

America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

DEC. 23-30, 2013 \$3.50

A Home for Christmas

THE EDITORS



**PLUS: REACTIONS TO
MANDELA'S DEATH**

OF MANY THINGS

In the Nativity, St. Athanasius once wrote, “mankind’s body truly acquired something great through its communion and union with the Word. From being mortal it has been made immortal; though it was a living body it has become a spiritual one; though it was made from the earth, it has passed through the gates of heaven.”

We should note here that Athanasius is talking not just about a human body, but all human bodies, yours and mine included. Athanasius, like so many of the church fathers, was keen to remind us that the Son of God took on, not just a human nature, but human nature itself. In other words, in this one child resides the best of who we are, as well as the hope for who we might become. In the Nativity, love itself became incarnate; faith, hope and love beat for the many in the heart of the one. “And they named him Jesus.”

The name of Jesus, then, identifies much more than one particular human being in the strict historical sense, much more than a single child born long ago in a distant land. The name of Jesus signifies the highest aspiration of every human person, the deepest desire of the human heart, the lover for whom we long and in whose absence our hearts are restless. The name of Jesus, given by the Father at the very moment of Mary’s faithful yes is itself a scandal, a stumbling block for the no of the sinner. In the midst of war, of injustice, among the callously indifferent and the doggedly unbelieving, the name of Jesus is also a scandal, a name that at once reveals the dignity of every human person and the futility of our this-worldly scheming.

Jesus’ earthly parents knew he was special. They could never have imagined, however, that in his name a worldwide church would be born—born in Bethlehem, sacrificed on Calvary, made a sacrament on Easter morning. Throughout the centuries, the saints and martyrs prayed that the

name of Jesus would pass their lips as they themselves passed into eternity. This was not pious exaggeration, nor is it charming folklore. It is historical fact. The very name of Jesus gave the saints and martyrs the strength to live their lives of faith.

Mary and Joseph could never have imagined the church of today, the church you and I are blessed to call home: a billion people spread across six continents. Today, Christians throughout the world continue to act in his name, demanding an end to violence and injustice. In the face of cancer and AIDS, amid the shadows of life in a culture of death, the church of Jesus Christ—we sinners still called by God—continues to reconcile, to teach, to heal in the name of Jesus.

Mary and Joseph could not have predicted any of this. No one had even predicted the events of that first Christmas. Jewish tradition had taught that the Messiah would emerge from the heavens riding a chariot, not in a stable among the hay and dung. The tradition had said that God would make his home in the grand temple of Jerusalem, not in the womb of a frightened, teenage girl. Yet our God—this God who took the name of Jesus—is a God of surprises.

As this year comes to an end, we might ponder anew in our own hearts, what surprises God has in store for us. Can we allow this person named Jesus—this God for whom love alone is credible—to possess our hearts in the year ahead? What untruths or cherished myths live within us, waiting to be scandalized by him? What hopes lie there, in our hearts, waiting to be born, waiting for their incarnations, through him, with him and in him?

Most of all, what does this God of surprises hope for us, for our church—itsself a relatively fragile human body, yet one that still has the audacity to hope in the name of Jesus?

MATT MALONE, S.J.

America

PUBLISHED BY JESUITS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Cover: The Christmas Nativity is re-created outside St. Rose of Lima Church in Newtown, Conn., Dec. 15, 2012. CNS photo/Joshua Lott, Reuters.

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John W. Martens, offers a guide to studying and **praying with Scripture** online. Plus, the editors recommend a **playlist for Advent and Christmas**, and Quentin DuPont, S.J., writes on **Twitter and the values of investing**. All at americamagazine.org.



Father of a Nation

When Nelson Mandela walked out of his prison cell on Feb. 11, 1990, *America's* editors described it as a “Teilhardian” moment. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., the religious thinker and paleontologist, “was convinced that the human family is evolving toward greater unity—its strands converging, not diverging,” the editors wrote. “And just as racial segregation is a brutal form of divergence, so the recent events in South Africa point toward a society more like what God intends—more mature, more humane, more unified.”

Mr. Mandela’s life was a lesson in convergence. As a prisoner on Robben Island, he struck up a friendship with the guard in charge of his care. As the first president of a post-apartheid South Africa, he brought whites and blacks together in government. He reached out to his fellow white citizens who were unsure of their place in the new society. And he was a steadfast advocate of the country’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, setting a model for peace-building for generations. He guided his country along the arc of history, a slow journey toward unity and justice.

Though former President Mandela was largely absent from the public square in the last years of his life, his very existence was a source of consolation for people in South Africa and beyond. Sadly, he leaves behind a world torn by the wounds of division. Democracy in South Africa suffers from growing pains. The absence of unifying leaders in Egypt and Iraq is achingly evident. Civil war in Syria raises a nagging question: Is the human family really evolving toward greater unity? Yet Mandela’s name, like those of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., offers hope that with God’s help, we may continue forward on our pilgrim path, waiting for another transformational leader to speed our march.

Persecuted in Uganda

Despite international pressure, the government campaign against gays and lesbians in Uganda continues; a law that would impose the death penalty for certain homosexual acts and levy heavy fines on groups that support gay rights remains on the legislative agenda. Meanwhile, gays living in Uganda must live in constant fear of discovery and prosecution. A British man and his Ugandan partner are now facing jail time after they were outed in a particularly cruel fashion.

Condemnation from Western governments and media outlets have had limited effect. Local leaders in Uganda see homosexuality as a “scourge” exported from the West and greet international censure as confirmation of a larger pro-gay agenda. Sadly, some Christian pastors have been instrumental

in the government’s campaign against gays. The Anglican Church has been more vocal in its criticism of the legislation, though some divisions remain among local leaders.

A unique opportunity exists, therefore, for Catholic leaders to organize against the proposed law. Christian leaders exert unique influence in Uganda, and the centralized nature of the church allows for Catholic leaders to speak with one voice. Archbishop Cyprian Lwanga of Kampala spoke against the bill in 2009, calling it “unnecessary” and “at odds with the core values” of Christianity, but a more sustained and full-throated criticism of the bill is warranted. The Holy See, which has a good relationship with Uganda, can also play a more active role. Vatican diplomats should make it very clear that the continued persecution of homosexuals in Uganda is unconscionable and un-Christian.

Island Fever Pitch

Called the Senkaku in Japan, the Diaoyu in China and an “uninhabitable pile of rocks” by many observers of geopolitics, a small chain of disputed islands is at the center of the latest round of brinkmanship over the East China Sea. On Nov. 23, China unilaterally declared the international airspace above the islands part of its Air Defense Identification Zone, demanding that all aircraft that enter the area notify Chinese authorities of flight plans or face “defensive emergency measures.” Though China’s move is within the bounds of international law, it is seen by its neighbors to the East as a provocative bid to strengthen its territorial claim to the contested islands.

While the United States takes no sides in the territorial dispute, it has made clear that if China were to use force, U.S. treaty obligations with Japan would require it to defend the islands, which fall under Tokyo’s administrative control. The United States signaled its resolve to maintain the status quo in the region by flying unarmed B-52 bombers through the zone unannounced, and its ally Japan followed suit, sending in patrol planes in defiance of the new rules.

This situation calls for serious pre-emptive diplomacy—not one-upmanship. Strong populist nationalism and deep historic grievances on both sides increase the risk of military miscalculations that could drag the United States into an unwelcome conflict with China. Vice President Biden has rightly called for “confidence-building measures, including emergency communications channels” to prevent such escalation. Both the White House and President Xi Jinping of China have embraced the idea of pursuing a new type of “great powers relations.” Navigating these troubled waters will be the first major test of this commitment.

A Home for Christmas

Wend your way through the streets of any large city, teeming with Christmas shoppers, where store windows glisten with expensive watches and handbags, and it is all too easy to avert your eyes from those dehumanized shapes in doorways or sprawled on the steps or stretched out in the pews of open churches. Swathed in blankets, they peer out with blank eyes from between scarves and wool hats as they display their cardboard manifestos: *House burned down. Wounded Vet. Hungry. Pregnant. Jobless. Help.* The message is sobering: We are helpless, abandoned and dependent on your seasonal generosity.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, the classic spiritual guidebook for retreat directors, St. Ignatius Loyola invites the retreatant to contemplate the great mysteries of the Incarnation and the Nativity. The starting point for these exercises, however, is not the grandeur of the Trinity, “seated, so to speak, on the royal canopied throne,” as Ignatius writes. Instead, he first invites the retreatant to see and consider the various persons on the earth, “so diverse in dress and behavior...some in peace and others at war, some weeping and others laughing, some healthy and others sick, some being born and others dying.”

St. Ignatius then describes God’s compassionate response to so much blindness, suffering and death in the world. He counsels us to hear what the Trinity says, “Let us work the redemption of the human race,” and to see what the Trinity does, “bringing about the most holy Incarnation.” Ignatius says the Lord was born “in the greatest poverty” and experienced “many hardships of hunger, thirst, heat, cold, injuries, and insults.” Though appropriately regarded as royalty by the angels in heaven and the visiting Magi, Jesus was born in a manger, and the family was displaced by the threat of violence.

Those living on the street and in shelters share in the Holy Family’s experience of transience and insecurity. But how often are they welcomed with reverence and joy? Years ago our culture referred to these persons as “down and out” or “Bowery bums,” distinguished from the “deserving poor” who had “pulled themselves together” and were thus worthy of concern. The Christmas message, however, reminds us that those who are without homes are human beings and deserve care. Do we see them that way?

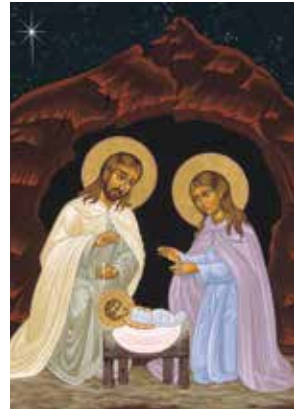
According to a nationwide survey conducted in January 2013 by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, there are approximately 610,000 homeless

people in the United States on any given night, with two-thirds living in shelters and the rest on sidewalks, benches and in cars. The number has fallen 9 percent since 2007, and housing vouchers to veterans have helped lower the number of homeless veterans by 24 percent since 2009. This progress is significant, yet much work remains.

In some places the problem is escalating. The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless reports the homeless rate in Chicago rose 10 percent to 116,042 in 2013. Chicago Public Schools reports 18,669 are students, 98.3 percent of whom are children of color and 2,512 are “unaccompanied,” living without a parent or guardian. Meanwhile, as new skyscrapers rise in America’s most expensive city, New York, the Coalition for the Homeless there reports that one child out of every 100 has no home, and the number of homeless families went up 73 percent during the Bloomberg administration. The causes of homelessness vary: domestic violence, untreated mental illness, joblessness, drug and alcohol addiction, H.I.V./AIDS, foreclosure and eviction.

Because of local, private, volunteer and public initiatives over the past 40 years, we now know what must be done to solve the problem of homelessness. In New York State alone, over 200 public, nonsectarian, not-for-profit and religious agencies have worked to develop policies that can effectively serve the weak and poor. Congress must maintain funding for initiatives like these. St. Francis Residence, directed by Franciscan friars in New York City, houses nearly 300 men and women in three locations. Its award-winning methods have been imitated throughout the country. They start by recognizing the worth of every human being and provide support services typical of a good family: a private room, staff doctors, including a psychiatrist, exhaustive records on every guest, a nurse who prepares medications, financial advice, an art workshop, cultural trips, breakfast and a hot lunch.

The main point, often overlooked, of the feast of the Incarnation, is that when God entered the world in the person of Jesus, the whole of humanity was transformed. Every person, including that huddled person in the gutter, is Jesus inviting—daring—us to love.



REPLY ALL

To Heal the Suffering

Re “Healing Communities” (Editorial, 12/2): Bravo. While we still have more questions than answers, the science behind the causes of mental illness has come a long way in the last 30 years. Understanding the chemistry of the brain and its disorders is many orders of magnitude more difficult than other less complex and more observable parts of the body.

It is tragic that as a society our attitudes toward mental illness have not made similar strides. The voices that say, “They are lazy,” remind me of the reactions of upper-class English to the famine in Ireland: the Irish were starving because they were lazy drunks.

