuss climate change, he went back to France with a \$22 billion deal for nuclear waste recycling.

Only a leader with Xi's confidence and strength could undertake his next meeting: with Taiwan Republic of China President Ma Ying-jeou in Singapore on Nov. 7. It's the first time since 1949 that leaders from the two sides met. Ma, representing the Kuomintang, currently Taiwan's ruling party and the nationalist force that "lost" China in '49, subscribes to the "One China Principle"—that there is only one China which includes Taiwan. He has enjoyed a friendly and productive relationship with the People's Republic, reducing military tensions and resuming direct flights. The two agreed to refer to each other as "Mister" rather than "President." Although both sides have worked hard to minimize expectations, it's a boost for Ma and the K.M.T., who have fared poorly in recent elections and may still lose the presidency in January.

All of this comes as Xi brushed off a \$2 trillion drop in China's stock markets during the summer and a slowing economy. Nor did he flinch as the U.S. Navy began patrols within 12 miles of Chinese-expanded islands in the South China Sea. In late October, China's government approved its 13th Five-Year Plan, a central economic blueprint for 2016-2021, which included a move designed to alter the nation's workforce while maintaining social stability: giving all of China's couples the opportunity to have two children after 35 years of the one-child policy.

For Xi, it all seems another day at the office. As it would, for the person of the year.

STEVEN SCHWANKERT

STEVEN SCHWANKERT, author of *Poseidon: China's Secret Salvage of Britain's Lost Submarine* (Hong Kong University Press), is America's Beijing correspondent.
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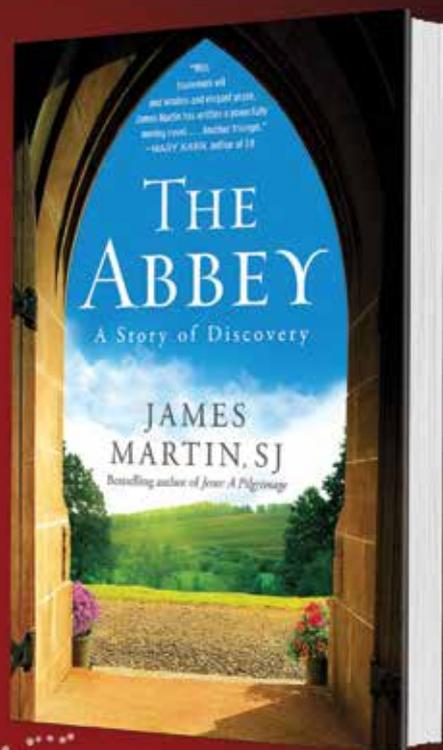
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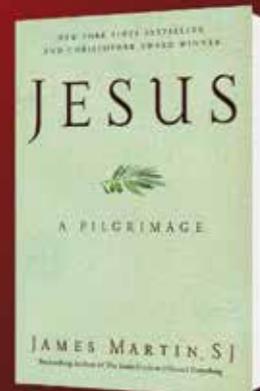
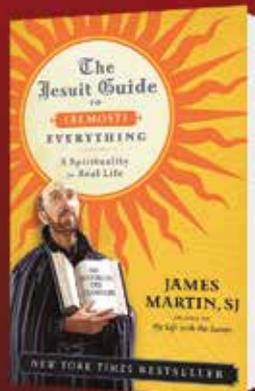
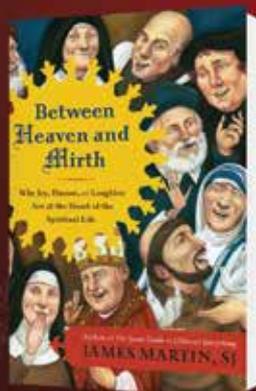
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An Election Out of Focus

Among Republicans, the summer of Trump has become the fall of the outsiders, with Donald Trump and Dr. Ben Carson leading the way. Senator Ted Cruz, who attacks the Senate, and Senator Marco Rubio, who won't show up in the Senate, are positioning themselves as outsiders and a new generation if the frontrunners falter. Trump has doubled down on blaming immigrants and "stupid politicians" and "low energy" leaders for what he calls Crippled America. Dr. Carson offers not energy, but biography and now blames reporters for trying to undermine his appeal with questions about his youth, West Point and pyramids.

On the Democratic side, Joseph Biden "ran out of time" and Senator Bernie Sanders may be running out of room as Hillary Clinton moves to the left. She seems to be running for who she could be—namely, the first female president—more than for what she has done. Senator Sanders does not run on what he has achieved, but on his lonely witness on key issues, giving away the email issue and questions of judgment and truthfulness that it symbolizes.

What are disappearing in this campaign are governors, leaders who have passed budgets, chosen judges and run a state. Gov. Rick Perry and Gov. Scott Walker are already out despite achievements that made conservatives love them and liberals hate them. Governors Chris Christie and Bobby Jindal and former Gov. Mike Huckabee can't even get on the

main debate stage. The records of Governors Jeb Bush and John Kasich as conservative and creative reformers seem irrelevant and may be counterproductive.

Democratic Gov. Martin O'Malley, with a liberal record on the death penalty, gun control, the Dream Act and same-sex marriage, barely registers among Democrats. In a nation that elected Governors Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, executive experience is more a liability than a qualification, so the governors are fading.

What is missing from this campaign is serious discussion of work, workers and people without work. The nation needs a real focus on overcoming pervasive poverty, and work is the neglected center of that discussion. Mitt Romney said that if he were elected, unemployment would come down to 6 percent.

Official unemployment has now fallen to 5 percent, and President Obama deserves credit for slow but steady job growth. But labor force participation is at a 38-year low, with some retired or in school, and many have given up looking for work. Millions more are working part-time though they need and want full-time work.

This is an economy that leaves millions out and many behind. In the Catholic tradition, work is not just a way to make a living; it is an expression of our dignity, a contribution to the common good. Pope Francis has said, "We were created with a vocation to work" and that "work is fundamen-

tal to the dignity of the person."

Robert Putnam in *Our Kids* draws a statistical and human picture of communities, families and children without the income, dignity and supports that come with decent employment at decent wages. A new study reports that life expectancy continues to lag for people of color.

For the first time, however, death rates are rising for middle-aged white Americans who lack education and other assets. Addiction, suicide, other health problems and hopelessness are destroying the lives of people who have lost their place in our economy and communities.

Where is the focus on poverty, work and workers in the campaign? At a time of identity politics in progressive circles, could Democrats focus on the crucial identity of people as workers and what happens when that is lost?

The Republican Party sometimes talks about life and family. Could its candidates focus on how the lack of work destroys both?

In this coming election year, we should echo the prayer and plea of Pope Francis "for more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society...the lives of the poor!... It is vital that government leaders...work to ensure that all citizens have dignified work."

It also wouldn't hurt to listen to governors who have actually had to lead and choose, not just to vote and talk.

Where is the talk of poverty, work and workers in the campaign?

JOHN CARR

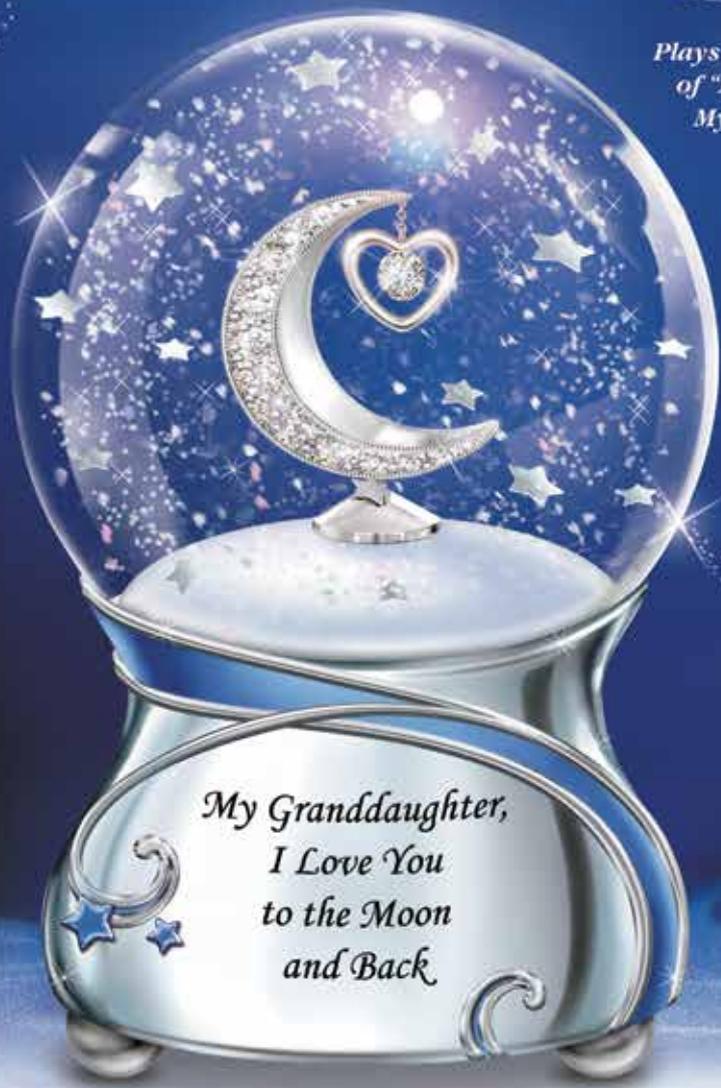
JOHN CARR is director of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

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The Fight for Religious Freedom



John Courtney Murray's role in 'Dignitatis Humanae'

BY BARRY HUDOCK

Debate on the issue of religious freedom during the Second Vatican Council's third session had been tumultuous. As the final session opened on September 14, 1965, two opposing and irreconcilable "sides" were lined up against one another. The traditionalist side, led by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, was a powerful minority who argued the state was obligated, through its officials, to worship God according to the Catholic religion. Reformers, following the thought of John Courtney Murray, S.J., argued the church could and should support religious freedom in secular states. Both sides saw the question as a matter of speaking the truth about God and the church and morality; for these men, the stakes could not be higher. All knew that the matter would be decided definitively in the weeks ahead. Indeed, they had been preparing intensely for the debate almost from the moment the previous year's session had closed.

Battle Stations

On Jan. 9, 1965, the John Courtney Murray, S.J., published an article in *America*. "This Matter of Religious Freedom," that received much comment and was soon translated and published in Italian and German periodicals. A few months later, *L'Osservatore Romano* published an article by the prominent French theologian Charles Boyer, S.J., of the Gregorian University, that defended the classical approach that Murray questioned.

The new religious freedom text, which the bishops had received in June, had been closely scrutinized by supporters and opponents alike. Cardinal Joseph Ritter of St. Louis, Mo., had written a letter to the entire American episcopate calling for support of the schema. Meanwhile the *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*, a bishops' interest group that op-

posed the draft, had invited the world's bishops to provide their mailing addresses in Rome during the next session in order to receive advice on how to vote. And Cardinal Giuseppe Siri had written directly to the pope complaining that, if promulgated, the new document would "especially benefit religious indifferentism."

The Canadian bishops, who had paid special attention to Father Murray's work, prepared a sequence of interventions in favor of the schema. And less than two weeks before the session's opening, the Yugoslavian bishops published a joint pastoral letter declaring their support for religious freedom.

During this same period, Murray carried on a respectful correspondence with the Cardinal Michael Browne of Ireland, a leader of the opposition to the document. Murray explained the text and defended its importance. But knowing how unlikely it would be to win the cardinal's agreement, he added:

There is an old folk-ballad among us about a boy who was treed by a bear.... The refrain runs thus: "O Lord, if you can't help me, for heaven's sake don't help the bear." It comes to mind as an expression of my hope in this matter: if your Eminence does not find it possible, in conscience, to come out in favor of the schema, I hope that you will not find it necessary, in conscience, to come out against it!

As he had the previous fall, Murray worked with the American bishops to prepare a set of coordinated interventions for session four covering all the important points.

Bishops' Voices, Murray's Thoughts

On Sept. 15, debate on the new text began. Bishop Émile Joseph de Smedt of Belgium presented an introductory report, again prepared with extensive consultation with Murray. The first council father to speak was Cardinal Francis Spellman, who offered strong support through an intervention that Murray had prepared. Cardinals Cushing and Ritter followed with their support. Over the next several hours, American bishop after American bishop offered

BARRY HUDOCK is the author of *Faith Meets World: The Gift and Challenge of Catholic Social Teaching and The Eucharistic Prayer: A User's Guide*. He is a publisher of *Liturgical Press* and lives with his family in central Minnesota. This article is an edited excerpt from the author's latest book, *Struggle, Condemnation, Vindication: John Courtney Murray's Journey Toward Vatican II* (*Liturgical Press*).

interventions that clearly reflected Murray's thinking. One bishop commented, "The voices are the voices of the United States bishops; but the thoughts are the thoughts of John Courtney Murray!"

The day included several opposition voices. The influential Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini repeated the classical approach that the state was obligated, through its officials, to worship God according to the Catholic religion. He noted the great benefits that Catholicism brings to society, offering chastity as his first example of such benefits. Cardinal Siri warned of religious indifferentism and suggested again that the religious freedom schema contradicted the teaching of several popes.

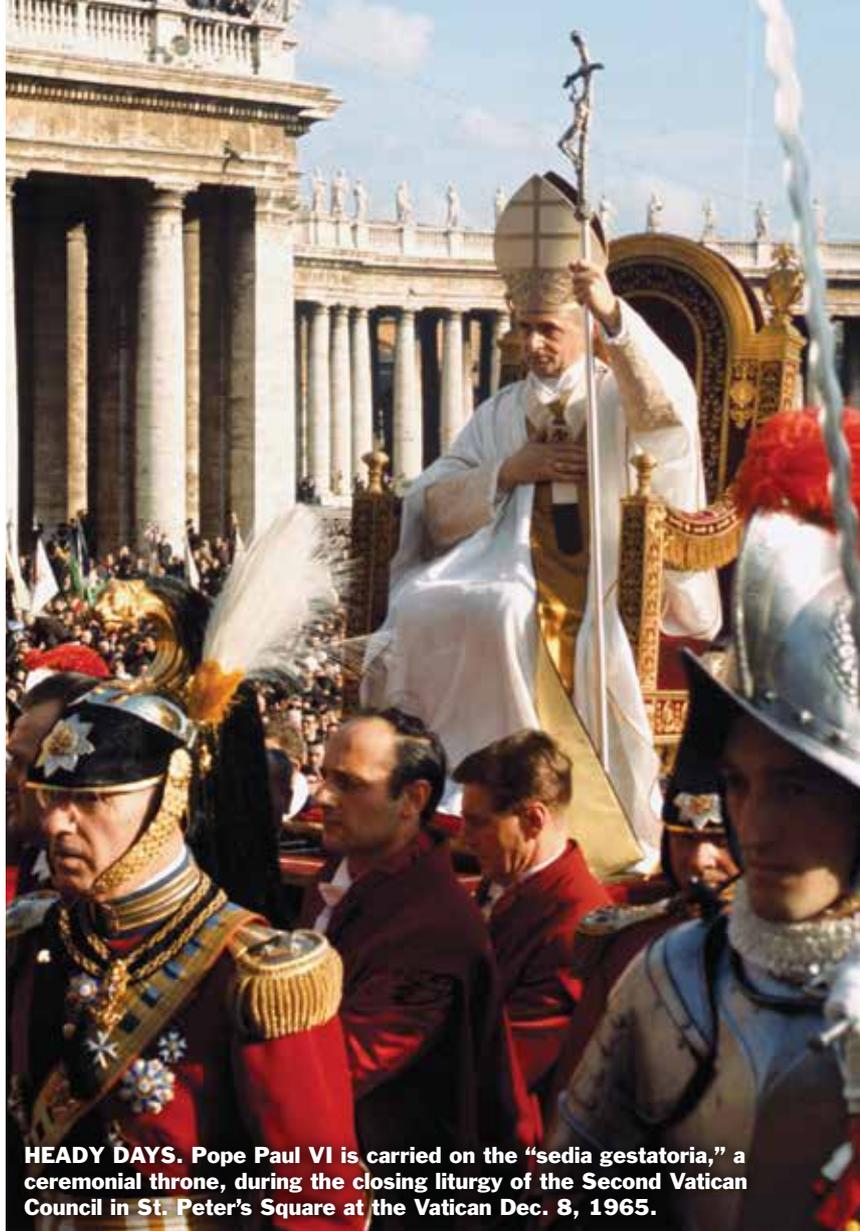
On the second day, Cardinal Lorenz Jaeger spoke in the name of 150 bishops in favor of the draft. He offered impressive responses to many of the opponents' criticisms.

The third day included several noteworthy interventions. Cardinal Franjo Seper (a future head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) offered his strong support. Cardinal John Heenan criticized the thesis-hypothesis approach, noting that it was absurd to speak of truth or error having rights, since only persons have rights. He said the traditional approach was inconsistent: The church cannot appeal to "the rights of truth" when Catholics are in the majority and use this to suppress the freedom of non-Catholics, but when Catholics are in the minority, demand freedom for Catholics.

The Cardinal Modrego y Casaus of Spain said the schema "certainly contradicts...the explicit teaching of the Roman pontiffs up to and including John XXIII." Another Spaniard, Velasco, said it "perverts the doctrine taught for centuries by the magisterium of the church." Cardinal Ottaviani maintained that the teachings of the schema were "for the most part contrary to common teaching" and called for a revision that would bring it "in accord with the earlier teaching of the Catholic Church."

Speaking on behalf of "all of the observers of the council," Bishop Charles Maloney, auxiliary bishop of Louisville, offered strong support for the schema. He noted wryly that the council fathers who were wrong about this issue had "a right to speak because of their dignity as persons, not because of the truth or falsity of their statements."

By the end of Friday the direction the debate was taking was still unclear. It was by no means certain that the schema would be accepted. Msgr. Albert Prignon, who was present as a theological expert, later wrote in his journal of this day, "Chance meetings with bishops and theologians in St. Peter's showed that minds were wavering. Several bishops said openly that they did not know what they ought to think



HEADY DAYS. Pope Paul VI is carried on the "sedia gestatoria," a ceremonial throne, during the closing liturgy of the Second Vatican Council in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Dec. 8, 1965.

and how they should cast their votes." Some thought that if a vote had been called, many hundreds would vote against it, and one rumor suggested that 1,000 were ready to reject it. Pope Paul VI, who had made no secret of the fact that he wanted the declaration, told Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens that he had been very impressed with the arguments of the opposition leaders.

Bogged Down

Monday, Sept. 20, the fourth day of debate, included a remarkable series of interventions in favor of the document. Cardinal Josef Beran took his place before the fathers. During the 1940s, he had been imprisoned by the Nazis in the concentration camps at Theresienstadt and Dachau. After four years of freedom, during which he had been named archbishop of Prague, Beran was imprisoned in 1949 by the Communist regime and remained so until 1963. Since his release, he had been forbidden by his government

from exercising his ministry. As he stood on the floor of the council, he had just moved to Rome, in exchange for concessions from his government for more freedom for the church, and had been named a cardinal by Paul VI.

Standing for the first time before his brother bishops, who knew well the suffering he had endured for his fidelity, Beran reminded them of the burning of the Czech priest Jan Hus in the 15th century and the forced conversions of Czech Protestants in the 17th century. These events, he said, “left a certain wound hiding in the hearts of the people” and damaged the church’s credibility. He called on the church to repent and said that “the principle of religious freedom and freedom of conscience must be set forth clearly and without any restriction flowing from opportunistic considerations.”

Following Cardinal Beran, Cardinal Joseph Cardijn stood before the bishops. He was the founder of the Young Christian Workers, a movement that then had nearly 2,000,000 members in almost 70 countries. Pope Paul VI had named him a cardinal in the recent consistory alongside Cardinal Beran. Cardinal Cardijn, too, spoke in favor of the schema.

As if that were not enough, the next speaker was Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, archbishop of Warsaw, who also had suffered imprisonment under the Communists. He too supported the schema.

Despite these dramatic statements, there still was a great deal of disarray on the issue. Several interventions were highly negative. Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre bitterly condemned the schema, saying that the principle of religious freedom “is not one conceived...by the church.” The sharp conflict even generated some apathy among some council fathers. Many Protestant observers began to sense that the schema might not succeed. The historian Gilles Routhier has written, “The debate seemed to have bogged down, and no one could find a way ending it.” The next morning’s headline in *The New York Herald Tribune* read, “Vatican Council Near Crisis Over Religious Liberty Issue.”

On Tuesday morning, Pope Paul VI (just a month away from his historic visit to the headquarters of the United Nations) summoned the council leadership to his apartment to say he thought it was time for a preliminary vote.

As the morning’s interventions began, Cardinal Enrico Dante, whose face was familiar because of his longtime role as papal master of ceremonies, suggested that the schema sounded like echoes of the French Revolution. Cardinal Charles Journet, a noted theologian trusted by the more traditional fathers, spoke in favor of the schema; this went a long way toward reassuring some who felt uneasy.

At 10:30 a.m., after four interventions, Cardinal Gregory Peter Agagianian took to the podium and asked the fathers

to indicate by a standing vote whether they thought it was time to close discussion. Nearly all the fathers stood. Bishop de Smedt offered a summary and closing remarks, and then the fathers were asked to vote on whether the current text should be taken as the basis for a definitive declaration after further amendments, to be subsequently approved by the council. The voting resulted in 1,997 in favor, 224 against and 1 invalid. When the tally was announced, the bishops responded with applause in the hall. The next morning’s *London Times* called the vote “a great event in the history of Catholicism and in the history of freedom.”

Sept. 22 brought a few more interventions, as was per-



A decade earlier Murray had been forbidden, under Vatican pressure, to write or publish his work.

mitted by council rules. One was from Archbishop Karol Wojtyła, who spoke in favor of the document in the name of the bishops of Poland, saying that religious freedom was in harmony with both human reason and divine revelation. The Italian theological expert Msgr. Pietro Pavan later wrote: “Thus ended a debate that was perhaps the most violent ever to have taken place in the aula. It had been rich in dramatic moments.”

Champagne, Friends, Smiles

The Secretariat for Christian Unity’s subcommission received another 201 written interventions after the debate and set to work on final revisions. On Sept. 30, Paul VI told Bishop de Smedt, “This is a major document. It establishes the attitude of the church for several centuries. The world is waiting for it.”

For a while, John Courtney Murray, S.J., played a central role in the revision work. His fellow expert Yves Congar, O.P., described him as “very much overloaded with responsibility for various matters.” But on Oct. 5, he was rushed to the hospital with a collapsed lung. When Father Congar visited him two days later, Father Murray, with oxygen tubes in each nostril, tried to provide feedback on the current text. Father Congar—who had had his disagreements with Father Murray—found the ideas important enough that he immediately passed them on to secretariat officials. Congar wrote that evening:

Thus Fr. Murray was ill, and seriously so, at the moment when a text was being finalized which had been,

to a great extent, his work. He himself told me that he is taking this mystically, in the sense of the cross, and that he is perhaps more useful to the text in bed and powerless, than up and active.

In Father Murray's absence, the revisions to the document brought a shift in tone, adding emphasis to revelation and theology, including a preface on revelation written by Father Congar. Father Murray's more constitutional and legal approach, however, was not eliminated. Also added to assuage fears of indifferentism was a more explicit acknowledgement that the Catholic Church is the true church founded by Christ. (When this was made public, The New York Herald Tribune headline read, "Council Revision Makes It a Duty of All to Be Catholic.") The text was accepted by the subcommittee on Oct. 9 and distributed to the council fathers on Oct. 22. The Coetus immediately sent around papers intended to demonstrate that the document contradicted the Bible and church teaching.