The church should not stay on the sidelines here. Jesus did not come to heal the healthy. The suffering of the mentally ill and those who love them is too great to continue to ignore.

JOHN O’NEIL
Online comment

Patriarchy No More

“Feminism at Fifty,” by Professor Sidney Callahan (12/2), is a very insightful and refreshing contribution to Christian feminism in our beloved Catholic Church.

I wonder why a few things were not mentioned. Carl Jung started the process of overcoming Sigmund Freud’s

patriarchal understanding of women. John Paul II’s theology of the body had the insight into humans as “body persons.” Finally, an authentically Christian (and Catholic and pro-life) feminism will remain incomprehensible as long as the issue of an exclusively male priesthood is avoided.

Looking ahead to the synod on the family, perhaps it is time to recognize that a patriarchal family is a dysfunctional family and a patriarchal church is a dysfunctional church. A patriarchal family and church may have been understandable in the past, but not anymore, now that the patriarchal culture is passing away and restoring the original unity of man and woman is becoming a “sign of the times.”

LUIS T. GUTIERREZ
Montgomery Village, Md.

Get Rid of Spying

“Good Intelligence” (Editorial, 11/18) quoted Pope John XXIII, who said “true and lasting peace among nations” must consist in “mutual trust.” But the editors did not take this quotation far enough. You wrote that there should not be “excessive reliance on espionage” among nations. What should be called for is the total elimination of both the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency. I don’t suggest this cavalierly.

How can any nation that spies be practicing “mutual trust”? There are

many examples to justify my proposal. What the C.I.A. did in Bolivia and Guatemala is justification enough. It is wrong for the United States to use agents to help overthrow legally elected governments and then help replace them with dictators.

The Spy Who Came in From the Cold, by John le Carré (1963), ends with the protagonist, Alec Leamas, going back down his escape ladder to join Liz Gold in death. I have always liked to believe that le Carré was trying to pronounce the death knell for spying. But that was written 50 years ago. Look where we are today.

JOHN TOOHEY
Red Bank, N.J.

Who Was Kennedy?

Re “A President for Peace,” by James W. Douglass (11/18): As one who grew up with two photos on the living room wall—one of Jack and Jackie Kennedy and the other of the pope—it was very sad to read about Kennedy’s pathological personal life, which completely undermined the hagiography Mr. Douglass seems bent on reviving and expanding.

Kennedy was a hawk on Vietnam and against the Communists. He shared his family’s long-standing anti-Communism. If he had survived the assassination, it is likely he would have been more aggressive than Lyndon B. Johnson.

Mr. Douglass believes in a massive conspiracy of all the people in the U.S.

BLOG TALK

The following is an excerpt from “Women in the Church,” by Julie Hanlon Rubio, on the *Catholic Moral Theology* blog (11/22). The post is a response to “Women in the Life of the Church,” the special issue of *America* (10/28).

As an online subscriber, I opened the e-mail containing the table of contents without looking at the title. I noticed that the first article was written by a woman, and so was the second. That’s strange, I thought. Then I saw the third and the

fourth. Something was going on....

Every single feature was written by a woman. I can’t describe the feeling of seeing women inhabiting the familiar features of a beloved magazine that usually includes only one or two female voices. I can only say that I will remember this moment, as I remember when I first saw altar girls, when I first received Communion from an Episcopal woman priest, and when I took my first course from a theologian who was also a mother (Lisa Sowle Cahill).

America’s editors confessed their failures in inclusivity and pledged to do better: “It is important for *America* to add more women to its roster of contributors and to increase our coverage of issues that affect women in the church.” Yes, it is. Not because women will always want to talk about mothering (though sometimes they will, and that’s a good thing), but because they will bring concerns and perspectives that would be missing if their voices were absent.

JULIE HANLON RUBIO

government he doesn't like—the C.I.A., F.B.I. and military generals, but we haven't had a single, credible whistleblower in 50 years. The factual evidence remains strong that a Cuban Communist sympathizer acted alone in this tragedy.

TIM O'LEARY
Online comment

Blame Government

In "Too Big to Prosecute?" (11/11), the editors buy whole hog the false narrative that greed and wrongdoers on Wall Street caused the financial crisis, and they call for scalps from "the world of U.S. high finance."

There have always been greedy and unscrupulous bankers, just as there have always been priests not as pure as Caesar's wife. The problem was system-wide. The housing and subprime mortgage bubbles, and the collapse and consequent financial crisis and Great Recession, were caused by government gutting and politicizing credit standards, plus easy money from the Federal Reserve Bank.

From 1996 to 2006, Standard & Poor's national composite home price index increased an unprecedented 129 percent. The mother of all housing bubbles was blown by government. The Federal Reserve kept its real funds rate at or below zero from 2001 to 2005.

The Federal Housing Administration recklessly ratcheted up Fannie Mae's and Freddie Mac's affordable-housing goals for more than a decade. The mortgage goliaths exceeded them through 2007, when a jaw-dropping 56 percent of their mortgages went to borrowers at or below median income in a given area.

While **America** thirsts for private-sector heads to roll, Washington is brewing the next crisis.

ERIC GROVER
Minden, Nev.

The Gaze of Christ

In "An Autumn Triptych" (11/11), John J. Conley, S.J., points out a key element of Pope Francis' refreshing appeal: his "spirituality...of human faces." This way of proceeding directs him to

relate to others face to face instead of according to some legally-based policies of engagement. Through this mode of spirituality he imagines himself "under the gaze of Christ."

This may appear radical to us in the 21st century, but it was the same model of spirituality that endeared St. Thérèse of Lisieux to people around the world a century ago. The young Carmelite took her name, Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, partly in devotion to a treasured image of the face of Jesus on Veronica's shroud, which energized her prayer.

For St. Thérèse, this image drew her closer to her Beloved. Now Francis teaches us that mindfulness of the gaze of Christ helps orient us to engage with the other souls with whom we interact in fuller realization of our shared humanity.

DANIEL OTERO
Online comment

Mind the Gap?

There is an annoying increase in recent issues of **America** in the number of times that the gap between rich and poor is cited as if it were an intrinsic moral evil. Can the authors who condemn this situation with such passion provide any justification—religious or otherwise—for their position? Are there biblical injunctions against income disparity? If fortunes were made honestly and legally, why are they considered immoral?

What percentage of large fortunes is retained for personal use compared with what is paid in taxes, used for creating jobs, funding charitable works and so on? How would our unprecedented levels of social aid programs be possible without income disparity and surpluses?

"Why Mystery Matters," by John Savant (11/4), is a

good case in point. He discusses the gap between economics and theology, but resolves nothing, largely because of his naïve assumption that the foundation of economics is "egoism and greed." Not much to reconcile here with a religion of love for all mankind, including those who are rich.

MICHAEL BUNYAR
Contrecoeur, Quebec, Canada

The Right Questions

Your issue on women was superb, but I want to compliment especially "Leading by Example," Kerry Weber's interview with Carmen Cervantes (10/28). Your questions were right on target.

This past February, Ms. Cervantes and some of her pastoral staff came to our Marist parish in Atlanta for a weekend workshop. A combined event with six parishes, there were close to 130 Hispanic young people. In these workshops with the Instituto Fe y Vida, as Ms. Weber wrote, young Latinos are being empowered to be leaders in their parishes and schools.

This past summer, I had a close-up look at this the content and methodology at a national institute with Fe y Vida. The program is producing very good fruit, nationally and internationally, in great part thanks to Ms. Cervantes, who leads by example.

I look forward to anything else **America** may publish on Hispanic/Latino ministry.

PAUL FRECHETTE, S.M.
Boston, Mass.



CARTOON: BOB ECKSTEIN

NELSON MANDELA

World Acclaims the Father of a Democratic South Africa

As South Africans prepared for the memorial service for Nelson Mandela on Dec. 10, tributes from around the world poured in, acclaiming a man who steered South Africa away from certain conflict and through a slow, sometimes painful process of reconciliation—one that is in many ways ongoing.

Describing the remarkable achievements of a historic leader of the struggle against apartheid and the first president of a democratic South Africa, Archbishop Stephen Brislin, president of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, said the nation owed a huge debt to Mandela. "If it wasn't for Mandela, I don't know what would have happened to this country, because we were certainly on the brink of civil war," he said. "He stood up to people, very angry" over the repression of apartheid rule, people "who didn't see the point of a negotiated settlement...and it must have taken enormous courage." He said history would have taken a very different turn if Mandela "had allowed anger and hatred to rule his life."

In a condolence message to Mandela's family, Archbishop Brislin wrote that Mandela, who died on Dec. 5 at the age of 95, "never compromised on his principles and vision for a democratic and just South Africa where all have equal opportunities, even at the great cost to his own freedom.

"The greatest way we can acknowledge the life of Nelson Mandela is to strive for the ideals he cherished—freedom, equality and democracy—and to defend these ideals from those who would corrupt them."

In a telegram to South Africa's President Jacob Zuma, Pope Francis wrote, "Paying tribute to the steadfast commitment shown by Nelson Mandela in promoting the human dignity of all the nation's citizens and in forging a new South Africa built on the firm foundations of nonviolence, reconciliation and truth, I pray that the late president's example will inspire generations of South Africans to put justice and the common good at the forefront of their political aspirations."

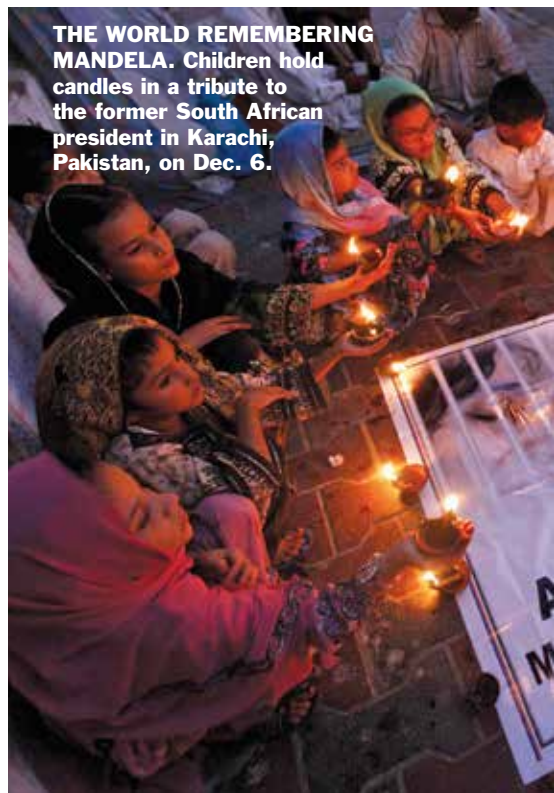
The retired Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu memorialized his fellow Nobel laureate as a man who showed a deeply divided nation how to come together. He downplayed rumors that South Africa would "go up

in flames" in the wake of Mandela's death, saying such talk discredits the late president's legacy. "The sun will rise tomorrow, and the next day and the next," he said. "It may not appear as bright as yesterday, but life will carry on."

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said: "In his struggle against apartheid rule, Nelson Mandela was a light for peace and equality in his country and for the whole world.... As president of South Africa, Mandela sought to undo the structures that marginalized and impoverished people—work Pope Francis is now challenging the entire world to imitate."

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said in a statement that Mandela "rejected recrimination in favor of reconciliation and knew the future demands [that] we move beyond the

THE WORLD REMEMBERING MANDELA. Children hold candles in a tribute to the former South African president in Karachi, Pakistan, on Dec. 6.



past.... Today, people all around the world who yearn for democracy look to Mandela's nation and its democratic constitution as a hopeful example of what is possible."

Anthony Egan, S.J., a member of the Jesuit Institute of South Africa, in a remembrance published on *America's* website on Dec. 5, said Mandela had been "both revolutionary and reconciler." Even as he started the military wing of the African National Congress, he writes, Mandela "was willing to negotiate with the regime."

"And in the 1990s, as he led the A.N.C. in the negotiated transition, he was nothing if not stubborn and resolute." Father Egan adds, "His commitment to reconciliation was driven by his realistic assessment of the nation's special circumstances. The A.N.C. had not seized power, but had negotiated a transition to democracy.... All South Africans had to find a way to coexist."



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

A.C.L.U. Suit Targets U.S. Bishops

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, called a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union “misguided” and “baseless.” The suit, filed on Nov. 29, targets the U.S. bishops’ “Ethical and Religious Directives,” arguing that the alleged mistreatment of a patient suffering a miscarriage at a Catholic medical center in Michigan was attributable to the directives.

The A.C.L.U.’s client, Tamesha Means, had been 18 weeks pregnant when she sought assistance at Mercy Health Partners in Muskegon, Mich., after her water broke. According to the suit, the hospital sent her home twice

despite the seriousness of her condition and the pain she was suffering. “Because of the Directives,” the suit charges, “M.H.P. did not inform Ms. Means that, due to her condition, the fetus she was carrying had virtually no chance of surviving, and continuing her pregnancy would pose a serious risk to her health. Nor did M.H.P. tell Ms. Means that the safest treatment option was to induce labor and terminate the pregnancy. M.H.P. also did not tell Ms. Means that it would not terminate her pregnancy, even if necessary for her health, because it was prohibited from doing so by the Directives.”

All Catholic hospitals in the United States are required to adhere to the directives. They guide Catholic health care facilities in addressing a wide range of ethical questions, such as abortion, euthanasia, care for the poor, medical research, treatment of rape victims and other issues.

In a statement released on Dec. 6, Archbishop Kurtz said, “The church holds that all human life, both before and after birth, has inherent dignity, and that health care providers have the corresponding duty to respect the dig-

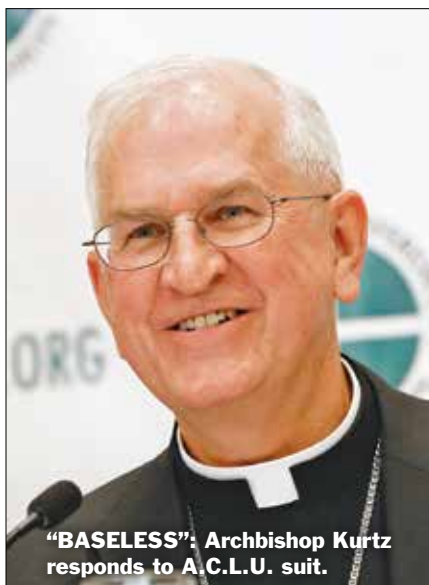
nity of all their patients. This lawsuit argues that it is legally ‘negligent’ for the Catholic bishops to proclaim this core teaching of our faith. Thus, the suit urges the government to punish that proclamation with civil liability, a clear violation of the First Amendment.”

Kary Moss, the executive director of the Michigan A.C.L.U. office, said the decision to pursue the bishops rather than Mercy Health Partners was partly the result of the statute of limitations (the incident in question took place in 2010) and partly because “this is not a medical malpractice suit,” but a case of negligence. Moss explained the A.C.L.U.’s reasoning in a phone interview with *America* and by e-mail.

“M.H.P. has stated that it adheres to the directives,” Moss said. “When Ms. Means went to M.H.P., she did not receive necessary treatment, information about treatment options or information about risks to her health if the pregnancy continued. The lawsuit alleges that the directives are responsible for M.H.P. not providing treatment to Ms. Means and not providing her with information about her health risk and treatment options.”

Moss said that the A.C.L.U. did not object in principle to the use of the directives in Catholic institutions except when it meant the “subjugation of women’s care” to the directives. She said, “The A.C.L.U. believes that although everyone has the right to their religious beliefs, decisions about medical care should be made by patients and their physicians.”

According to Moss, “When a patient in Ms. Means’s condition goes to the hospital, decisions about the type of care that should be provided and the type of information that is necessary for a patient, whether at a Catholic or non-Catholic health facility, should be based on a physician’s medical judg-



“BASELESS”: Archbishop Kurtz responds to A.C.L.U. suit.

ment.” Asked if it was the judgment of the A.C.L.U. that U.S. health care facilities should not be allowed to operate unless they were willing to refer or perform emergency termination of pregnancies, Ms. Moss replied, “Health care facilities, whether secular or religious, should be held to the same standard—doing what is best for the patient.”

She said, “A patient should not be prevented from obtaining medically accurate information and medically necessary treatment, including a medically necessary pregnancy termination, at a hospital simply because of the hospital’s religious affiliation.”

Archbishop Kurtz said, “A robust Catholic presence in health care helps build a society where medical providers show a fierce devotion to the life and health of each patient, including those most marginalized and in need. It witnesses against a utilitarian calculus about the relative value of different human lives. And it provides a haven for pregnant women and their unborn children regardless of their financial resources.”

Nationwide Protest For Better Wages

Workers around the country stepped away from their jobs at fast-food restaurants and other low-wage sites on Dec. 4 in protests demanding improved wages. Workers and supporters say their wages are too low to support their families and that many as a result are forced to rely on government assistance. Rep. George Miller of California and Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa, both Democrats, have introduced legislation to raise the minimum wage nationally to \$10.10. According to the Public Religion Research Institute, a solid majority of Americans from all major religious groups favor raising the minimum wage, including black

NEWS BRIEFS

Church leaders in the **Central African Republic** are hoping the arrival of U.N. troops will end bloodshed in Bangui, where at least 16 people were killed on Dec. 5 after the city was attacked by supporters of former President François Bozizé. • At a hearing on capitol hill on Dec. 5, Rev. Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA, urged Congress to **extend jobless benefits**—due to expire just after Christmas—noting that C.C.U.S.A. will continue to help out, but cannot come close to meeting all the needs of struggling U.S. families. • Flights were cancelled and schools were closed on Dec. 6 in Shanghai as **record levels of air pollution** shrouded the city in smog. • European officials met **Ukrainian opposition leaders** in the capital, Kiev, on Dec. 5 in talks seen as a snub to President Viktor Yanukovich, who triggered mass street demonstrations by refusing to sign a key European Union trade deal and seeking closer ties with neighboring Russia. • Pope Francis has requested **prayers for 12 nuns and three young women** taken away from their convent north of the Syrian capital of Damascus by Islamist rebels on Dec. 2.



Running for cover in Bangui

Protestants (89 percent), Catholics (78 percent), religiously unaffiliated Americans (77 percent), white mainline Protestants (69 percent) and white evangelical Protestants (61 percent). Support for a minimum wage hike also crosses partisan lines, though Americans who identify with the Tea Party movement stand out for their significant opposition to the measure.

New Vatican Commission on Sexual Abuse

Pope Francis accepted a proposal to set up a special commission on the sexual abuse of children that will advise him on ways to prevent abuse and provide pastoral care for victims and their families. Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley, O.F.M.Cap., of Boston, a member of the pope’s advisory Council

of Cardinals, announced the decision at a Vatican briefing for reporters on Dec. 5. The cardinal said the new commission would “study the present programs in place for the protection of children” and “come up with suggestions for new initiatives” by the Vatican, in collaboration with national bishops’ conferences and religious orders around the world. Cardinal O’Malley said the Vatican’s focus so far had been on legal procedures and that the new body would represent a more pastoral approach. The cardinal said the commission would study a number of areas, including programs to educate pastoral workers in signs of abuse, psychological testing and other ways of screening candidates for the priesthood and the church’s “cooperation with the civil authorities, the reporting of crimes.”

From CNS and other sources.



Capitol Exhortations

In a “Washington read,” people scan the index of a book and then read only the pages involving themselves. Here is a Washington read of some of the political challenges in Pope Francis’ exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel.” (The pope’s words are italicized.)

Politics. *I ask God to give us more politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue.... Politics...remains a lofty vocation... as it seeks the common good. I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society...the lives of the poor! It is vital that government leaders...working to ensure that all citizens have dignified work, education and health care [No. 205].*

There is not much “sincere and effective dialogue” or seeking the “common good” in Washington. This “lofty vocation” is undermined by public disappointment and anger. Washington is paralyzed by partisanship and ideology, moved more by contributions of the rich than “the lives of the poor.”

Economic Policy. Pope Francis deplores an *economy of exclusion and inequality [53], trickle-down theories [54] and corruption [60]. The need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed [188, 202]. We can no longer trust in the...invisible hand of the market. Growth in justice requires more than economic growth.... It requires decisions, programs...geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality [204].*

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

Democrats are working to protect the safety net. House Republicans are seeking major cuts in food stamps over reductions in agricultural subsidies, practicing priority for the rich and well-connected. Until the pope’s challenge, Washington had been silent about pervasive poverty and its structural causes, with apparent acceptance of high joblessness, stagnant wages and destructive pressures on families.

Health Care. Pope Francis calls for *access to health care [Nos. 192, 205]. He warns against privatizing religion, reducing it to the quiet obscurity of the individual’s conscience or...the enclosed precincts of churches [No. 255].*

Health care reform is being undermined by website failures, waivers for employer mandates, refusal by states to expand Medicaid and overreaching by the Department of Health and Human Services mandate into religious ministries. For Republicans, “repeal and replace” has yielded to “repeal and ignore,” combining the illusion of killing Obamacare with evasion on how to cover those without care. Administration ineptness and Republican indifference undermine the moral imperative of health care for all.

Human Life and Dignity. *The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good...ought to shape all economic policies [No. 203]. Francis defends unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us and links this to the defense of each and every other human right [No. 213]. It is not “progressive”*

to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life [No. 214].

No “obsession,” but no change in teaching because this involves *the internal consistency of our message about the value of the human person [No. 214].* Francis insists Catholic commitment to human life begins with unborn life and includes protection of the very young and very old, migrants and the poor and victims of war and trafficking. We

can call this the Gospel of life or the consistent life ethic or just faithful Catholic teaching.

There is not much ‘sincere and effective dialogue’ in Washington.

Immigration. Francis calls *all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity will overcome paralyzing mistrust, integrate those who are different [No. 210].*

The bishops’ pleas for House action on immigration have been ignored. So far, the Republican Party refuses to bring legislation to the floor because it could lead to bipartisan agreement on a constructive way forward.

Pope Francis acknowledges *it is irksome when the question of ethics is raised...global solidarity...the distribution of goods...protecting labor and defending the dignity of the powerless...a God who demands a commitment to justice. At other times these issues are exploited by a rhetoric which cheapens them. Casual indifference in the face of such questions empties our lives and our words of all meaning [No. 203].*

Turning away from these questions empties politics of moral purpose as well.

JOHN CARR

“Let us try also to be a church that finds new roads, that is able to step outside itself.”

—Pope Francis



A BIG HEART OPEN TO GOD

A Conversation with Pope Francis

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Have Faith in Joy

BY JAMES MARTIN

Whenever I speak to groups on the spirituality of joy, I am usually asked some excellent questions afterward. These questions always prompt me to think more deeply about the topic, so I thought I might share the most common query with you: Does Christian joy, which flows from believing in the good news, mean that I am supposed to be happy all the time?

Short answer: No.

This is a concept particularly important for an understanding of Christian joy. First, let me distinguish joy from happiness. Unlike happiness, joy is not simply a fleeting feeling or an evanescent emotion, it is a permanent result of one's connection to God. While the more secular definition of joy may be simply an intense form of happiness, religious joy is always about a relationship. Joy has an object and that object is God. The ultimate response to the

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is editor at large of *America*. This essay is adapted from his book *Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor and Laughter are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life* (HarperOne).

good news is joy, one that is lasting and can endure even in the midst of difficulties.

But this does not mean that the Christian is always happy. Sadness is a natural response to pain, suffering and tragedy in life. It is human, natural and even, in a way, desirable: sadness in response to a tragic event shows that you are emotionally alive. If you were not sad from time to time, you would be something less than human. William A. Barry, a Jesuit priest and clinical psychologist, echoes this. "If you're not saddened by certain things, you're not normal," he said. "For example, when a loved one dies or in response to natural disasters. Sadness is part of life."

Jesus Began to Weep

Jesus was surely a joyful person who laughed. How do we know this? For one thing, his parables and sayings are clever and often amusing. Indeed, Scripture scholars tell us that we may be missing much of Jesus' sense of humor in the New Testament, since we no longer understand the context. And we know that as a fully human person, Jesus experienced the full range of human emotions, so Jesus must have laughed.