Bishop de Smedt introduced the text to the council fathers on Oct. 25. Two days of voting on its various parts followed. The secretariat then received more than 4,000 petitions for amendments and met again on Nov. 8 and 9, with Father Murray again present (though Father Congar wrote in his journal: "He spoke in a voice that seemed like that of a ghost, and as though it came from the other side of the veil"). The team made final revisions, mostly insignificant, and the final text was distributed on Nov. 17, with voting scheduled for two days later.

On Nov. 18, Murray was invited to concelebrate mass with Pope Paul VI in St. Peter's, along with several others representing the theological experts. This was remarkable, considering that exactly a decade earlier Murray had been forbidden, under Vatican pressure, to write or publish his work. A friend later wrote, "In private, the event was celebrated with champagne, friends, smiles—and toasts that were really prayers for the future of a beloved Church in a kind of turmoil that its servant could only wish to prove holy."

On Nov. 19, the council fathers voted first on various parts of the document—each vote strongly in favor—and finally on the whole text. The latter vote was 1,954 in favor, 249 against and 13 invalid.

On Dec. 7, 1965, in the final public session, the formal vote on the "Declaration on Religious Freedom" ("Dignitatis Humanae") was 2,308 in favor, 70 against and 8 invalid. On that day, Pope Paul VI formally proclaimed it (along with the "Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests," the "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity" and the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World") as a document of the council. The Second Vatican Council's closing ceremonies took place the following day. ■

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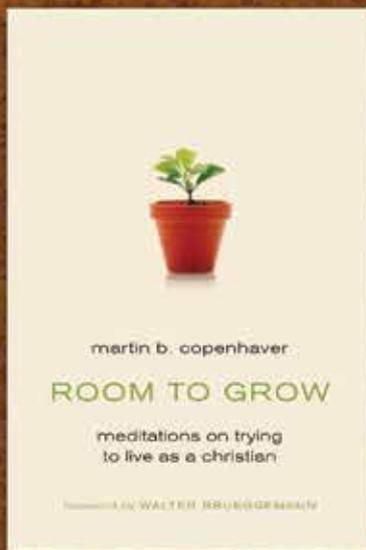
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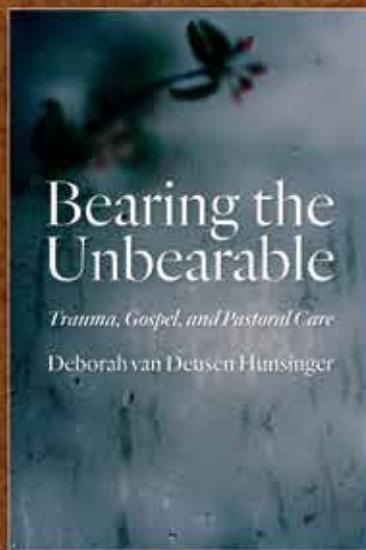
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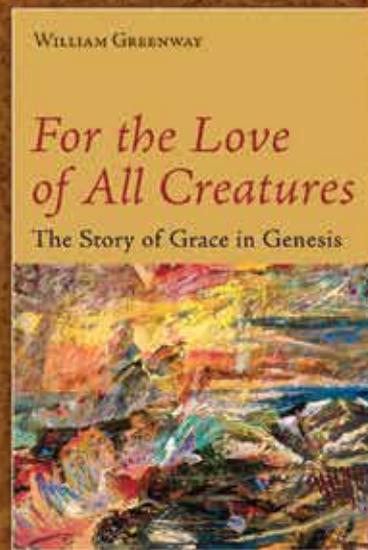
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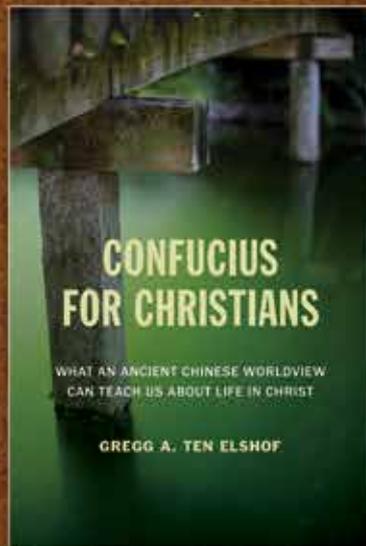
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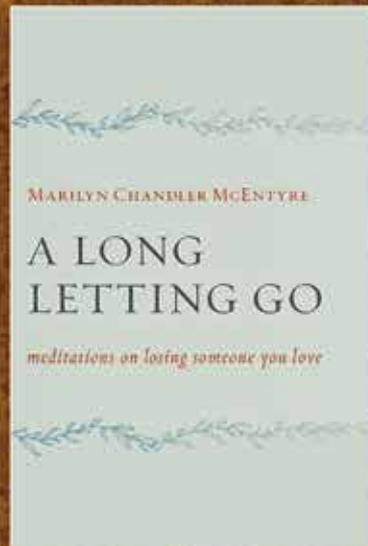
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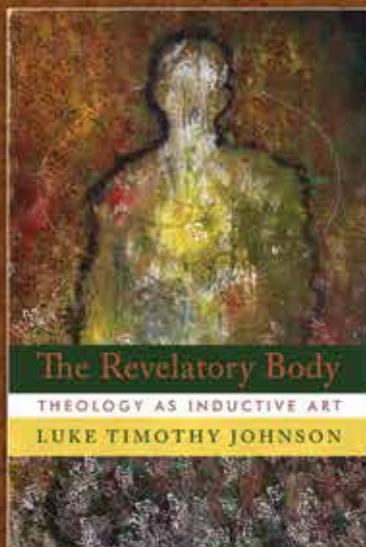
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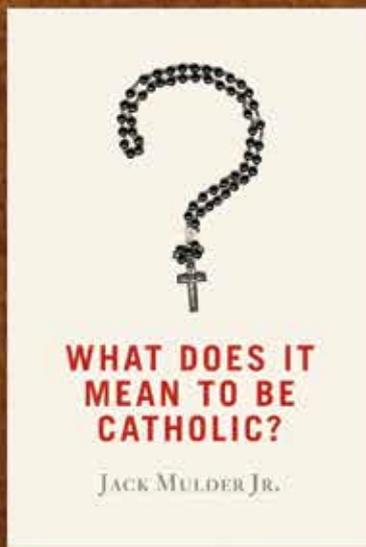
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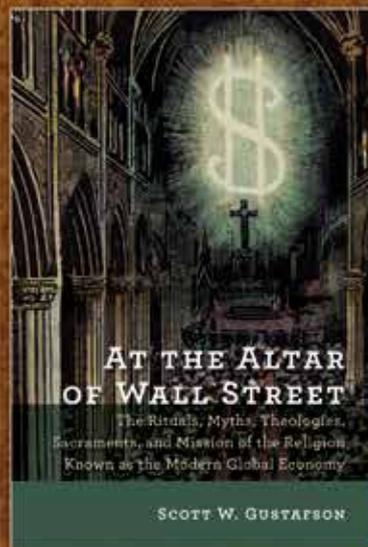
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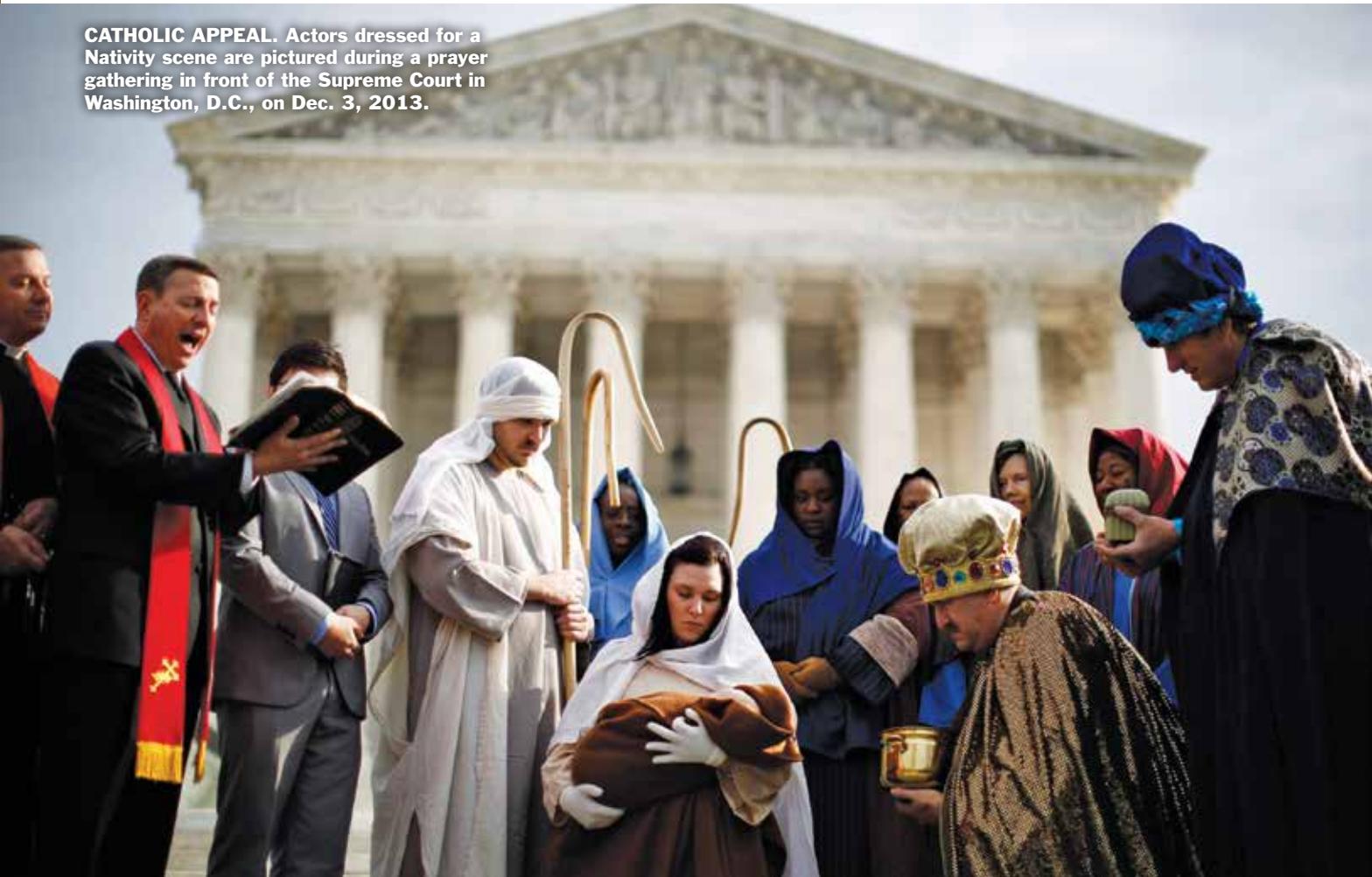
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The Uneasy Dialogue

Catholicism and American culture

BY AVERY DULLES

CATHOLIC APPEAL. Actors dressed for a Nativity scene are pictured during a prayer gathering in front of the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 3, 2013.



In the decade after Vatican II *inculturation* became a buzzword. Although popes have used the word only with caution, they

CARDINAL AVERY DULLES, S.J., was the McGinley Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University in New York City from 1988 until his death in 2008. He was the author of 27 books and 800 articles and reviews. This essay is a shortened version of an article that appeared in the Jan. 27, 1990, issue of *America*.

have said on journeys to Asia and Africa that the Catholic Church in those continents ought not to be a slavish copy of the European church. As a consequence American Catholics began to conclude that Catholicism in this country should develop its own distinctive traits. In the past it had been a mosaic of importations from various “Old World” nations—Ireland, Germany, France, Poland, Italy and others. Even if the efforts of Isaac

Hecker and Archbishop John Ireland to Americanize the church in the 19th century proved abortive, perhaps the time had now come for a new and more sober effort. Would not such Americanization, far from undermining authentic Catholicism, serve to solidify and strengthen it? This question is being asked in many places at the present time....