But we do not have to do so much surmising when it comes to the question of whether he was sad. The New Testament tells us outright—without having to read between the lines—that Jesus broke down after the death of one of his friends. When Lazarus, the brother of his friends Mary and Martha, died after a brief illness, Jesus traveled to the tomb and, we are told, "began to weep" (Jn 11:1–45). Jesus' weeping is seen as proof of his compassion, of his humanity. "See how he loved him!" said those in the crowd.

Later, the New Testament writers use some of the strongest words imaginable to describe his anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane. "He began to be greatly distressed [*ekthambeisthai*] and troubled [*ademonein*]," writes Mark (14:33). Raymond E. Brown, S.S., in his magisterial book *The Death of the Messiah*, translates that first word as "greatly distraught." The Gospel of Luke, speaking of the garden experience, uses the word *agonia* and says that Jesus' tears fell on the ground "as if drops of blood"—that is, his tears flowed as copiously as if it were a flow of blood (22:44).

If Jesus was sad, surely we can be sad.

Also, the notion that you must be cheerful at all times in order to demonstrate belief in God is ridiculous. But it is common. "Get out of the tomb!" one otherwise well-meaning woman told me when I told her that I was sad over my father's death. "Aren't you a believer?" (She was referring to

the idea of focusing on death instead of the resurrection.) But even the saints, those avatars of belief, grew sad from time to time. Like Jesus, they were occasionally sad because they were human.

Nor do I believe in what is known as the "Prosperity Gospel," which tells people that if they believe in Jesus Christ, their lives will be one of constant success.

This is demonstrably false. The Twelve Apostles believed in Christ, to take one obvious example, and many of them met with difficult, painful, even tragic ends. Does anyone think that St. Peter, who was

crucified, had insufficient faith? The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., one of the great religious figures of our time, suffered greatly, was jailed and was assassinated. Did he not have sufficient faith? Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, toward the end of her life, was often in terrible physical pain. She even suffered from a great interior darkness, a "dark night of the soul." Was she unfaithful? Suffering—interior and exterior—is the lot of all people, including believers, even devout believers and including those who strive to lead joyful lives.

While the Prosperity Gospel has a number of important highlights—its focus on joy is a needed corrective in many Christian circles; its emphasis on a rock-ribbed faith in God is essential; its encouragement to believe in a God who desires your ultimate joy is an antidote to so many terrifying images of God. But its denial of suffering means that it does not fully embrace the human condition. This may be one reason why some of its adherents shy away from Good Friday services.

Nor do I believe that people who encounter suffering or illnesses have somehow failed to "think positively." The social critic Barbara Ehrenreich takes aim at that idea in her piquant book *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America*. While it is often helpful to look on the bright side of life and salutary to strive to be cheerful, the belief that the sick have failed to "think positively" is monstrous. Such a belief finds its ultimate end in the notion that cancer patients, to take but one example, are somehow "responsible" for their illness because of their faulty thinking patterns. That approach can compound the misery of the sick. Ehrenreich, a cancer survivor herself, writes, "Clearly, the failure to think positively can weigh on a cancer patient like a second disease." Illness is not a moral fault or a failure of will. Illness is simply a reflection of our humanity.

On the other hand, a culture of carping and general complaining predominates in some quarters. Everyone knows

**If you were not sad
from time to time,
you would be
something less than human.**

someone who seems to be a champion complainer, always lamenting some new fate that has just befallen him, complaining endlessly about his latest malady, reminding you about the next terrible turn of events that he is sure will happen and in general worrying everyone around him. Typically these people are self-centered. And typically they are unpleasant to be around. I used to know someone who was a full-time hypochondriac (something I am prone to). You knew better than to ask, "How are you?" lest you find out, in numbing detail, his latest scourge.

One of my friends describes it as searching for the drop of red paint in a can of white paint. It is a powerful image: the red represents your one problem. You have an entire can of white paint—let's say, a job, a roof over your head, a loving family, and you choose instead to concentrate on the one tiny red drop—the one thing wrong in your life. Suddenly the whole can turns red; that is all you can see.

That is where choice comes into play. Sometimes, when presented with the mixed bag of life, we can choose to focus on what makes us happy, on what more readily connects us to joy in our life.

The form of psychotherapy called cognitive behavioral therapy is also helpful here. This school of psychology starts from the assumption that since our thoughts shape our experience of the world, unhealthy and inaccurate thinking can lead to an incorrect evaluation of one's life and therefore to unhappiness.

For example, if you are the type of person who thinks you are "always" facing some sort of misfortune, when in reality your life is a mixed bag of good and bad, you might end up miserable—not because of your situation, but because of the way you think about it. Once again, I am not speaking here of a person in the midst of a great tragedy or experiencing real pain. Nor am I denying the occasional need for psychotherapy or counseling to deal with serious psychological problems like depression. Rather, I am speaking about the person who chooses to focus only on the negative side of life despite the preponderance of evidence for the positive.

What are the signs that one is doing this? "Global" words are one tip-off. "I *never* get what I want!" "I'm *always* sick!" "Everyone hates me!" "I'm the *only* one who has it this bad!" "No one *ever* calls me!" "My boss *always* picks on me!" Those are tip-offs that you are probably not thinking as clearly as you should.

For some, it can be as simple as deciding, hard as it may be, to focus more frequently on the positive aspects of life. For others, visiting a counselor or therapist will enable them to see things more clearly. But, once again, this does not mean that tragedy will never happen or that you will never be sad. It simply means taking a more realistic look at one's blessings in life.

A few years ago, for example, I was lamenting to my spir-



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itual director how difficult my life was. So many struggles! So much work to do! So many physical difficulties! And on and on. I told him I had expressed all of this to God in prayer, and it just made me sad.

“Are you being honest with God?” he asked.

“Of course I am,” I said. “I’m sharing all of my difficulties with God.”

“Ah,” he said. “But honesty means being truly honest with God about reality. Are you looking at the totality of your life? Both the good and the bad? Are you honestly presenting your whole life to God or focusing exclusively on the problems?” That helped me to see how negative I was being, in my prayer and in my life.

Real and False Religion

The believer must navigate between grinning, idiotic, false happiness and carping, caterwauling, complaining mopyness. (Notice again that I am also not speaking of clinical depression here, which is more of a psychological issue.) Overall, the believer will be happy and sad at different points of his life; but joy is possible in the midst of tragedy, since joy depends on one’s faith and confidence in God.

To that end, one of my favorite quotations about religion comes from the Scottish philosopher John Macmurray, who contrasted “illusory” religion with “real religion.” The maxim

of illusory religion is: “Fear not; trust in God and He will see that none of the things you fear will happen to you.”

Real religion, said Macmurray, has a different maxim: “Fear not; the things that you are afraid of are quite likely to happen to you, but they are nothing to be afraid of.”

Macmurray’s sage observation illustrates the contrast between deep-down joy and evanescent happiness.

Joy can even creep into our lives and catch us unaware, in the midst of dark times. Kathleen Norris, author of *The Cloister Walk* and *Acedia & Me*, told me that while visiting her sister in a hospital, joy crept in. “I was anxiously watching an oxygen monitor in my sister’s hospital room, when a janitor came in with a mop. In a low voice, barely perceptible,

she was singing a song I recognized, a love song from a Broadway musical. I commented on it, she began to sing louder, in a voice more enthusiastic and polished. But small matter. By the time she left the room, my sister and I had been treated to

three songs and a significant portion of her life story. Joy is powerful medicine.”

Norris concluded, “I am convinced that joy is a fruit, because it tastes so sweet.” (What a wonderful way of understanding one of St. Paul’s “fruits of the Spirit.”)

Likewise, a person in a difficult situation can still find humor in his or her life and still laugh. Moreover, he can choose to be cheerful around others, not in a masochistic way but rather as a way of not unduly burdening everyone with his latest complaint. This is not to say that one should never talk about one’s struggles or burdens with anyone. As St. Paul would say, “By no means!” It is important during times of struggle to speak to a close friend, family member, a priest or minister, or a therapist when things are very difficult. And it is important to share those struggles with God in prayer.

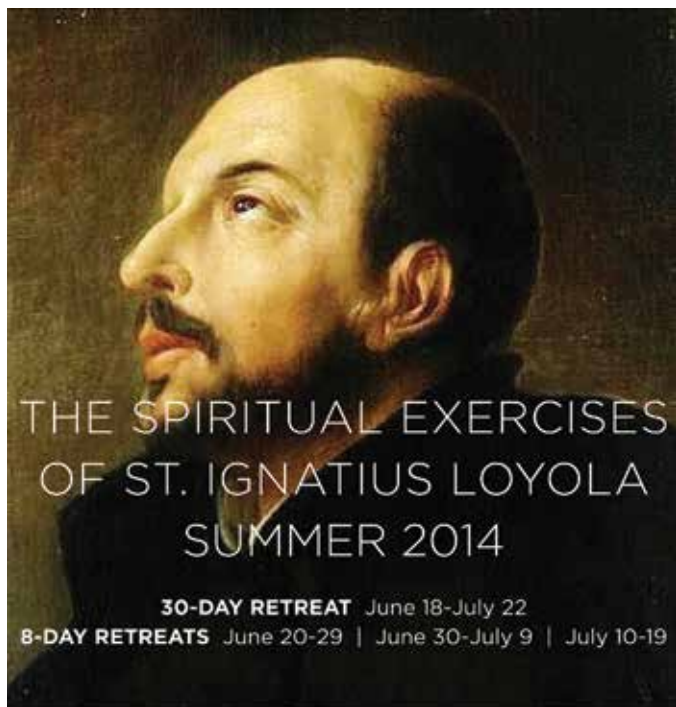
What I am arguing against is the kind of round-the-clock complaining that many people—including me at times—sometimes engage in.

Lately, I have been trying to be more silent about some of my struggles, that is, not to share too many personal burdens with people whose lives are already difficult. Once again, this is not to say that I do not share my struggles with my friends, my spiritual director or with God in prayer. Rather, it is a gift to give people your cheerfulness even in the midst of pain. This may be something of what Mother Teresa meant when she said, “Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.” The ability to do that comes from a deep-down sense of joy even in the midst of pain.

So does the Christian have to be happy all the time? No. But is the Christian invited to experience lasting joy, which can stand unshaken in the midst of troubles? Just ask the disciples on Easter Sunday morning. ▲

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Lose Yourself

Getting past 'me' to 'thee'

BY RUTH BURROWS

Is there a record of any other person in antiquity whose love of children and interest in them equalled that of Jesus? His love was such that he held up a small child as an example that adults must, in some way, choose to resemble. This is a bold challenge, and yet Jesus' references to childhood are all too easily sentimentalized. Jesus is indeed full of compassion and love, but he stands in the truth, and his compassion and love express themselves in hard, almost ruthless sayings and demands. Familiarity with Scripture can blunt this sharp edge. We must learn not to take these challenges lightly.

All three writers of the Synoptic Gospels reveal Jesus' insistence on the necessity of becoming as little as a little child in order to enter the kingdom of God. This is a sharp-edged utterance and, when understood, is likely to provoke as strong a reaction as when Jesus insisted: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."

"This is a hard saying," many exclaimed; "Who can listen to it?" (Jn 6:60). And they deserted Jesus. We are wise to reflect and consider if we too, confronted with the full reality of becoming as a little child, are severely tempted to "walk no more with him."

Jesus' disciples left the security of family, home and livelihood to throw in their lot with Jesus. In regard to this world, they are poor and powerless, little ones of no account, and Jesus is grateful for their loyalty and courage. However, he has no illusions: their self-interest has merely shifted from this world to the mysterious kingdom that their master is inaugurating. What gleaming crown awaits them?

What Is the Kingdom?

To reach a deep understanding of this "hard saying," we have to ask what Jesus means by the kingdom of heaven. He is not talking only about the heaven awaiting us when we die; he is talking about the now. In his own historical context, he understands that the work his Father has given him to do is to draw Israel back to God, to renew it and shape it to become all that God intended it to be for the salvation of the nations. In his person the reign of God begins.

"Our God reigns! Our God reigns," we sing lustily

enough, but does he? Does God reign fully in his Christian people? Does God reign in our hearts, every day, every hour of the day in every circumstance? To acknowledge God as king, to enthrone God in our hearts means accepting to be spiritually helpless, to be little, unimportant, totally dependent. It is to dethrone the ego. To become as a little child has everything to do with the first and greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God, with your whole heart, with your whole soul and with your whole strength...and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

"I believe in one God," we say in the Nicene Creed. But in every human heart without exception, God has a rival in the ego. No one can serve two gods at one time. Jesus tells us that it is impossible to see the kingdom, let alone receive or enter it, without a radical renunciation of our natural self-possession and instinctive self-glorification. Given the world as it is, given the way we are, God's kingdom cannot come without renunciation and suffering.

Only our Creator knows who and what we are and the glory and blessedness God destines for us. On our own we cannot know any of this and certainly cannot achieve our proper fulfillment. It can come about only by self-surrender in total trust to our Creator, doing God's will, which has no

**Genuine prayer—how poor and
unsatisfactory it can seem!
—never inflates the ego.**

other object than our blessedness. As I understand, there are two major effects of the Fall: spiritual blindness and the terror inevitable to our condition of contingency, blind as we are to the protective, nurturing, utterly faithful love of our Creator, in whom we live and move and have our being. We instinctively dread the loss of "me," of who I am, my "self"; we dread diminishment, dwindling into nothingness and unimportance.

To a great extent, nature has ways of anaesthetizing this painful awareness. It persists nevertheless and irresistibly urges us to protect with all our might this fragile self. We are told that we must assert our supposed independence, be ourselves the arbiters of what is happiness and glory and go for it. We are desperate to keep control; we watch lest others threaten

RUTH BURROWS is the pen name of Sister Rachel, O.C.D., a nun of the Carmelite monastery at Quidenham in Norwich, England.



A CHILD LEADS THEM. Bambinelli Sunday in St. Peter's Square

our rights. In other words, we insist on being our own god. Good, noble, virtuous in all manner of ways, we remain in control. We believe there is no problem in giving generously of the fruits of our vineyard, so long as the vineyard remains our own. And yet it is precisely this jealously guarded self-possession that must be surrendered. I do not think that we ourselves can make this absolute surrender. God himself must do it for us, must wrest us from ourselves. Nevertheless, if God is to achieve this ultimate triumph, we must do all that is within our power to help.

“The Son of Man came, not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28). Jesus himself, the humblest of humankind, is the model for what he is asking of his disciples. Mark’s picture of Jesus holding the child close to him illustrates the point. Jesus is the perfection of spiritual childhood. The stringent *unless* of turning and becoming as a child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven is another way of saying that to seek to save one’s life in this world is to lose it. To sacrifice one’s life is to gain admittance into the kingdom of heaven.

Surrendering Self-Interest

In *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, St. John of the Cross wrote: “Oh that someone might show us how to understand, practice and experience what this counsel is which our Saviour here gives

us concerning the denial of ourselves, so that spiritual persons might see in how different a way they should conduct themselves upon this road than that which many of them think proper.... Oh that someone would tell us how far Our Lord desires this self-denial to be carried!” This lament is addressed to us “spiritual persons,” who claim to be Christ’s friends.

What Jesus asks is always possible. The stern, uncompromising injunction to “deny thyself” is not a call to strip ourselves of earthly goods, to take on a life of rigid austerity—the ego could grow fat on that sort of thing. It is not things but self that has to be denied. Our Lord addresses each one of us in our particularity. There can be no pattern. We must want

to follow him, want what he wants for us and died to give us. Enlightenment is progressive. Once we really give our attention to the matter, we see more and more how powerful, how tenacious is our selfishness. Every day offers small occasions for surrendering self-interest, our own convenience

and wishes for the sake of others; for accepting without fuss the disappointments, annoyances, setbacks, humiliations that frequently come our way. The battle is largely fought out in relations with other people. “By this we know love, that [Jesus] laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for one another” (1 Jn 3:16).

Although Jesus’ word is addressed to all, historically his words often were addressed to those who were chosen to hold

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Be Still Studio

authority in the community he was creating, preoccupied as they were with precedence. There is nothing more contemptible than arrogant abuse of spiritual authority, and surely it is sacrilegious to use what has been given for the service of others to further self-interest. A careful, heart-searching reading of the Gospels and the New Testament letters is indispensable. Be servants of one another, we are told. Consider other people's welfare rather than your own. Think of yourself as unimportant and other people and the reign of God all-important. Get rid of all anger and bitterness. Watch! Pay attention to thoughts, words, behavior. We soon realize how difficult it is to get rid of our innate self-centeredness. We find our ego lurking behind even our most generous efforts.

Paradoxically, to accept humbly and trustfully the impurity of our motives, seeing ourselves far from the loving selfless person we would like to be, is choosing to be little, admitting our helplessness and unimportance—provided, of course, that we are doing our utmost. Childlike, we surrender our autonomy to our Lord who, we now see, must do everything for us, and we find a happy freedom in the knowledge that he is everything we are not and he is all for us. When we no longer insist on being god to ourselves, every one of our doors is thrown open to the king of glory. Our sustained, earnest effort is important, but what God does is infinitely more important and decisive.

Genuine prayer—how poor and unsatisfactory it can seem!—never inflates the ego but always induces humility, revealing as it does our spiritual helplessness and dependence on grace. Patience, meekness, a lowly opinion of self and deep respect for others must always characterize the people God has chosen for his own. The Gospel of John shows us the inner reality of the Father's perfect child. "The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees his Father doing" (5:19). Jesus joyfully accepts to be powerless so that his Father can be all in him, and thus he is the perfect human expression of the Father. Through Jesus' surrender the Father can achieve his loving purpose for humankind: "I do always the things that please him" (8:29).

We see Jesus as pure receptivity for all that the Father would give or would ask. How splendidly, gloriously human he is in his perfect obedience! Jesus had a human will and knew conflict. We see him distraught, torn in the temptation to refuse the revolting, fearsome chalice held out to him. "My Father!" Yet my food, the only meaning of my life, is to do the will of my Father. I am not alone, my Father is with me, and so, "Your will be done." Not only is he our exemplar; Jesus, through his own perfect obedience, is the source whence the Holy Spirit comes to us to enable us to do what is impossible: "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Mt 7:14). To glimpse something of the blessedness that is ours in the surrender of self is to cry out to God from the heart: "Take me from myself, wrest me away and take me to you." **A**

Saving the Humanities

The liberal arts under fire

BY RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

Let us start with a quick quiz: 1. Which literary character falls “down the rabbit hole”? 2. When seven paintings were stolen recently from a Rotterdam museum, taken to Romania and possibly burned, did you care? 3. Not long ago a news story on National Public Radio announced that a long-lost symphony by Beethoven, his 10th, had been discovered. On what day of the year did that news break?

In one sense these questions are “trivia,” though the answers might make one a millionaire on a television game show. Yet they come to mind in response to “The Heart of the Matter,” not the Graham Greene novel, but a recent report from the Commission on the Humanities & Social Sciences for the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. The

report, requested by Congress, suggests that certain qualities of mind that are the fruit of a liberal education and on which a democratic society may rise or fall—inquisitiveness, perceptiveness and the ability to put a new idea to use—are slipping away. Acquiring these qualities demands wide reading and writing and speaking well. Historically, Jesuit education has called these qualities *eloquentia perfecta*, but for how much longer can it make the claim to be fostering this?

In 1941, with the participation of the United States in World War II on the horizon, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent a note to Prime Minister Winston Churchill to boost his spirits. Roosevelt simply said, “I think this verse applies to your people as it does to us.” It was from Longfellow’s poem, “The Building of the Ship”: “Thou, too, sail on, Oh Ship of State!/ Sail on, Oh Union, strong and great!/ Humanity with all its fears,/ With all the hopes of future years,/ Is hanging breathless on thy fate!” Churchill

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J., literary editor of *America*, has been a faculty member and dean at several Jesuit colleges and was editor of the Jesuit higher education magazine *Conversations*.



responded by reading the poem on the radio to the British people, and he sent Roosevelt a favorite poem of his own. In a sense this was the humanities in action. Two great orators, world leaders, reached into the common culture of their two countries for words that provided courage for the ongoing crisis.

Negative Report Card

The purpose of the recent report is both pragmatic and spiritual. Nationwide, only 7.6 percent of all bachelor's degrees were granted in the humanities in 2010. At Harvard, considered a leader in the liberal arts, in 2012 only 20 percent of its undergraduates had a major in the humanities, a significant drop from 36 percent in 1954. Universities more and more advertise themselves as institutions that "train" students for the job market, and they water down the liberal arts core to make room for so-called real-world courses—as if ethics, history and poetry deal with an imaginary dreamland. But a democracy can survive only if citizens base their political decisions not just on television attack ads and tabloid headlines but on a background of history, civics and social studies. The report rightly asks, "How do we understand and manage change if we have no notion of the past?" The spiritual gift of the liberal arts—particularly philosophy, theology, biography, history, literature, art and music—is the ability to lift us out of ourselves and introduce us to other lives, places, times and experiences, including the joy, even ecstasy, of Mozart and Michelangelo. In short, the liberal arts help make us human beings.

It helps to see this report—among the commission's 54 members were 10 university presidents, another eight faculty from different departments, four artists, one former Supreme Court justice and one journalist, plus a collection of administrators—in context. Its predecessor was "A Nation at Risk" (1983), a study of secondary education, which it found to be sorely lacking. Some 23 million American adults and 13 percent of 17-year-olds were deemed functionally illiterate. High school graduates had not learned to write effective papers or discuss ideas intelligently. It concluded: "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."

The new report is concerned that fewer than 30 percent of public high school students are taught by a history teacher with a degree and certification in history, and a recent study of education schools by the National Council on Teacher

Quality characterizes these schools as "an industry of mediocrity." Today forces for education reform include the American Federation of Teachers, which is determined to improve teacher education, and the national drive to implant a common core curriculum, raising the standards of public high schools.

As expected, a debate has boiled over into *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and various websites over whether the humanities are in a full or half crisis. In a bizarre essay in *The Wall*

Street Journal (7/12), Lee Siegel argues that because his own college literature teachers were so bad, literature should not be taught to anyone. "It is too sacred to be taught," he explains. "It needs only to be read." My experience, on the other hand—after teaching

The spiritual gift of the liberal arts is the ability to lift us out of ourselves and introduce us to other lives, places and experiences.

literature for over 40 years and, as editor of the Jesuit higher education magazine *Conversations*, talking with students and faculty in all 28 Jesuit colleges and universities—is that students are starving intellectually, whether they acknowledge it or not. Few can talk easily about a great book they have read. Mark Edmundson writes in *The Chronicle* (8/2) that literature is "character forming" and "soul making"—a way of life. Catholic and Jesuit universities, it seems to me, have always taught this. How well we have succeeded is another question.

Practical Steps

Jesuit schools, especially when revising the core curriculum, must remember their special responsibility to promote humanities education. Students, particularly the new generation of students who previously would not have aspired to college, are often pressed by parents overwhelmed by the astronomical rise in costs (an average of \$40,000 a year tuition, plus room and board, at private colleges) to major in health professions, business management or criminal justice because they foresee quicker job opportunities that will help pay off their student loans. But liberal arts courses will provide the skills most likely to move them up the ladder. Schools should educate parents about the fact that many employers are looking for these human skills.

The new report proposes a number of important steps: a "seamless learning continuum" between high schools and colleges that will raise the competence of secondary school teachers; development of a "culture corps" of qualified adult volunteers to support community reading groups, lectures, trips to theaters, museums and historic sites; global perspective and second language requirements in all curricula; and a significant international experience for every undergraduate, to increase the mere 2 percent who study abroad now. The

report quotes former Senator J. William Fulbright, himself a Rhodes scholar and creator of the fellowship program that bears his name: “The essence of intercultural education is the acquisition of empathy—the ability to see the world as others see it, and to allow for the possibility that others may see something we have failed to see or may see it more accurately.”

One partly successful program put in place a few years ago in about 90 percent of colleges with enrollments of 5,000 students or less is the freshman humanities seminar, designed to introduce the new student to a serious study of a humanities topic and to teach study habits, critical reading, thinking and writing and discussion skills. When I taught a seminar like this, an additional goal was to engage students in the Jesuit identity of the school. In an evaluation of the program at the University of Richmond, *The Chronicle* (8/2) enumerated some problems. Not all faculty members are able and willing to facilitate good discussion, listen well, get the students to talk, assign more than a few books each semester or assign and teach writing related to the readings and return the papers promptly.