Our analysis must begin with a brief discussion of the nature of the

CNS PHOTO/JASON REED, REUTERS

American culture into which the Catholic faith might be inserted. This culture is extremely diverse. Catholics in the United States come not only from the various Western European countries already named, but some are American Indians, some are African Americans, some are Vietnamese or Filipinos, and very many are Spanish-speaking people from the Caribbean or Latin America. Thus we cannot easily find a common denominator.

Even the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant culture that has played a preponderant part in shaping the habits of the nation is not all of a piece. It has gone through a number of major shifts in the centuries since the first settlers came to New England and Virginia. Four major stages may here be pointed out:

1. The Puritanism of Congregationalist New England, which underlies much of our history, was anything but liberal. The Pilgrims looked upon the New World as a promised land where the covenant people could build the City of God. The culture of 17th-century Massachusetts was bound by a rigorous code of belief and morality founded upon the Bible as read in the Calvinist tradition. The church dominated civil society in Boston as firmly as it had done in Calvin's Geneva.

This Calvinist heritage has been, for the most part, cast off. And yet it remains a living memory. It fueled many 19th-century exhortations about the "Manifest Destiny" of the United States, and it continues to reappear in Thanksgiving Day proclamations, in campaign oratory and in anniversary celebrations of the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution....

2. By the time that the United States received its foundational documents (the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights), the Enlightenment was in full swing.

The common faith of the founding fathers was no longer that of the Pilgrims but that of Christians profoundly influenced by the deistic religion of "nature and of nature's God." The religion of reason was, however, understood with clearly Christian overtones, as

The culture that the church faces today cannot be understood as that of the previous three centuries.

can be seen from the Declaration of Independence. There and in other documents God was depicted as creator and ruler of all.... The law favored certain generically Christian institutions, such as monogamous, indissoluble marriage. Commitment to these traditional religious and moral values gave a transcendent basis to the claim that the country should be free and independent.

3. Certain elements in the Lockean philosophy of the founding fathers disposed the nation for a major incursion of individualistic utilitarian philosophy in the 19th century. The common good was reconceived as the net result of a balancing of contrary interests. The pursuit of private gain by individuals and groups was seen as contributing, in the long run, to the prosperity of all. The Puritan moralism of the 17th century, and the cult of civic virtue in the 18th century, now yielded to a system in which material wealth became the dominant value. The role of the government was seen as that of an arbiter, laying down the conditions under which competition could be fairly conducted. At its worst, this new mentality spawned a kind of social Darwinism. The great capitalists amassed fortunes for themselves, but, having done so, they were driven by their residual Puritan conscience to a pursuit of

philanthropy, no less arduous than their previous self-enrichment.

4. In the 20th century still another major shift has occurred. A new mass culture, largely determined by technological advances, is superimposing itself on the three layers already examined. The whole syndrome of contemporary culture is well described by the term "consumerism." Each individual is seen primarily as a consumer, and heavy consumption is viewed as the key to social well-being. Wealth becomes a function of sales, which are

increased to the extent that people can be induced to buy new goods. To provide such inducement business sponsors a gigantic advertising industry, which in turn supports and dominates journalism and mass communications. Advertising is funneled into programs that have the widest popular appeal. Nearly everything, from sports to education and religion, succeeds to the extent that it can arouse interest and provide entertainment. The desire for pleasure, comfort, humor and excitement is continually escalated. The traditional work ethic becomes tributary to, and is to some extent undermined by, the quest for affluence and sensory gratification. While the entertainment industries and business grow ever more fiercely competitive, alcoholism, drug abuse and obsessive sex proliferate in large sectors of the consumerist society.

This fourth layer of culture has not totally displaced the previous three, but it threatens to modify them profoundly. The culture that the church faces today cannot be understood as that of the previous three centuries, though some elements of the earlier American heritage still survive.

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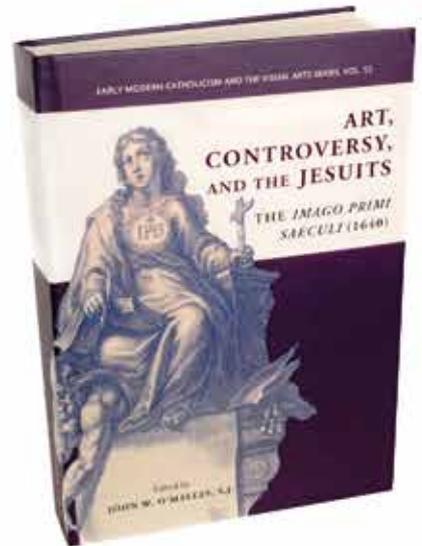
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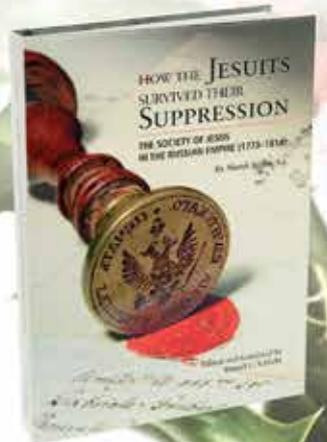


How the Jesuits Survived Their Suppression: The Society of Jesus in the Russian Empire (1773-1814)

by Marek Inglot, S.J., and edited and translated by Daniel L. Schlafly

The Society of Jesus almost vanished from the pages of history when Pope Clement XIV suppressed the Jesuits worldwide on July 21, 1773. This book tells the important, but little known, story of how Catherine the Great of Russia saved the Society almost singlehandedly. She protected the 201 Jesuits she had acquired in 1772 with the First Partition of Poland and insisted that they continue their apostolic work as Jesuits. For decades, her successors continued to support the Jesuits. The "Russian" Society was the only surviving Jesuit entity in the world after 1780, except for a few Jesuits in Quebec, where Governor James Murray and Bishop Jean-Olivier Briand refused to implement the brief of suppression. The "Russian" Society served as a beacon of hope for former Jesuits everywhere, made possible partial restorations outside the empire before 1814, and led directly to the general restoration of the Society in that year.

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or so, it is possible to detect four major strategies. For short they may be called traditionalism, neo-conservatism, liberalism and prophetic radicalism.

Traditionalism is the posture of those Catholics who are highly critical of what they find in the dominant American culture, and who wish to restore the more centralized and authoritarian Catholicism of the years before World War II.... The neo-conservative strategy rejects as unrealistic the restorationism of the paleoconservatives.... Not satisfied to concentrate on what the Catholic tradition can contribute to the American experiment, Catholic liberals are primarily intent on showing how Americanism can help to modernize the church. They propose to reform Catholicism along the lines of participatory democracy.... While calling for the total conversion of church and society, radical Catholics seek to legitimate their positions by invoking historical precedents, both religious and civil....

None of the four strategies, I submit, is simply wrong. The realities of American Catholicism and of American culture are complex and many-faceted. American life has aspects that we can praise with the neo-conservatives and the liberals, and other aspects that we must deplore with the traditionalists and the radicals.

Regarding the church, I would hold with the traditionalists and neo-conservatives that it is basically healthy and that we should let it shape our convictions and values. The first loyalty of the Catholic should be to the church as the Body of Christ. But the liberals are correct in holding that the church stands in reciprocal relations with secular culture. Roman Catholicism, as it has come down to us, has been significantly shaped by the social institutions of medieval and early modern Europe, and this very fact suggests that the church might have

something to learn from the American experiment of ordered liberty. Liberal Catholics and neo-conservatives alike insist that the Vatican II "Declaration on Religious Freedom" is due in part to the influence of the American system. Further influences of this kind might be beneficial to world Catholicism.

The radicals also have some valid points to make. The church, like secular society, is continually tempted to

Americanist Catholics easily forget the New Testament warnings against personal ambition and partisanship.

settle for mediocrity. To the extent that it has adopted the values and attitudes of middle-class America, the church deserves to be admonished by prophetic reformers. Repentance needs to be preached to those within the household of God.

Just as all four of the strategies have their strengths, so too, taken in isolation, they have weaknesses. Catholic traditionalism is on the whole too regressive. It looks nostalgically back to a past that can hardly be recovered. In its typically American expressions, moreover, traditionalism offers little guidance to Catholics who live amid the secular realities of our day. While adhering to the strictest canons of orthodoxy in their beliefs and personal morality, many affluent Catholic traditionalists want the church to say nothing about politics, economics, business or professional life. They effectively divorce their religious convictions from their day-to-day activities.

The neo-conservatives, with their patriotic attachment to the American heritage, are inclined to minimize the extent to which the tradition of public virtue has been eroded by the quest for private pleasure and material gain.

Intent upon maintaining civility in the orders of law and politics, they neglect the urgency of renewing the faith-commitment and devotional life of contemporary Americans. They could be understood as holding that some kind of generalized civil religion suffices and that personal commitment to a specific religious tradition is a purely private matter, even a matter of personal taste....

Liberal Catholicism, with its enthusiasm for participatory democratic models, runs the risk of introducing into the church the ideologies and interest groups that compete for power in civil society. Americanist Catholics easily forget the New Testament warnings against personal ambition and partisanship. In their zeal for updating, the liberals too easily assume that Catholicism can and should do away with its traditional structures, its reverence for the sacred, its docility to authority and its esteem for sacrifice, prayer and contemplation.

Finally the Catholic radicals, with their strident apocalyptic denunciations, cannot hope to play more than a marginal role in Catholicism, which is and must remain an essentially incarnational faith.... Sectarian militancy lacks the broad popular appeal needed for it to be effective in such a large and traditional institution.

The most fundamental question raised by the preceding discussion is whether the church in this country should become more countercultural, as the traditionalists and radicals would wish, or more accommodationist, as the liberals and some neo-conservatives propose. The tide since the Second Vatican Council has been running heavily toward accommodationism. Middle-aged adults constitute the last generation of Catholics raised with a strong sense of Catholic identity. Most younger Catholics look upon themselves first of all as Americans

and only secondarily as Catholics. Their culture has been predominantly formed by the secular press, films, television and rock music. Catholicism is filtered to them through these screens. Catholic schools are becoming less numerous and less distinctively Catholic. Catholic colleges and universities, while in some cases expanding, have lost much of their religious character. A certain vague religiosity perdures among the young, but it is that of "communal Catholics" not strongly committed to the doctrines and structures of their church.

Under these circumstances parents and teachers, fearful of being rejected as old-fashioned, are understandably reluctant to confront the young with the challenge of official church teaching, especially in the area of sexuality. Religious educators often feel powerless in the face of the sexual revolution and the passion for affluence that possesses their students. Bishops and pastors find it increasingly difficult to

shape the convictions and attitudes of the faithful. Apart from the issue of abortion, on which they are willing to risk a measure of unpopularity, the bishops increasingly shift their attention to social issues, adopting agendas that in many ways resemble those of the liberal intelligentsia, notably in their teaching on peace and on the economy. They seek to appeal to a broad public that includes non-Catholics, non-Christians, non-believers....

In Search of an Authentic Church

[T]he middle-class American values that have been accepted by most contemporary Catholics are not an authentic fulfillment of genuine Catholic aspirations. In this context the problem of accommodation takes on rather concrete implications. There can be no question of simply rejecting accommodation as a strategy. It has always been an honored principle of pastoral and missionary practice. The Christian message must be presented, insofar as pos-

sible, in forms that make it intelligible, credible, interesting and relevant to the hearers.

Vatican II, in its "Decree on Missionary Activity," recommended that the younger churches should borrow "from the customs and traditions of their arts and sciences...all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, the revelation of the Savior's grace or the proper arrangement of human life." Accommodation becomes a problem only when the hard sayings of the Gospel are watered down, and when immoral or dehumanizing practices are tolerated.