Some practical techniques have proven successful: assign a short written essay for each class so the student author will be primed to talk, seat the students in a tightly closed circle and have them warm up by talking with the student in the next seat, and avoid asking questions when the teacher already knows the answer. For a final paper, each student can read and

critique the other students’ work and discuss each one together for the final exam. Two national norms are well-kept secrets: students should study two hours out of class for every one hour in class (usually 30 hours of study a week), and in writing classes students should write at least 20 pages each semester. Very few teachers, however, approach these goals.

Emphasis on Reading

If one magic word runs through the commentaries on the report, it is *reading*. In 2004 the National Endowment for the Arts published its report “Reading at Risk,” which concluded that fewer than half of adults in the United States read literature. The Endowment launched a program called The Big Read—small reading groups across the country to read and discuss American classics. A young writer once asked Ernest Hemingway which writers he should read. Hemingway replied, “He should have read everything so he knows what he has to beat.” Pressed, he named about 30 books, including *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, *Madame Bovary*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Dubliners*, *Ulysses*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Huckleberry Finn* and everything by Ivan Turgenev. How many graduates of a Jesuit university have read more than one or two of these?

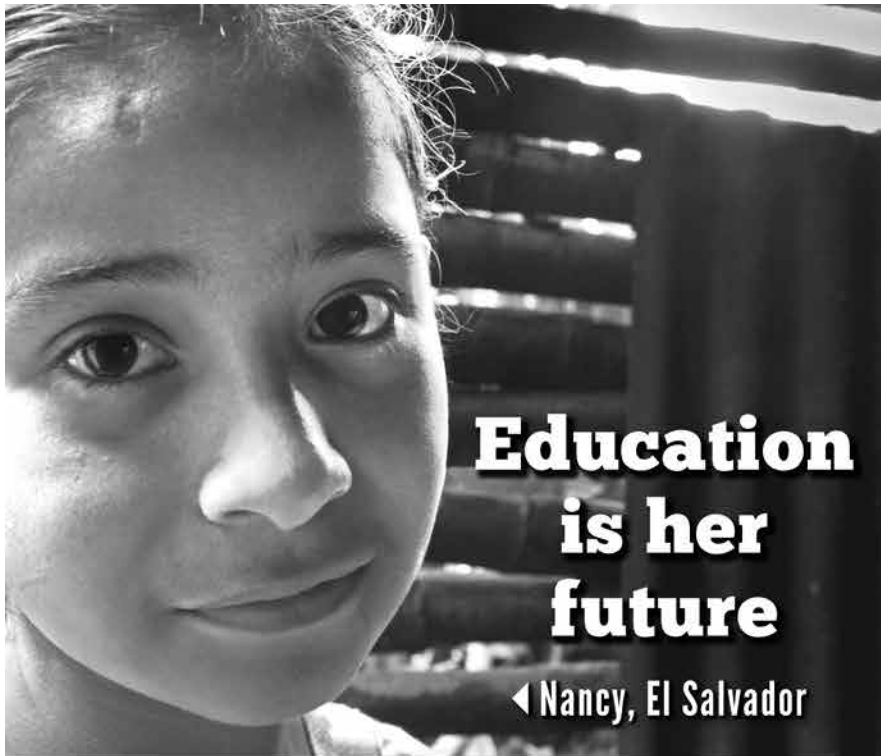
At four of the five Jesuit colleges where I taught, we published pamphlets, essays and annotated book lists of classics we hoped the students would read. The lists, written by 140

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faculty members, total 270 suggestions. Here are 10 titles, mentioned repeatedly in the listings, to keep us busy: the Bible, especially Genesis, Luke, Mark and Acts; *The Divine Comedy*, "Hamlet" or sonnets by Shakespeare; *The Brothers Karamazov*; *Walden*; *Pride and Prejudice*; *The Plague*; George Orwell's *Essays*; James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; and Karl Rahner's *Foundations of Faith*. Basic stuff. But how many of our students graduate having read more than James Joyce and Albert Camus?

The quiz questions at the start of this essay are not there to play "Gotcha!" They simply remind us that an infinite number of cultural allusions are in the air enriching our speech and goading our understanding. Those who knew that it was Lewis Carroll's Alice who fell down the rabbit hole had a better grasp of Nathaniel Rich's review of Amanda Knox's *Waiting to Be Heard: A Memoir* about the author's trial for murder in Italy. The review begins by applying Carroll's image of Alice to this contemporary woman, an accused murderer facing another trial.

The second question causes us to ask ourselves if we are as devoted to modernist paintings as the observer who described the theft as "a crime against humanity." Is it? The point of the humanities is that all great art is a powerful expression of our common humanity. As for the discovery of Beethoven's lost 10th Symphony? That story was broadcast, appropriately, on April Fools' Day.

Art helps to put our world into context. Today we look to the many nations of the Middle East that are in turmoil, and we struggle for words that will bring sense and order to the debacle. The war correspondent Robert Fisk turned to poetry in *The Independent* (7/21): "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!.../ Round the decay/ Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare/ the lone and level sands stretch far away." If we have a good humanities education, we will surely not only know that it was Shelley who wrote these lines; we might also know our modern struggles better because of him. **A**



SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

ASSOCIATE CHAPLAIN

About Sacred Heart University: Sacred Heart University, the second-largest independent Catholic university in New England, offers more than 50 undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs on its main campus in Fairfield, Connecticut, and satellites in Connecticut, Luxembourg and Ireland. More than 6,000 students attend the University's five colleges: Arts & Sciences; Health Professions; University College; the AACSB-accredited John F. (Jack) Welch College of Business; and the NCATE-accredited Farrington College of Education. The *Princeton Review* includes SHU in its guides "Best 377 Colleges -- 2013 Edition," "Best in the Northeast" and "Best 294 Business Schools -- 2012 Edition." *U.S. News & World Report* ranks SHU among the best Master's universities in the North in its annual "America's Best Colleges" publication. SHU fields 31 division I athletic teams, and has an award-winning program of community service.

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- Provide pastoral care for faculty, staff and students.
- Coordinate University Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, Baccalaureate masses, and all special occasion masses.
- Act as point person for all university prayer vigils.
- Plan routine opportunities for community prayer.
- Coordinate and schedule Small Christian Communities (Campus RENEW) provide training for Small Community leaders.
- Manage and approve all applications for the use of the sacred space of the university chapel.
- Coordinate the community's prayer in response to significant events in the life of the University and society.
- Coordinate memorial services and serve as the point person for University response to the death of students, faculty or staff.
- Share devotional talks, make presentations regarding spiritual life; serve as a spiritual mentor.
- Coordinate and preside at university weddings.
- Recruit, train and coordinate liturgical ministers for all liturgies.
- Communicate with liturgical music staff regarding youthful music that will foster full participation.
- Participate in Campus Ministry events and fellowships on a regular basis.
- Create and implement a student chaplain program for all sports teams/male and female.
- Interact with campus community at large.
- Other duties as assigned.

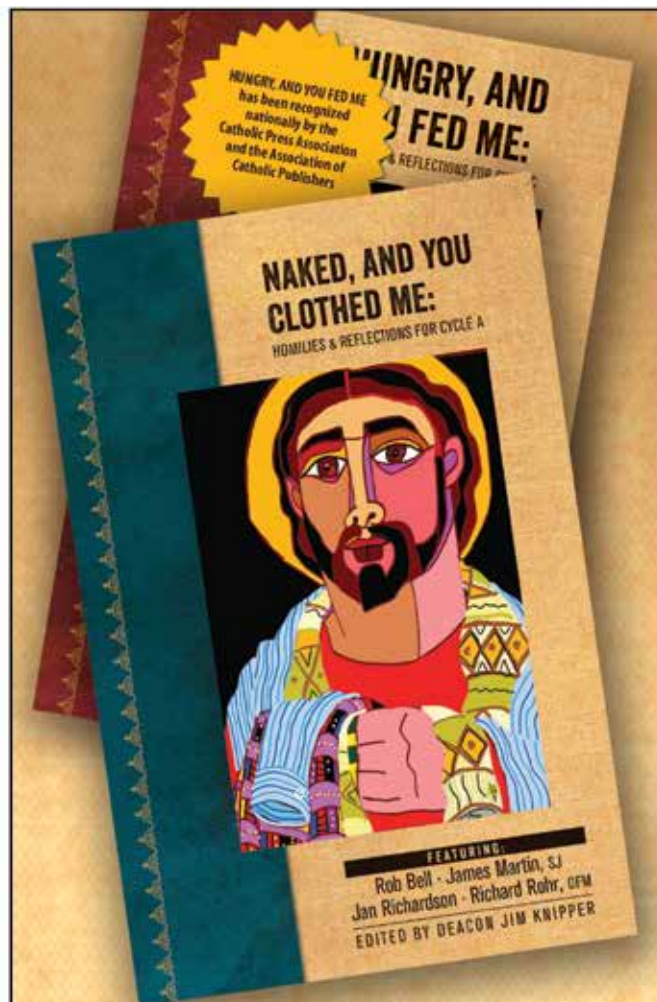
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BOOKS & CULTURE

ART | LEO J. O'DONOVAN

WEAVING THE WORLD

The Metropolitan Museum of Art explores the textile trade.

Well before globalization and technology unified the world, trade in textiles wove it both practically and sumptuously together. In the Age of Discovery that began in the early 16th century, ships sailing from Europe to the

East to find new routes for the spice trade carried textiles with them and brought even more home. Originating in China, Japan, India, Southeast Asia, Turkey and Iran, the textiles often functioned as currency and gradually became even more coveted than spices.

They were used for bed and table covers, wall hangings and tapestries, carpets, curtains, clothing and a variety of religious purposes. The stories they tell about the cultures they came from and the people that acquired them prove to be as intricate as some of their most gorgeous patterns.

Gorgeous is the word for the exhibition “Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500-1800” on display at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art through Jan. 5.



“The Toilet of the Princess,” attributed to John Vanderbank (active ca. 1680-1717)

PHOTOS ON PAGES 26 AND 27: THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Drawing on the museum's fabled collection for about two-thirds of its 134 objects, a team of seven Met curators have borrowed from seven different departments of the museum for a compellingly contextualized presentation. The loans come from other museums and private collections in the United States, Canada and Europe.

After Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope to India (1497–98), Portuguese traders set their sights on the southern coast of China and both coasts of India. A hybrid of weaving styles developed as Eastern artists incorporated Western motifs from biblical, classical and contemporary sources. The real show-stopper in this first gallery is “The Abduction of Helen,” a large hanging embroidered in China for the Portuguese market in the first half of the 17th century. It sets the classical Western story in a highly detailed Baroque city and embellishes it with a rich repertoire of Chinese motifs. The faces of the figures reflect a European approach brought to East Asia by Jesuit missionaries in the late 16th century.

By the 17th century, the empire of Portugal's Iberian rival, Spain, stretched from Northern California through South America and across the Pacific to the Philippines. Colonial tapestries bearing Spanish arms became popu-



Wedding coverlet (Colcha), Doña Rosa Solis y Menéndez, Mexico (Mérida), 1786



“Virgin of Guápulo,” Peru, 1680

lar, and Andean weavers proved to be immensely gifted in providing a profusion of folk-like figures who could include Adam and Eve, Leda and the Swan or heroes and heroines from popular tales. For a typically multi-referential object there is a reverent painting of the “Virgin of Guápulo” (Peru, c. 1680), which presents the Virgin holding a scepter of roses in her right hand and in her left the Christ Child raising his right hand in blessing. Both are crowned and dressed in elegant white silk brocades. The part-

ed red curtains behind and the gilded pedestal beneath the Virgin indicate that the painting does not represent her directly but rather her statue at the shrine outside Quito, Ecuador. There is another and darker side to the painting, of course, with its crowned figures sacralizing rulers in a continent of largely subjugated peasants.

When European traders first reached the Far East, wonders in silk had already been woven in China for over a millennium. A large and resplendent rectangular example done for the export market in the 17th century delights with its profusion of peonies, pheasants and peacocks, animals natural and mythical. While Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands and England traded with China through the Ming Dynasty and into the Qing, Japan was closed

to foreigners from the 1630s to the mid-19th century. But the Japanese still eagerly sought the woolen cloth otherwise unavailable to them (sheep were not raised in Japan), and the Met's exhibition includes a scarlet surcoat of wool such as Samurai warriors wore over their armor during the Edo period (1615-1868). Later in the show, an early 18th-century man's morning gown documents not only the subtlety and sophistication of Japanese silks but also the rare privilege of trading in Japan accorded the Dutch in 1641.