As I have said, there are healthy elements in American society. Liberals and neo-conservatives have good grounds for maintaining that the church in this nation will be stronger to the extent that it builds these elements into its own life and makes them available for the universal church. Our American traditions of freedom, personal initiative, open communication

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and active participation can undoubtedly be a resource for the renewal of Catholicism in an age when authoritarian structures, repression and conformity are in general disrepute.

On the other hand, it can be at least equally important to guard against the dangers of accommodation. To the degree that it adjusts to the dominant culture, the church has less to say. By simply echoing the prevailing opinions and values, the church undermines the credibility of its claim to present a divine message and weakens people's motivation for seeking membership. A church that no longer issues a clear call for conversion is only dubiously Christian. Traditional Catholicism has convictions and priorities very different from those embedded in contemporary American culture. The more thoroughly Catholics become inculturated in the American scene, the more alienated they become from their religious roots and the hierarchical authorities.

Accommodation, therefore, can

increase the crisis of identity felt by American Catholics. Because of all these factors there is reason to believe that the greatest danger facing the church in our country today is that of excessive and indiscreet accommodation. Catholics will be well advised to cultivate a measured, prudent counterculturalism....

Pope John Paul II, like Paul VI before him, has repeatedly called upon Catholics everywhere to evangelize their cultures. He recognizes that faith cannot survive without cultural embodiment, and that faith can have no home in a culture untouched by the Gospel. To carry out their assignment from these popes, Catholics must first of all become firmly rooted in their own religious tradition. They must, through their parishes, their families, prayer groups or basic ecclesial communities, find an environment in which they can interiorize their religious heritage. In this way they can prepare themselves to become agents in the evangelization of the secular culture. Such cultural evan-

gelization, in turn, may help to establish an atmosphere in which Catholic Christianity can be lived out more faithfully by greater numbers.

The neo-conservative program, more outgoing than that of the traditionalists, has its proper place in the Catholic agenda. Neo-conservatism, if it allows itself to be enriched by the sacramental piety and prayerful interiority of the traditionalists, has great potential for the evangelization of American culture. But these two strategies, even in combination, do not exhaust the possibilities. As I have already indicated, the Catholic Church stands to gain from a prudent introduction of certain American democratic values and practices as urged by the liberals. The neo-conservatives do not deny this, and traditionalists would be well advised to concede the point. Catholic radicalism, finally, serves as a needed gadfly. Both church and secular society need to be challenged by the radicals' call to higher standards of evangelical perfection.

In summary, the four strategies are not reciprocally exclusive. They can and should be pursued concurrently. Although American Catholics can disagree about the extent to which each strategy is appropriate at a given time and place, they should be on guard against mutual hostility and recrimination. Each group should respect the intentions of the others and humbly recognize its own limitations. The internecine struggles between opposed factions are a scandal and a waste of energies that could more profitably be devoted to the common mission of the church as a whole to minister to the salvation of the world. By generously recognizing the diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit, all can help to build up the body of Christ in unity and strength. Traditionalists and radicals, liberals and neo-conservatives, by their joint efforts, can enable the Catholic Church to enter into dynamic and fruitful relations with American culture in its full complexity. **A**

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A Church of Encounter

While countless millions across the globe are inspired by Pope Francis and cheer as he pushes ahead with the reform of the Roman Curia and renewal of the church, there is a minority within the Catholic community who do not like his ecclesiology. They do not like his vision of church or the kind of church he is building, and they are showing their dislike in various ways.

This became increasingly clear in connection with the two assemblies of the Synod of Bishops on the family, but the signs first appeared soon after his election. Some cardinals, bishops, priests and laypeople—mainly intellectuals and aristocrats—were upset when he decided to live at Santa Marta, rather than in the Apostolic Palace. They considered this a desacralizing or downsizing of the papacy. They and others too do not like the vision of the church he first presented in the interview in August 2013 with Antonio Spadaro S.J., that was published in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, *America* and other Jesuit publications around the world, and that he developed more fully in his programmatic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel” in November 2013.

Francis wants a church that is on mission, reaching out to others and accompanying them, especially those on the peripheries; a merciful church that is a field hospital for the many wounded of this world; a church that builds bridges, not walls. He wants a church that is poor and for the poor, one that rejects careerism; a church that is committed to encounter, inclusion and reconciliation, not one that is confrontational, self-referential or judgmental.

He wants a synodal church, in which the bishops and faithful people walk together and authority is understood as service.

There is internal opposition to Francis’ ecclesiology. It first surfaced in July 2013 after he made his famous comment, “Who am I to judge?” in relation to homosexuals. It gained momentum around the assembly in September 2014 of the Synod of Bishops on the family and struck with force at the assembly in 2015, when, among other things, 13 cardinals—including Cardinal Timothy Dolan and Cardinal Daniel di Nardo of the United States—sent the pope a letter challenging the integrity of the synod process he had approved. It hardened around the question of whether divorced and civilly remarried Catholics could, under certain circumstances, take Communion. It is now clear that this latter question is but one element, one might call it a symbol, of a much broader opposition to Francis’ understanding of the church.

Cardinal Donald Wuerl highlighted this in his interview with *America* (Oct. 18) when, commenting on the opposition to Pope Francis, he said: “I wonder if some of these people who are speaking, sometimes surreptitiously, sometimes halfway implying, then backing off and then twisting around, I wonder if it is really that they find they just don’t like this pope.”

He recalled that the pope “is calling for a church that, to my mind, is much more in contact with the Gospel, with the living out of the Gospel. Not just the articulation of the Gospel, the voicing of the Gospel, the proclaiming of the Gospel, but the personal living of it, and that seems to be what is the most attractive aspect of this pope, why so many people find him inviting, why so many people follow him, why so many people are coming back to the practice of the faith. And for reasons known only to them, there are some who find this somewhat threatening.”

Cardinal Wuerl is right. A minority of cardinals, bishops, priests, women and men religious and lay Catholics find Francis’ ecclesiology “somewhat threatening.” Some expressed their opposition at the synod; others in the Vatican are resisting his reform of the Roman Curia—as evidenced by the recent leaking of confidential documents regarding the Holy See’s finances—while more (mostly Curial cardinals) have challenged his reform of the annulment process. Then there are those, particularly in economic and political circles, who object to what Francis said in his encyclical “*Laudato Si*.”

Francis, who will be 79 in December, is in good health and appears to enjoy extraordinary inner peace. He is profoundly conscious that he was chosen by God to lead the church at this moment in history, so he is not fazed or deterred by such opposition. He is moving forward with determination to reform the Roman Curia and renew the church worldwide. He is planning foreign trips for 2016 and 2017 and will create new cardinals in June. Above all he is preparing to open the Jubilee Year of Mercy on Dec. 8.

Some find Pope Francis’ ecclesiology ‘somewhat threatening.’

GERARD O’CONNELL

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

Hallway to Heaven

Life's final steps at an in-home hospice

BY LINDA KINNAMON

Maria and Manuel had shrunk. As bodies usually do, theirs diminished with the passing years. Maria stood rod straight, just smaller, while Manuel stooped, first over a cane, then a walker. His once-tall frame was pulled down by gravity stronger than his spine. The only evidence of his previous height could be seen when he was stretched out in his blue recliner, as he frequently was. There he relaxed and napped, especially during soap operas, his daytime sleeping pill.

My entry point into the lives of this endearing couple was as Manuel's in-home hospice nurse. When Manuel became my patient, Maria had been his bride for over 50 years, and they had just celebrated her 80th birthday. Even though she was almost twice my age, I would get breathless watching her as I sat on their sofa finishing my paperwork. Manuel dozed on and off all day, but Maria pattered around the tiny house without a break. Dust bunnies feared her. Weeds avoided her flowerbeds. Throughout her chores, Maria sang the refrain, "We do not need to go to a nursing home."

Manuel knew the "we" in her song was really him and loved her even more. The idea of a nursing home didn't frighten him, but he told anyone who would listen that he felt blessed to be cared for so well and so

enthusiastically by his wife. As long as the house was perfect, she could proclaim no one could care for him like she did. He, however, admitted readily that he needed care as much as she needed to provide it.

Her self-imposed workload would have sapped anyone's strength. She managed to hide the signs of fatigue well from others, if not from him. Manuel knew her face much better than the one he glanced at in the mirror while shaving. He could measure the toll his care was taking on her by the shadows beneath her eyes and the slightly watered down smile she gave.

Manuel did not like to see how tired his little Maria was, but otherwise it wasn't so bad getting old, even dying. He had always felt he was a simple man, and what could be simpler than this? He certainly hadn't expected to live on this earth forever. When he was healthy, he had gone to Mass every Sunday and would have remembered if the priest had mentioned eternity on earth as an option. He believed in God and thought that God returned the favor. Death was just the next part of life. He talked sometimes about what he had done with his life and always said he wouldn't really change it. He mentioned heaven sometimes, too, but always said he would just have to wait until he got there to check it out. The only thing Manuel feared was the next step, the literal next step.

The Enemy Within

When his walking became tottering, resembling the gait of their newest great-grandchild, Manuel accepted a

cane. Other grandfathers had them, and at first it seemed more of an accessory than a necessity. Walking down the hall between the bathroom or bedroom and living room with a cane in one hand and the wall on the other side was comfortable for a while. Then one day his knees gave way, and there was just nothing in the hallway to hold onto. Clawing at air, he went down. It happened in a split second that lasted forever. Manuel anticipated the crunch of his bones breaking, as he heard Maria scream. As suddenly as it had started, the downward momentum stopped. He heard the thud of his body hitting the floor. He felt only carpet and gratitude. Looking up into Maria's fear, his heart pounding, he managed to say, "I'm okay."

Maria called hospice for help, not 911. Paramedics had ambulances that could snatch people away from their homes. Hospice didn't. One of the evening nurses checked Manuel out and determined he had been humbled but not seriously injured. The next day when I was back on duty, I stopped in for a visit. Reassuring Maria was at the top on my list, closely followed by ordering a walker for Manuel. With his pride and his joints still aching from the fall, he gladly traded the cane for a walker. Like the cane, it sufficed for a while.

All too soon, however, pulling his weight up from the recliner to his walker became like lifting another man along with himself. It had once been feather light to give two or three of the kids a piggyback ride at the same time. Now, even though he was a frac-

LINDA KINNAMON is a registered nurse and author. Her memoir, *Alchemy of the Afterlife*, based on her childhood as an orphan and her adult experiences as a hospice nurse, has just been published.

tion of his former weight according to the scales, pulling that weight from the recliner to the walker was like pulling a truck forward with the emergency brake on. Grabbing the walker, he would heave forward, only to fall back into the recliner a few times in failed attempts. While he tried, Maria would be tugging on whatever part of him she could reach, saying, "You've got to get up Manuel. I can't do this for you."

He couldn't recall Maria saying those words about anything else. She never said she couldn't do anything. With strength he didn't know he still had, he would once again stand up.

"Manuel," I asked on one of those rare occasions when Maria was not hovering nearby. "What was more frightening? Fighting in the South Pacific during World War II or walking down your hallway from the bedroom this morning?"

Without hesitation, he answered. "This hallway, no doubt about it. You see, in war the enemy is out there," he said, waving a gnarled finger around in the air. "Now, the enemy is in here."

He was patting his chest with his hand, his meaning clear. The enemy was age and cancer and weakness. There was no reprieve from any of them. Like a soldier, he struggled to drag one foot in front of the other, the enemy within more deadly than any threat posed by a foreign power. He had to keep walking. Maria needed him to do it. The fear of placement in a nursing home, the loss of their perceived independence was everything to her, as it is to most of us. Manuel was past that. His courage was born of love for her.

The day the enemy claimed Manuel's ability to walk, I wrapped Maria in my arms, while I ordered a hospital bed and requested around-the-clock hospice staff. Then I told them both what I always tell patients and families. As the body gets weaker, the spirit gets stronger. Manuel proved this theory by letting go. He did not want to burden his Maria.



Down the Hall

The funeral was simple, just like the man it celebrated. Mass was held in the church he and Maria had attended for years. The pews were filled to capacity with family and friends, the crowd resembling that of an Easter Mass rather than the funeral of an octogenarian. After Mass, invited by the family, I returned back home with them. Even with the large family filling every space, the small house felt empty without Manuel. In spite of the limited standing room and lack of seating, his blue recliner went unclaimed.

As we ate and talked and talked and ate, the mood lifted. Everyone had a favorite story to tell about Manuel. While we laughed and sometimes cried over the stories, one of the youngest great-grandsons demanded attention. Grabbing first one adult's sleeve, then another, he persisted in his attempt to be heard.

"I just saw Grandpa Manuel," he said to anyone who would listen.

"Yes, we saw him at the funeral," or "Sure, honey," was the repeated and condescending reply.

Not easily silenced, he continued to try to get the attention of the adults, tugging on anyone within reach. At last he caused enough disruption to stop the conversation. Unwilling to discipline a child after his great-grandfather's funeral, his mother simply said, "What is it?"

Looking up at each of the grown-ups, verifying he had our undivided attention, he pointed one little finger down the hall Manuel had bravely navigated so many times in the past year. Then he said, "I just saw Grandpa Manuel in his bedroom, only a minute ago. And he can walk all by himself! And he's smiling!"

No more canes. No more walkers. No more suffering. Manuel was simply walking in heaven, and smiling. 

FILM | JIM McDERMOTT

A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

Mercy, sin and 'Star Wars'

I am not sure any movie has ever had a more shocking ending for me than “The Empire Strikes Back,” part two of the original “Star Wars” trilogy. In it, hero Luke Skywalker has his hand cut off by asthmatic mass murderer Darth Vader, who then says he is Luke’s father. Meanwhile, our other hero, Han Solo, is flash frozen in carbonite and spirited away, perhaps forever. The End.

I was ten years old when “Empire” came out, and I hated it. How was I expected to wait three years to find out what happened? But today “Empire” is by far my favorite “Star Wars” film. (I’m middle aged; of course I like things that conclude in tragedy and loose ends.) But it is the series as a whole that keeps me coming back, and will continue to

with the upcoming Episode VII “The Force Awakens.” Within its fanciful stories of wars in distant, long-ago galaxies I still find lessons of faith, sin and redemption.

Eyes Wide Shut

There is a passing moment halfway through the original “Star Wars” in which Luke is trying to learn how to “feel the Force,” the energy that binds all living things together. And he is having absolutely no luck. Then his mentor Ben Kenobi tells him to put down his helmet’s blast shield, which renders Luke unable to see anything. Not exactly the smartest strategy when you’re trying to keep from getting shot. Of course it works. With the blast shield down, Luke becomes more

able to feel the Force and react.

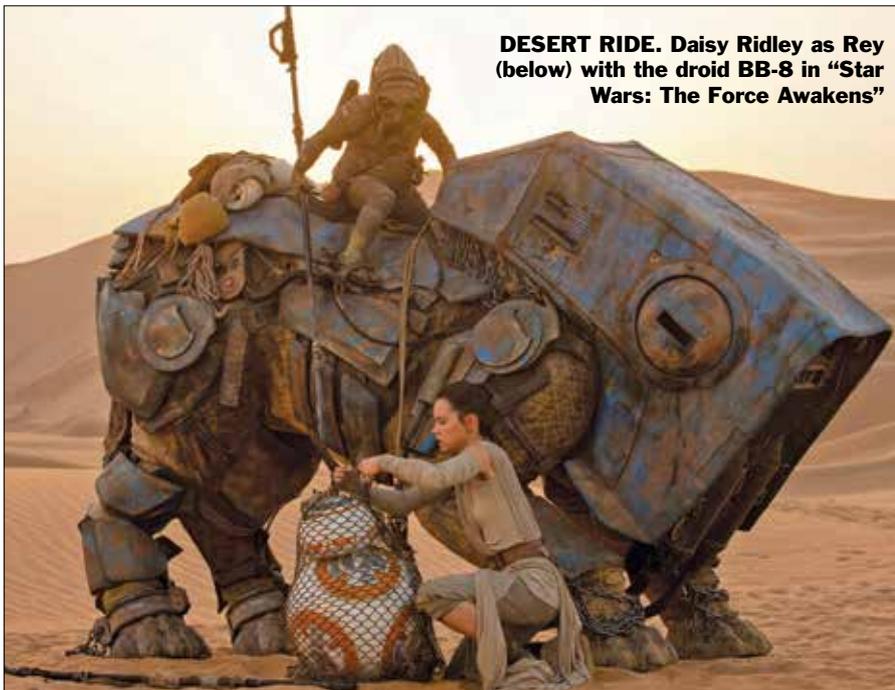
The point of this tale is one that all six “Star Wars” films return to again and again: our senses can be a great distraction. The world around us constantly demands our attention. Figuring out how to proceed amidst its many demands requires us from time to time to step back and listen instead for what is going on underneath. It is counterintuitive, but it’s true.

Most fans of the original “Star Wars” trilogy would just as rather we forgot there had ever been a second. Set 30 years earlier, Episodes I through III are a cacophonous mess of C.G.I. and tin-eared dialogue. But the movie poster for Episode I has always fascinated me. A little boy with a backpack walks away from us through a desert. He appears totally ordinary, but his shadow is that of the man he will become Darth Vader.

How does a person “go bad”? It is another fundamental question of the “Star Wars” saga. The answer is pretty simple: We become afraid. Yoda offers a sort of mathematical formula: “Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.”

But in “Star Wars,” as in life, fear is also unavoidable. All that we can control is our reaction to it. Sin is not being afraid, or angry or desperate; it is what we do as a result of feeling that way. It is how we try and end our discomfort. In “Empire,” Luke repeatedly gives up on training exercises because they are painful. In the prequel trilogy Anakin murders a whole village to try to alleviate the grief he feels over the death of his mother. Later he goes full Darth because he cannot stand the thought that his wife might die.

There are so many insightful definitions of sin; many of them circle some kind of selfishness, what theologian



DESERT RIDE. Daisy Ridley as Rey (below) with the droid BB-8 in “Star Wars: The Force Awakens”



James Keenan, S.J., calls “a failure to bother to love.” For me, the reminder of “Star Wars” is how sin can also be a reaction to desperation. It is the stuff we are willing to do when we’re trying to stop being in pain.

‘I Know There Is Good in You’

Luke’s mentors, Ben Kenobi and Yoda, are classic wisdom figures—they teach Luke how to do cool stuff like levitate objects and fight with laser swords. But more than that they teach him about being a human being—how acting out of rage or fear will almost certainly get you into trouble; that oftentimes the greatest obstacle to doing good is your own refusal to accept that it is possible, and that the monster you most fear is almost certainly yourself.

But as wise as they are presented, on the most important point of all, Kenobi and Yoda are absolutely wrong. For them, Darth Vader is an enemy to be destroyed. Their long friendship with him has been wiped away by all

the horrible things that he has done. There is nothing now but an evil that must be eradicated, they say. But Luke refuses to go down that road. Indeed, not only will he not kill his father, he will not believe that Vader cannot be brought back into the light.

Our society tends to think of mercy in sweet terms: a Hallmark card, Jesus surrounded by lambs and/or children. What I love about “Star Wars” is how it insists that real mercy is an act of radical defiance. It is a choice that goes against the grain, that doesn’t make a lot of sense, can even appear gratuitous or downright dangerous. And at the same time, mercy is the path by which the hero becomes his fullest self. In the case of Luke, what finally makes him a Jedi Knight is not the battles he wins, but the fact that instead of pursuing his cause he chooses to try and save Vader from himself.

When first we encounter the black visage of Darth Vader, it is a mask meant to terrify us, an emblem along

with his wheezy mechanized breathing of Vader’s fundamental inhumanity. But over the course of the original “Star Wars” films we discover that Vader’s armor is not a mask as much as it is a prison. It is the life-support system that hides the horrific scars of his own actions. And that’s the nature of sin: It is a prison that we build for ourselves and that, ultimately, we don’t know how to escape. Indeed, we may not think we deserve to. As Vader tells Luke at the end of “Return of the Jedi,” “It’s too late for me, son.”

But the enduring message of “Star Wars,” a fitting insight as we begin the Year of Mercy, is that in fact it is never too late, that there is still good inside all of us, no matter what we have done. We need only close our eyes, close out those distractions and take the hand that is extended to us.

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THE MYSTIC FROM MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS

It's hard to imagine a life more beautiful and strange than that of Robert Lax. Readers familiar with Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain* will remember Lax as Merton's friend and fellow convert to Catholicism. The two met as students at Columbia University, where both underwent a religious transformation (though Lax would not act on his until after graduation) and remained friends for the rest of their lives. After Merton entered the Trappists, they kept their friendship alive through the exchange of letters—decades' worth of witty, poignant, hilarious correspondence that reveals the intimacy of their relationship, based in their shared love of the written word and their shared journey of faith.

Nov. 30 is the 100th anniversary of Robert Lax's birth, and it seems fitting that his centenary is marked by the publication of a delightful new biography, *Pure Act: The Uncommon Life of Robert Lax*, by Michael N. McGregor. To read McGregor's book is to learn that Lax was a searcher and a mystic, a poet with a profound love of life and almost instinctive ability to find God in all things. Growing up in a largely non-practicing Jewish family, Lax was free to explore the variety of religious traditions available to him in New York, and finally found a home in the Catholic Church, though Lax's lived experience of Catholicism would prove to be like no one else's.

One also learns the wild and wonderful trajectory of Lax's life—his unhappy first job with *The New Yorker*, his brief stint as a film reviewer for *Time* and an even briefer one as a Hollywood screenwriter, and, most no-

tably, his month-long adventure with a traveling circus and the deep friendship he developed with a family of acrobats, the Cristianis, who would shape his view of holiness, community, and beauty for the remainder of his life. We learn of the gradual pull he felt eastward, toward Greek culture and the Greek islands, where he eventually settled and lived his life in silence and meditation as a poet, a philosopher and a spiritual mentor to pilgrims who came from near and far to make his acquaintance.

Among those pilgrims was young Michael McGregor. His first meeting with Lax in 1985 led to a friendship that would flourish until Lax's death in the year 2000. Given the length and closeness of that relationship, it comes as no surprise that McGregor's book is no ordinary biography. It is a shared narrative—one that faithfully traces Lax's life in all of its fascinating detail—but also one that traces the development of the biographer as he comes to understand this brilliant, complex, holy man. In a sense, we as readers accompany McGregor on that journey, as his path of discovery mirrors our own. With him as our narrator and guide, we move along that road as fellow pilgrims. I never had the chance to visit Robert Lax on the island of Patmos, but somehow, in reading this book, I feel as if I have.

The occasion of a centenary is a hopeful enterprise. It gives us the opportunity to look back, but it also inspires us to look forward, inviting us to

re-evaluate not only the life but also the work that lives beyond the artist. Just as he was an extraordinary man, Robert Lax was an extraordinary poet. There is nothing conventional or predictable about his poems. Their subjects are by turns visionary and ordinary, celebrating the apocalypse of the everyday.

The later poems are spare and strange; their stripped down simplicity engages sound and sense and sight, inviting the reader to see and hear the world anew and to revel in the wonder of the word. The joy in Lax's poetry embodies his own interior joy and his discovery of it, almost everywhere, in the exterior world.

There is joy in Lax's life and joy in Lax's work—and that same joy pervades *Pure Act*. Michael McGregor's book memorializes the most memorable of

Robert
Lax's lived
experience
of Catholicism
would prove
to be
unique.



men, not only in terms of its content, which is faithful to fact, but also in terms of its spirit. It is appropriate that we celebrate this strange and beautiful life in November, the month of All Saints. Among the most famous stories about Lax is the one Merton recorded in *The Seven Storey Mountain*. Lax queries Merton, just after his baptism, "What do you want to be?" Taken off guard, Merton replies, "I don't know; I guess what I want is to be a good Catholic." But Lax immediately corrects him: "What you should say is that you want to be a saint!" With these wise words, Robert Lax expressed the true vocation of every Catholic as well as the goal he sought—and arguably achieved—in living out his own, uncommon life.