Burgeoning international trade also provided textiles for religious purposes, and the exhibition includes dramatically installed vestments for Roman Catholic liturgies (chasubles, copes, chalice covers) as well as a Hindu temple hanging, a Buddhist vestment and a gloriously flowering Torah Ark Curtain.

Eighteenth-century shifts in European taste from the Baroque to the Rococo and then to Neoclassicism make themselves felt in examples of the so-called “bizarre silks,” with their large, abstracted and highly stylized patterns, produced in Europe in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The florid, decorative delicacy of the Rococo is echoed in a ravishing, mid-18th-century palampore of cotton embroidered with silk, from Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts. The evolving Neoclassical preference for simplicity and symmetry, by contrast, stands out in a late 18th-century dress and scarf in white cotton (the newly fashionable color) delicately embroidered with silk flowers and falling uncinched to the floor.

No exhibition covering the whole world and 300 years of history can satisfy every particular interest. But visitors would do well to consider carefully what the catalogue acknowledges as “the brutality that facilitated

the growth of global trade networks” and “the horror of the traffic in human beings” who were often bartered for with textiles. As for the brutality, a late 18th-century cotton quilt shows in detail the grisly death of Captain James Cook in the Hawaiian Islands, presenting him as a universal hero and martyr. Another small gallery offers materials that contrast Spanish imperialism in the Americas with indigenous insurrections and mounting European opposition to the slave trade. Here three small paintings by Agostino Brunias (1728–96) romanticize West Indian life, minimizing rather than revealing its latent colonialist instability.

Returning to its strength, the show closes with some wonderful pieces. Ralph Earl’s 1789 portrait of the merchant Elijah Boardman with his treasure trove of textiles takes on a

whole new interest. One of his bolts of painted Indian cotton might even have been used to make a dress (robe à l’anglaise) that is shown nearby. An Indian palampore from about 1765, possibly given to Philip and Maria Van Rensselaer as a wedding present and still in pristine condition, boasts the usual fantastical flowers but pairs of birds, beasts and humans as well. See how it compares with the New York coverlet in linen and cotton or the Chinese silk palampore that are also in the gallery.

Marrying visual pleasure and historical insight in equal measure, the exhibition will be on view through the Christmas season. It is hard to imagine a better gift from the Met to all its visitors.

ON THE WEB

Karen Sue Smith reviews the crucifixions of Marc Chagall. americamagazine.org/art

LEO J. O'DONOVAN, S.J., is *president emeritus* of Georgetown University.

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BREAKING THE GLASS SLIPPER

In a recent viral video, a Rube Goldberg device made up of a series of pink and purple toys—a feather boa, a tea set, a baby doll—moves along to the tune of “Girls” by the hip hop group the Beastie Boys. But in this version of the song, the misogynistic lyrics have been replaced. Instead of calling for girls “to do the dishes” and “to clean up my room,” the revised lyrics call for girls to build apps and spaceships. Produced by GoldieBlox, a toy company that pairs storytelling and simple machines to encourage girls’ interest in engineering, the video was quickly hailed as a success and the toys praised for being an example of how to get girls to maintain interest in the male-dominated fields of science, technology, engineering and math, popularly known as STEM fields.

When the novelty of the catchy video wore off, however, the reaction to GoldieBlox was not entirely positive. Some comments criticized the quality of the toys, others said the main character of the stories was too thin and blonde, and still others disliked the fact that one of the story lines revolved around a “princess pageant,” arguing that it played into the girly stereotypes that the toys claimed to upend—not to mention the bad press from the brief legal scuffle between GoldieBlox and the Beastie Boys. “You cannot create a toy meant to break down stereotypes when you start off with the ideal that ‘we know all girls love princesses,’” wrote Melissa Atkins Wardy, author of the forthcoming *Redefining Girly: How Parents Can Fight the Stereotyping and Sexualizing of Girlhood, From Birth to Tween*, on her blog. Yet no matter one’s opinion of the product, the sentiment

the video evokes—that girls should shouldn’t be confined to or defined by what GoldieBlox calls “the pink aisle”—clearly resonated with many viewers.

Princess narratives (and, thanks in large part to Disney, the accompanying products) have become so ubiquitous among young girls that simply offering an alternative to such ideals can attract media coverage. In fact, Mercy Academy, an all-girls, Catholic high school in Louisville, Ky., recently received national attention for its enrollment video and the accompanying ad campaign.

Like GoldieBlox, the goal of Mercy’s video is to get viewers to understand the ways in which a product (in this case, the school) helps to empower young women. With the help of the firm Doe-Anderson, the ads bluntly refute the fairytale narrative on which many girls were raised. They feature paintings of a glass slipper and a faceless prince and princess, accompanied by various slogans, including: “You’re not a princess. Prepare for real life”; “Mirror, Mirror, on the wall. Be more than just the fairest of them all”; and “Don’t wait for a prince. Be able to rescue yourself.”

Mercy Academy’s principal, Amy Elstone, told Huffington Post UK that “as a Catholic institution, our founder, Catherine McAuley, focused on education as a way of empowerment, self-sustainability and independence. We believe in empowering young

women to chart their own course in life.” The high school is sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, and the video, which at press time had more than 52,000 views, points out that the school offers “a strong foundation in faith” as one of the reasons the students there will be “better prepared for whatever comes next.”

The campaign is admirable not simply because it’s eye-catching and clever, but because it encourages young women to see their lives as multifaceted, to understand the need to develop their mind, body and spirit. The broader message of the video also emphasizes that developing one’s own talents is not only empowering but also can be a way to contribute to a larger community.

The video encourages young women to be themselves. It’s a common and perhaps overused refrain, but amid

the uncertainty, anxiety and excitement of growing up in today’s world, young women can’t hear this enough. And even without the catchy ad campaigns, Catholic schools have played and can continue to play a vital role in helping students to take a whole-person approach to life and to strive to live according to Gospel ideals. In the end, it’s not the prevalence of princess pinks or waiting for a so-called prince that’s the problem, so much as the pressure caused by the pernicious belief that lives with alternate narratives somehow fall short. The truth is, as Mercy’s video put it, “In real life we all write our own stories.”

Girls
shouldn’t be
confined to
or defined
by ‘the
pink aisle.’



MESSIAH COMPLEX

ZEALOT

The Life and Times Of Jesus of Nazareth

By Reza Aslan
Random House. 296p \$27

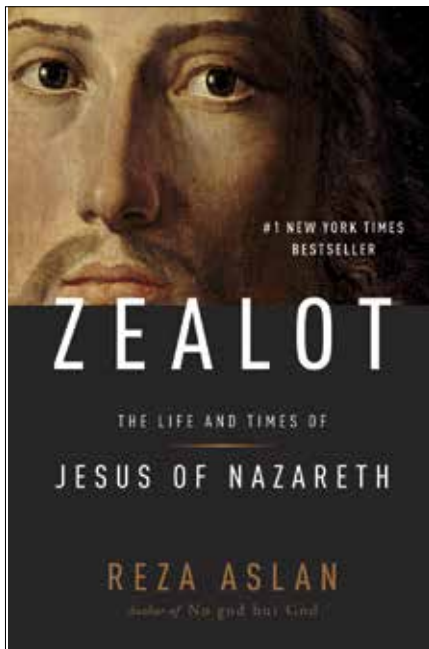
Reza Aslan's study of the historical Jesus has been hovering near the top of The New York Times best-seller list for several weeks. It is written in an engaging style and reads like a historical novel. But the author does not want it to be taken as "fiction" but as a serious work of historical inquiry. The notes that accompany his work are copious, and he cites much of the pertinent literature for such an undertaking.

But, sad to say, the end result could easily be assigned to fiction. Here is a summary of Aslan's basic thesis. The portrayal of Jesus in the four Gospels and the writings of Paul completely mask the true historical Jesus, a Galilean peasant consumed with zeal for God's kingdom who advocated the overthrow of the ruling powers (this included the high priests in Jerusalem as well as their Roman overlords) and who saw himself as the God-appointed king of this new realm.

The Jesus of the New Testament, on the other hand, is a divine figure, the "literal" Son of God, totally devoid of any earthly interest, and is a creation of Paul the Apostle and other compliant church leaders on behalf of an urban and Hellenistic branch of the early church that was in tension with the Jerusalem-based church led by James. It is the divine Jesus created by the needs of the Roman church that was ultimately triumphant over the authentic portrait of the historical Jesus. This is the one that has endured in orthodox Christianity to this day.

How does Aslan reach such a sen-

sational conclusion? The starting point and one of the few reliable historical facts about Jesus in the Gospel literature, in his view, is the account of Jesus' purification of the Jerusalem temple—a provocative action that alarmed the Jewish Temple establishment and alerted the vigilant Roman authorities



to bring Jesus to his death through crucifixion, a form of capital punishment reserved primarily for crimes of sedition.

From this basis, Aslan develops his theory about Jesus' true identity. Jesus was a Jewish peasant from Nazareth of Galilee, a hotbed of pre-revolutionary fever, whose zeal was triggered by the reformist preaching of John the Baptist, who was also Jesus' mentor. Upon his return to Galilee, whose poor farmers were by now reeling under oppressive taxation, Jesus set out on his mission from God. A charismatic healer and magician, at least in the perception of his contemporaries, Jesus advocated

overthrow and destruction—violent if need be—of the ruling powers and their replacement by a kingdom that favored the poor and oppressed. Jesus saw himself as the "Messiah," God's anointed one who would rule this new kingdom, but masked his intentions by avoiding the title Messiah and using the enigmatic title "Son of Man," which was drawn from the Book of Daniel and referred to one who would restore Israel to its land and purify its devotion to the Torah. Jesus' healings and his charismatic preaching began to draw crowds, and the closer he and his disciples came to Jerusalem, the seat of both priestly and Roman power, the more dangerous did Jesus' campaign become until the fatal days of his arrest and crucifixion.

Although Jesus' mission, like that of the many messianic pretenders of his age, would end in abject failure, the conviction of his early followers that Jesus was risen from the dead spearheaded a new movement in Jesus' name, keeping alive his teaching and the memory of his person.

The Jesus of Nazareth who walked the roads of Galilee and Judea in the first century had virtually nothing in common with the divine Jesus who would be portrayed in the Gospels, a portrayal that Aslan amazingly characterizes as completely "spiritual" and "other-worldly," a Jesus who has no interest whatsoever in earthly matters, one who is "the image of a gentle shepherd cultivated by the early Christian community," a "man of unconditional peace almost wholly insulated from the political upheavals of his time."

How did such a distortion happen? Aslan's explanation of the process is mind-boggling, to say the least. The first step was that the earliest followers of Jesus were ignorant, illiterate peasants who made the mistake of erroneously applying Old Testament Scriptures to Jesus, beginning the process of idealizing him. Then came the need to get along with Roman author-

ities, particularly on the part of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians spread throughout the Roman Empire. The revolutionary intentions of the real Jesus had to be muted and his mission made spiritual and harmless.

Even Jesus' teaching including love of enemies—universally recognized by scholars as a unique element of the historical Jesus' teaching and seemingly an obstacle to the portrayal of Jesus as a zealous revolutionary intent on destroying his enemies—is bent by Aslan to his own thesis. The "enemies" Jesus meant were internal Jewish enemies, not the Romans or foreign oppressors. Even the parable of the good Samaritan, which the Gospel of Luke presents as an illustration of Jesus' teaching on love of neighbor across the boundaries of culture, is explained by Aslan as a veiled attack on Jesus' enemies in the priestly class rather than as an ethical teaching.

The third and final step is attributed to Paul. Here Aslan brings out the tired thesis that Paul was the true founder of Christianity. Paul, steeped in the urban and philosophical culture of the Roman Empire, created a divinized Jesus, a type of Roman demigod, one who had little in common with the Torah-obedient and zealous Jew who was the real Jesus, but one who would be acceptable to Roman authorities and a much better sell to a Roman audience of Gentiles.