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POINTS OF FAITH

WHAT ARE WE DOING ON EARTH FOR CHRIST'S SAKE?

By Richard Leonard, S.J.
Paulist Press. 157p \$14.95

A BIOGRAPHY OF THE SPIRIT

By John Haughey
Orbis. 224p \$25

Almost all of us have found ourselves in a debate over belief, faced with the decision to defend our convictions against criticism. The media will often portray religious disagreements as “wars” between the believers and non-believers. In a time when it can feel like U.S. culture is becoming more divided over religion and politics, it can be appealing to retreat into a safe group of like-minded people and rely on the arguments we have been using for years to assure ourselves we are in the “right.”

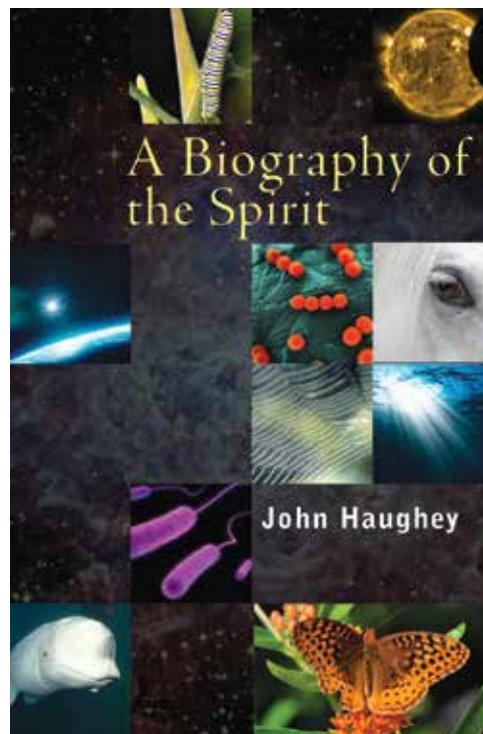
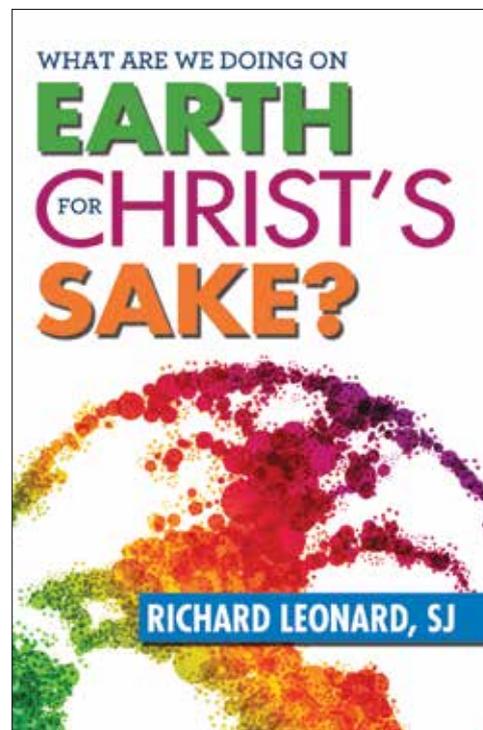
Richard Leonard’s *What are We Doing on Earth for Christ’s Sake?* and John C. Haughey’s *A Biography of the Spirit* go beyond defending belief to exploring whether there should be more to our current understanding of faith and God—an exploration that can be uncomfortable in its uncertainty. Be sure to have pen and paper handy for note taking and maybe a dictionary, as these authors will not let the reader off the hook with simple explanations. And that is precisely why they are so important.

The premise of Leonard’s *What are we doing on Earth for Christ’s Sake?* comes from a conversation he had on a flight from New York City to Los Angeles with a fellow passenger and Catholic, Thomas. Leonard says he typically encounters one of five types of airplane seatmates: those unhappy with their Catholic school upbringing, those who believe religion is nonsense and fantastical, conservative Catholics,

evangelical Christians and those scandalized by the clergy sexual abuse crisis. Conversations ensue. Many of us can empathize with the anecdotes of talkative travelers, and by couching his discussions in this context, Leonard’s text is easy to digest—we can imagine we are debating some issues with our own friends or acquaintances (or fellow passengers). With a background in cinema and having written extensively on faith and culture, Leonard speaks to the reader in a way that is understandable, humorous and joyful—a must-read for those wanting a few well-researched defenses of the belief in God.

Leonard’s book is divided into three parts: a chapter on belief and non-belief, a chapter answering common questions posed to believers and a final chapter about some of the church’s greatest role models. Never before have I been so excited to read a Table of Contents. After telling believers and non-believers in the first chapter to keep their cool and always be respectful, Leonard gets into some of the most obvious but pressing debate topics between believers and non-believers: “Isn’t Religion the Cause of Most Wars?” “Is the Bible True?” and “Why Follow any Religion’s Moral Code? Why Not Simply Follow Your Own Moral Code” to name just a few of the questions posed.

The common questions about the belief in God and the church are just that: common. We have heard most of them many times. Admittedly, I expected common answers, and I was pleasantly surprised and impressed by the usefulness of Leonard’s research. Some of the tough questions are left with incomplete answers, though,



especially those regarding the clergy sex abuse scandal and how we can maintain our faith when some of our leaders have betrayed the trust of the church’s followers. This topic deserves more attention than Leonard was able to give it in this text.

For Leonard, it seems love in action is at the heart of belief. If we can support our belief in God with sound arguments, then what are we doing with that belief? The final third of the book is dedicated to “Witnesses of Faith, Hope, and Love”—a series of mini-biographies on some of the church’s

greatest examples of love in action: St. Thomas More, Blessed Teresa, Oscar Romero and Pope Francis, among others. All 13 of the witnesses are worth reading. Even the most familiar characters held something new to be discovered by Leonard’s description of them. Many witnesses had doubts,

made mistakes and came to reflect on their lives. Reflection allows one “to discern the patterns that lead us to be more hopeful, faithful, and loving... This means constantly assessing the what, and why, of our decisions.” What are we doing on Earth for Christ’s sake?

I’m glad I read Leonard’s book before Haughey’s, as I found it all that much more providential when the passenger next to me on a flight from Washington, D.C., to Salt Lake City spied the title *A Biography of the Spirit* and began talking to me about Catholic doctrine, Catholic school education and the Holy Spirit. Thanks for the heads-up, Richard.

Leonard reminded us that religions evolve and theologians interpret texts in light of contemporary scholars’ knowledge. Haughey does just that in his wonderfully image-filled *A Biography of the Spirit*. He profiles the Holy Spirit while armed with the knowledge of physics, biology and neurology of today. The result is an intelligent and inspiring book written in the form of a diary. The brief entries broken up by date force the reader to pause, even just for a few moments, and reflect. Haughey’s book is certainly not a “beach read”—it’s quite the opposite of light and fluffy—but you should definitely read it while in the midst of nature. Haughey’s descriptions of both the microscopic organisms and unquantifiable expanses of the universe will enhance your observation of the world around you.

Simply put, Haughey sets out to write a biography of the Holy Spirit with supportive examples from scientific discoveries. Religion and science should not be opposed or even exclusive. Rather, “both science and religion have much to teach each other. Neither, of course, will learn from one another if the practitioners don’t believe each has something important to say.” We cannot ignore scientific breakthroughs; they should inform and inspire theo-

TO PURGATORY

*We kiss the person we love last thing before
the coffin is shut*

—Jack Gilbert

You lean across the coffin’s gunwale to kiss
your father before the rower launches into
that long, last voyage to purgatory, while we,
survivors, walk and drive onto streets of dailyness,
having forgotten that around some corner
we encounter angels disguised as lilies breathing
light and color enough to lift this meager yard
of earth above itself, and the eyes well-up
with knowing the sad joy of temporal beauty,
of belief that beneath the skin a soul longs
for release from the body’s salt into permanence,
and once more I watch the rosy flesh of your lips
lightly, as if something could break, brush-touch
the blue underflesh of your father’s bloodless
mouth, and then I envision us years hence as I rest
in my coffin and your drawn face inches closer,
closer, lips quivering, this final physicality fading, fading.

GARY METRAS

GARY METRAS is a retired educator whose poems have appeared in *Gray’s Sporting Journal*, *Poetry* and other periodicals. His newest book of poems is *The Moon in the Pool* (Presa Press, 2015).

logical exploration. “[St.] Augustine’s belief was that our knowledge of God increases if our knowledge of nature increases. And since the natural sciences are learning more and more about nature, we have the opportunity of knowing more about nature’s Author.”

Haughey presents the Spirit as the Great Connector. The Spirit helps us make wholes from parts, It “makes new meaning about what otherwise wouldn’t have meaning.” Haughey gives numerous examples of the interconnectedness of the universe, Earth and the human body. For example, within ourselves, the “brain has nine regions in it...connected by 100,000 miles of nerve fibers...[and] gray matter is made up of our 86 billion neurons, each of which is distinctive, individualistic...yet does a similar thing.” Haughey goes into further detail about how pneumatology can be a source of insight for neuroscience—how religion and science can learn from each other.

In one entry, Haughey cites Nobel Prize-winning physicist Steven Weinberg in his discussion of aspects of physics that are today unexplainable, and may never be explained. Weinberg points to two notions: dark matter and the expansion of the universe. Scientists are making wholes from parts—forming hypotheses to explain what is otherwise unexplainable. The

hypotheses cannot be tested, though. They are “asserted because they are needed to complete the understanding of what is empirically verifiable.” Haughey argues that perhaps pneumatology can shed some light on this dark matter. Together, science and religion can work toward uncovering truth—the same truth.

For those who may criticize Haughey’s theology, he does not have all the answers, but he does have some good questions. And, as he says, how can that be displeasing to God? “It can’t displease the One who made us tower builders that new towers of meaning keep getting constructed,” he writes.

Haughey’s book is exciting! It offers new insight into the Spirit and nature. As I can say for all my Jesuit educators, Haughey teaches more than theology. He offers an interdisciplinary discussion, using our experiences of nature, human history and scientific theories to advance the study of the Spirit. Having written this well-informed biography, Haughey certainly has an answer to “what is he doing on Earth for Christ’s sake?” What a lucky passenger whoever will be seated next to him on his next flight.

ELIZABETH WEBB, a graduate of Saint Peter’s University in Jersey City, N.J., is a senior intelligence analyst at iJet International in Annapolis, Md.

became a priest in the 1950s, when the American church was at peace with itself, unified and riding high.

In *Navy Priest*, Richard Gribble, C.S.C., gives us John Francis Laboon, Jr. (1921-1988): World War II submariner, Jesuit, educator, chaplain, career Naval officer, retreat master and parish pastor. Laboon was, as one observer put it, “a man of peace who entered the profession of warriors to keep the peace.”

Fr. Gribble repeatedly thrusts Laboon’s life into exhaustive historical context. In doing so he gives us not only Laboon’s life, but his times. And by extension, he gives us an exercise in contrast against our own time and the lives that populate it. America doesn’t seem capable of making Jake Laboons anymore.

Fr. Gribble takes the reader through the story of Pittsburgh, the Great Depression and World War II. He tells you more than a non-Navy person probably wants to know about life at the U.S. Naval Academy in the early 1940s. He walks you through the changing role and ultimate triumph of American Catholicism in the post-World War II years—and into the post-Vatican II disintegration of that triumph. He continues through the deepening disillusionment of the Vietnam years. He wraps up in the 1980s, when Laboon ran afoul of the archbishop of Baltimore because he supported his old friend Oliver North from the pulpit.

The only thing that remains solid through it all is Laboon himself. And one gets the sense that Laboon was such a rock because of the sturdy Catholic stuff of which he was made. Being a good Navy man didn’t hurt either.

Along the way, Fr. Laboon makes interesting friends, including North, whose life he helped to save in Vietnam; the future Sen. Jim Webb, recent presidential candidate; and Adm. Mike Mullen, recent chairman

PETER REICHARD

DEEP CATHOLIC WATERS

NAVY PRIEST

The Life of

Captain Jake Laboon, S.J.

By Richard Gribble, C.S.C.

The Catholic University of America Press.
376p \$29.95

Navy Priest is, in a sense, the story of a certain type of American who seems to have died with the 20th century.

Capt. Jake Laboon, S.J., grew up in

Pittsburgh in the 1920s and 1930s. Swimming in deep Catholic waters that have since receded, he and four of his siblings went on to religious life.

Laboon was six-and-a-half feet tall, a remarkable athlete, a serenely affable, Newmanesque Christian gentleman. He was a war hero at a time when that still impressed everyone. He became a Naval officer at a time when it conferred universal respect. And he

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

One thing you get clear in *Navy Priest* is that Jake Laboon was a fine, dignified example of humanity. The book contains countless, almost monotonous quotations from Laboon's contemporaries to that effect. One finds the quotations to be out of proportion to anecdotes that actually illustrate who Laboon was. As a result, the reader feels at times that Gribble is telling about Laboon, but not showing him.

There is scarcely a shred of evidence in the book that Laboon was anything less than a prince among men. While evidently true, this makes his biography a challenge. How do you find dramatic tension in the story of a man about whom no one has a harsh word to say?

Unless the reader is a Navy veteran, some of the warrens Fr. Gribble explores might be excruciating. Fr. Gribble probably didn't need to provide

a rundown of the subjects Laboon took in high school, the grades he got at the Naval Academy or the dimensions of the vessels on which he was stationed.

In fact, in the early going, Fr. Gribble gets so lost in detail, he does little to communicate to the reader just why he should care about Jake Laboon. But in addressing Laboon's later years, Fr. Gribble gives us more to chew on. Presumably, this is in part because he has more extant material to work with.

At war in Vietnam, Laboon stated on the one hand that by his presence as chaplain he was not "approving or disapproving" the war—that "I am here because these young Marines need me." On the other hand, he said that "I re-

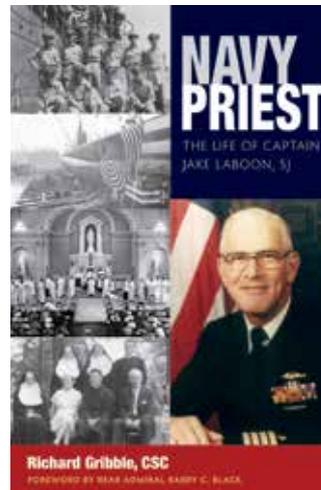
alized that it was there that America must stem the spread of communism." In 1969, Laboon lamented the lack of support for the soldiers: "This is what hurts the troops so much. ... most Americans would consider them fools for being involved" in the war.

One can easily imagine how Laboon would have felt about the Pax Christi protesters who disrupted his friend Cardinal John O'Connor as O'Connor presided over the launching of the U.S.S.

Laboon in 1993. A protester took over the podium, saying it was inappropriate for a warship to be named after a priest.

Here and there, Fr. Gribble squirrels away in the footnotes some compelling details about Laboon. For instance, in footnotes you learn that Padre Pio had prophesied to Jake's father that Jake would become a priest. You find Laboon in a foxhole with Marines in Vietnam, under heavy fire, calmly lighting a cigar. You see a baseball game in which a Marine intentionally ran into Laboon at first base, with Laboon about to slug the Marine before being reminded he was a priest. You watch Laboon yelling at the umpire from the stands during a Navy baseball game because, as Laboon explained, "You have to keep them honest." You see Laboon telling a Navy woman that their planned service aboard ships would "ruin" the Navy. You also find an admiral complimenting Jake by way of a swipe at the Jesuits: "Jesuits are very prone to offer their opinions on many things. Few, however, have the experience to back up those opinions as did Jake."

In its totality, *Navy Priest* portrays a man who lived for God and country, a humble example to all around him—whether Catholic or not—but



Jesuit Journeys

Spiritual Journeys for Lovers of All Things Ignatian



<p>Loyola & Beyond: An Ignatian Journey to Spain</p> <p>With Fr. David Robinson, SJ & Mr. Carlos Obando</p> <p>Hosted by Loyola Institute for Spirituality, Orange, California</p> <p>12-Days: May 18 - 29, 2016</p>	<p>A Journey into the Heart & Soul of Ireland</p> <p>With Fr. Sam Bellino SJ & Fr. John Mossi, SJ</p> <p>Hosted by California & Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus</p> <p>12-Days: Sept 18 - 29, 2016</p>
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one who was not afraid to hold those around him to a high moral standard. As Laboon once put it to a group of officers, "The day you were sworn in as midshipmen...that was the moment you died to yourself."

What a foreign notion that seems to-

day, in an indulgent age that prizes self ever farther above self-sacrifice. What a long distance we have come since the era that gave rise to Jake Laboon.

But that's precisely why *Navy Priest* is worth marinating in for a few hundred pages. Amidst all the superlatives

about Fr. Laboon and his legacy, one encounters a coherent way of living that gives the 21st-century reader an antidote to the current zeitgeist.

PETER REICHARD is a writer and researcher living in New Orleans.

CLASSIFIED

Positions

HUMAN THREAD CAMPAIGN MANAGER

with community organizing experience to further develop and launch a campaign to raise consciousness and empower Catholics to advocate for the plight of garment workers worldwide. Position responsible for all campaign activities from the pilot (preferably in Archdioceses of Chicago and Milwaukee) to national scaling phase. Duties include planning and implementing action strategies with parish and student leaders, producing public outreach and educational materials, and utilizing social media platforms to engage, inform and drive campaign efforts. Visit www.humanthread-campaign.org. For job description, contact Rev. Michael Crosby: (414) 406.1265.

PRINCIPAL. Xaverian Brothers High School in Westwood, Mass., (www.xbhs.com) educating young men in grades 7-12, is seeking a dynamic leader to serve as Principal beginning July 1, 2016. Sponsored by the Xaverian Brothers, Xaverian enjoys an outstanding reputation. The new Principal will replace the current Principal, who is retiring after 25 years of extraordinary leadership. The Principal is appointed by the Headmaster, with the approval of the Board of Trustees. Xaverian seeks a proven leader, with 3 to 5 years of administrative experience, holding an advanced degree, a relationship builder, a skillful communicator and a practicing Catholic. Candidates should submit a letter

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RADIO
Martin Doblmeier talks about his PBS documentary "Chaplains" on "America This Week" on The Catholic Channel on SiriusXM.

FROM OUR BLOGS

Watching 'Spotlight' as a Young Priest, Sam Sawyer, S.J.

A Conversation with Sister Simone Campbell, Judith Valente

Osama Bin Laden's Ghost Lurks
Raymond A. Schroth, S.J.

WHAT YOU'RE READING

The Big Dig, Maurice Timothy Reidy

Vatican Arrests Spanish Monsignor and Italian Woman for Leaking Confidential Information

Jesus's Teachings on Marriage and Divorce, John W. Martens

Pope Baptizes the Son of His Friend, the 'Waste-Pickers' Leader from Buenos Aires, Gerard O'Connell

Gospel for the Middle Class
Stephanie Pacheco

WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT:

"Telling people who worry that they shouldn't, just to trust God, can just add a layer of guilt on top of the worries."
—SANDI SINOR, "ANXIETY AND SANCTITY"

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America (ISSN 0002-7049) is published weekly (except for 13 combined issues: Jan. 5-12, 19-26, April 13-20, May 25-June 1, June 8-15, 22-29, July 6-13, 20-27, Aug. 3-10, 17-24, Aug. 31-Sept. 7, Dec. 7-14, 21-28) 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 \$69 per year; add U.S. \$30 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. \$69 per year for international priority airmail. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, P.O. Box 293159, Kettering, OH 45429.



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Preparing the People of God

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (C), DEC. 6, 2015

Readings: Bar 5:1-9; Ps 126:1-6; Phil 1:4-11; Lk 3:1-6

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Lk 3:4)

Preparation for the coming of the Lord is not simply an individual task, though it incorporates personal holiness and love, but there is most prominently an ecclesial dimension, in which the whole people of God await Christ’s *parousia* so that they might return home to the Promised Land, the kingdom of God. To prepare, we wait for what God will do for us and we act to make God known to the world around us.

The text of Baruch, set in the return from the Babylonian exile, presents Israel on a pilgrimage home directed by God. The prophet speaks for God (5:5) and says:

*Led away on foot by their enemies they left you;
but God will bring them back to you carried high in glory as on royal thrones.*

God shines forth in the people of God, who, Baruch says, wear “the cloak of justice” and “the mitre that displays the glory of the eternal name.”

John the Baptist presents for us the task of the people of God in response to the coming of the Messiah and the eschatological pilgrimage. John began to tell the people to prepare with “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” As with Baruch, John presents an image of the mountains and valleys being made flat and smooth as a sign of Israel’s repentance and moral transformation. This moral leveling allows

Israel to “walk safely in the glory of God” and also allows “all flesh” to see God’s salvation.

For John’s public proclamation of preparation for the coming of the Lord has not just a corporate dimension for the people of God, but a universal dimension, in which all humanity is being prepared for the coming of God’s Messiah. When John shouts out, “Prepare the way of the Lord,” it is a corporate command, an imperative verb in the second person plural: “You all prepare the way of the Lord!” This is not just the work of a prophet specially chosen, but a means by which all the people can witness to the glory of God’s coming.

It is in the people of God that God’s splendor and righteousness should be seen, that the preparation for God’s presence is made manifest. Paul thanks the Philippians for “sharing in the Gospel from the first day until now” and stresses that there is work the church must do and that God will perfect. As with Israel being brought back by God from exile, Paul says that “the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.” God will make us ready for the eschatological pilgrimage, but Paul encourages the Philippians, and us, in our own role in this preparation.

Paul tells the church that his prayer for them is that “your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight.”

This is a remarkable prayer, though

simple in many ways. Paul, like John the Baptist and Baruch, is speaking to the whole people of God, for “your” is plural; it is “the love (*agapê*) of you all,” and it is love that must be shown as a body and as individuals. Equally fascinating is how Paul connects self-sacrificial love to knowledge (*epignôsis*) and insight (*aisthêsis*). “Knowledge” (*epignôsis*) of this sort is often understood in the Greek sense as knowledge of divine things, connected to intellectual perception, while “insight” (*aisthêsis*) was understood by Stoic philosophers as



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How is your church community preparing for the coming of Christ? How does your love overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight? How might your community help others prepare for the pilgrimage?

arising from experience or the physical processes responsible for sense-perception. Love, that is, is not simply emotions running wild but is grounded in our knowledge of the truth of God and of the world around us.

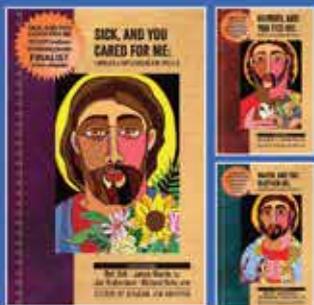
Our work in preparation for the coming of God, Paul says, is to increase in love as the people of God, “to determine what is best so that in the day of Christ you [plural] may be pure and blameless.” And this preparation of love is so that we might direct all to their true home, to be ready at the coming of Jesus Christ, to join with them on the pilgrimage to the kingdom of God.

JOHN W. MARTENS

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

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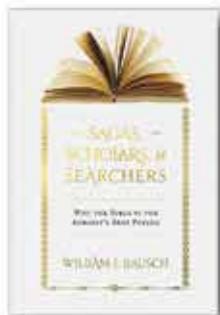
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