To pull this off, Paul had to reckon with James, the brother of the Lord and the true leader of the church—"the bishop of bishops," as Aslan characterizes him. James, although a devoted follower of his brother, remained a law-abiding Jew who did not accept the notion of a Jesus who was the incarnate Son of God—a belief completely inimical to Jewish faith. James continued to have the allegiance of the other apostles, including Peter and John, and managed through emissaries to keep Paul in check. Aslan even interprets the visit of Paul to Jerusalem

recorded in Acts 21:17–26, which Luke portrays as a benign encounter with James and the other leaders, as a "bitter" confrontation in which James humiliates and embarrasses Paul.

Paul's eventual appeal to stand trial after his arrest is not, according to Aslan, an exercise of his rights as a Roman citizen but a desperate attempt on Paul's part to get as far away from James' "noose of control" as he could. But after the murder of James by the high priest Ananus and the effective dispersal of the Jewish Christian community in the calamity of A.D. 70, Paul's brand of Christology becomes triumphant. The Gospels themselves are heavily influenced by Paul's divinized portrait of Jesus, and the Gospel of John is "little more than Pauline theology in narrative form."

How is one to assess an effort like this? The attempt to drive a wedge between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith is not a new enterprise, but Aslan's proposal is particularly stark and radically reductionist. Most scholars who hold this thesis have nuanced their argumentation, noting an evolutionary process in which the resurrection faith of the early community gradually idealized its portrayal of Jesus.

Aslan rolls through any nuances without hesitation: the writings of Paul and the Evangelists are simply contrived. Little is mentioned about the preaching, teaching and worship of the early community as an important conduit for the early church's traditions about

Jesus. And their motives, it should be noted, are base: Aslan repeatedly characterizes the early church's portrayal as a "flat-out fabrication," as a "desperate" attempt, as "convoluted," as a "concoction" (referring to Mark's passion narrative), as an effort for which "factual accuracy was irrelevant." The accumulation of such descriptors gives

From the Rough Ways

This is a fearful night.
The cloud-wrack scuds
Hundreds of feet above us, on a blast
That shrieks of war.
Wind rips at mighty oaks
And threatens roof-tops cowering at their feet.
Men feel its fingers in their very souls
And barricade the entrance, lest the dog
Within, half-tamed, leap up at sound of roaring
To go ravaging upon their hearths.

We'll have no truce with fear.
Yet here is danger
Such as might strangle more spirit than flesh...

Make us a silence, O creative Spirit!
Into our shaken chamber
Breathe a silence.

This is December.

We have a bitter need
To hear a young Child cry.

SISTER MARY DAVID

This poem was previously published in The Second America Book of Verse, a collection of the best of America poetry, 1930–1955.

the impression that the early church's distortion of the real Jesus was something akin to a modern Washington cover-up rather than a serious and sincere theological and religious process rooted in the community's historical memory of Jesus and his mission.

Similarly, the author's characterization of Judaism is also disturbing. Aslan rightly contends that the Jewish Scriptures and traditions would have influenced Jesus of Nazareth, but the God he has in mind—one who legitimates Jesus' revolutionary mission—is summarized as follows: The God of the Hebrew Scriptures is "the same God whom the Bible calls, 'a man of war' (Ex 15:3), the God who repeatedly commands the wholesale slaughter of every foreign man, woman and child who occupies the Land of the Jews, the 'blood-spattered God' of Abraham and Moses, and Jacob and Joshua (Is 63:3), the God who 'shatters the heads of his enemies,' bids his warriors to bathe their feet in their blood and leave their corpses to be eaten by dogs (Ps 68:21–23). That is the *only* God Jesus knew and the *sole* God he worshipped." To say that this vengeful God is the "only" image of God Jesus could draw from his Jewish heritage is an irresponsible distortion.

In fact, Aslan's whole book has an exaggerated and tendentious tone. In an age when there were a number of messianic claimants, Aslan describes Judea as "teeming" with them; in an age when healers were recognized, Aslan claims there were "untold numbers" of them, "as well established" as the profession of a "woodworker or mason"—and better paid. There are also strange, out-of-focus and inaccurate observations about the topography of the land in Jesus' day. Jerusalem is situated "between the twin peaks of Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives" (these mountains share one ridge and are to the east of Jerusalem); Sepphoris is a "day's walk" from Nazareth (it is only five miles away, a little over an hour's

walk); Nazareth is built on a "gently sloping hill" (in fact it is situated on very steep bluffs facing the Jezreel valley); the lands near the Sea of Galilee were nurtured by "cool salt breezes" (remarkable for a *fresh*-water lake).

Some claim that Aslan's book shot to the bestseller list because of a hostile interview with a Fox News anchor who badgered Aslan for his Muslim identity, seemingly accusing him of

writing a Muslim refutation of Jesus. I did not find any evidence of that and presume that Aslan is sincere in his scholarly effort. That said, his work, in my view, presents a very distorted portrayal of both the Jesus of history and of the New Testament.

DONALD SENIOR, C.P., is professor of New Testament studies at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

KENNETH R. HIMES

FOR THE LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

OFFERING HOSPITALITY Questioning Christian Approaches to War

By Caron E. Gentry
University of Notre Dame Press.
176p \$29

Caron E. Gentry is a lecturer in the School of International Relations at the University of St. Andrew's in Scotland. She is also a student of theology who has taught a course on international relations and Christianity. This volume is the outcome of her effort to join the two disciplines.

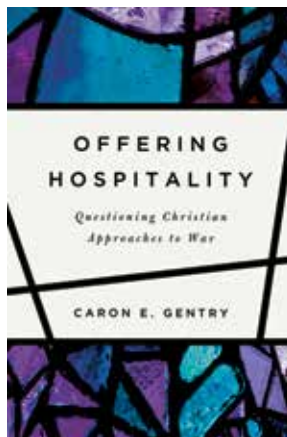
The title of the book is more on target than the subtitle, since hospitality is the key theme developed throughout. More than Christian approaches to war, the author's focus is on a Christian rationale for peacebuilding, although she does not use that word. Instead, Gentry borrows a term from the just war tradition, *last resort*, and then completely reinterprets its meaning so that last resort is pretty much equivalent to peacebuilding.

Her academic training in international relations informs Chapter 2, in

which she discusses the changing face of warfare with the increase in intra-state conflicts: the civil wars that arise in failed states due to ethnic and religious differences or the insurrections that arise because of authoritarian rule by a tyrant or oligarchy. Today, these incidents make up the majority of armed conflicts around the world. Gentry cites research identifying the variables that allow us to measure the likelihood of collapse or conflict in troubled states. We also have a sense of the cultural, political and economic factors that can forestall potential failed states.

For Gentry the just war tradition, if it is to be useful in the new age, requires revision. Central to that renewal is the development of hospitality as a key value through her twist on the traditional just war criterion of last resort. Hospitality, as Gentry uses it, is a call to care for others, even

to the point of making oneself "vulnerable." This idea of "hospitality is intrinsically related to Christian conceptions of *agape*." And *agape* is not only foundational for hospitality but for the way Christians since Augustine have thought about war.





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Relying heavily upon Paul Ramsey's classic treatment of Augustine as well as the historical work of James T. Johnson, Gentry proposes that the idea of a justifiable use of force came about as Christians struggled with the question of how to love the neighbor who was attacked when one had the wherewithal to beat back the aggressor. As Christians grew in numbers and in their influence within the Roman Empire, it became conceivable that one might use the empire's power to alter unjust situations where a neighbor was violently victimized.

Gentry is quick to caution that the persistent obligation to practice *agape* must deflect the way Christians understand the idea of a just use of force, for even enemies must be treated with care. Hence, there are normative restraints upon war. Gentry names three figures as representative types of Christian approaches to war: Reinhold Niebuhr for Christian realism, Stanley Hauerwas for Christian pacifism, and Jean Bethke

Elshtain for the just war tradition (she is particularly hard on Elshtain).

Her difficulty with Niebuhr is that he is state-centric and less than helpful for discussing the new kinds of organized violence that come with failed states, terrorism, genocides, insurrections and civil wars. He is also so focused on the balance of power that he neglects the powerless in the gamesmanship of great nations. In short, Niebuhr's approach is inhospitable to the weak and poor people of the globe.

She judges Hauerwas to be insufficiently aware of how his privileged position as a citizen of the United States provides him with the freedom to be a pacifist while "there is a distinct absence and silence in his work surrounding those who are killed or martyred daily" in places where a liberal democratic state does not provide the security Hauerwas enjoys but criticizes. Gentry opposes Hauerwas's advocacy for a church that is anti-political. "There is not enough emphasis on a truly timely, proactive response to injustices in the *world* because of how much he values and draws exclusionary boundaries around the *church*." So Hauerwas, too, fails the test of hospitality because the marginal and weak are inadequately cared for by his version of pacifism.

When discussing Elshtain, Gentry's criticism is directed at her move toward neoconservatism after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. She believes Elshtain adopted the prejudices of neo-Orientalism. The cultural critic Edward Said maintained that Orientalism sees the Middle East as "a conquered territory filled with people who are less intelligent, incapable of being educated, and sexually deviant." Neo-Orientalism is the West's extension of that prejudice to all people associated with Islam. Elshtain's writings on the war on terrorism, according to Gentry, adopted a stance that was severely lacking in hospitality toward the other who was not on the side of the United States in its military excursions.

At the end of the book Gentry summarizes her approach to "proactive last resort." This is an attempt to integrate a political form of hospitality with just war thinking. Within traditional just war thinking, the idea of last resort was to discourage leaders from rushing to war by requiring that alternatives be explored first. Gentry's proposed "proactive last resort" means acting hospitably, that is caring dis-interestedly, toward others in order to transform situations that are likely places of future conflict. Social science research allows us to target what are the probable trouble spots, and Christian faith should motivate us to act. Promoting authentic human development among the weakest and most marginal is to avoid war through proactive last resort.

"Authentic human development" is not Gentry's phrase but one I borrow from Catholic social teaching. And this leads to a complaint. Throughout the author's discussion there is an almost total absence of the Roman Catholic tradition. Not only are classical figures like Aquinas, Suarez and Vitoria not mentioned, but contemporary Catholic authors are also ignored. Nor is there any reference to the entire body of Catholic social teaching on war. Familiarity with Pope Paul VI's idea that "development is the new name for peace" or Pope John Paul II's statement that "solidarity is simultaneously the path to development and to peace" might have provided Gentry with additional support for her efforts at establishing a "proactive last resort."

Despite the inadequate exploration of the broad Christian tradition and the somewhat labored effort to include peacebuilding under the criterion of last resort, this is a work that adds another voice to the chorus calling for Christians not just to avoid war or practice it with restraint, but to build peace. May the numbers increase.

KENNETH R. HIMES, O.F.M., is an associate professor of theology at Boston College, in Chestnut Hill, Mass.



THE MYSTIC OF MILLEDGEVILLE

A PRAYER JOURNAL

By Flannery O'Connor
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 112p \$18

This little book provides an intimate portrait of the artist as a young Catholic woman who desires to become both a saint and a famous writer.

That's the territory of Flannery O'Connor's (1925–64) newly published book, *A Prayer Journal*, edited by W. A. Sessions, O'Connor's friend and a scholar of her work, who found this journal buried among her papers for more than half a century.

Written in longhand in a marble composition book (a facsimile is included here), the first section of the book meditates on the cardinal virtues of faith, hope and charity and the four types of prayer (adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication). O'Connor says that she is competent only in composing prayers of supplication. The rest of the book consists of prayers imploring God's help.

The prayers show another side to O'Connor. Here she is not the hardened satirist stripping away at the faux piety of fictional silly old ladies or giving comeuppance to bratty kids. She's filled with doubt about her writing and her religious aspirations. She wants to succeed as a writer but does not think for a second that she can do it on her own. "Dear God," she writes, "I am so discouraged about my work."

She sees herself as a cheese and asks God to make her a mystic. She says she is a moth who wants God to be its lover. She has an ecstatic, almost palpable desire to be the beloved of God. She prays for God's grace and for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "If I could only hold God in my mind," she says.

The only child of Roman Catholic parents, O'Connor was born in Savannah, Ga. Later, at 13, she moved

to Milledgeville when her father died of lupus—a disease that also claimed her life when she was 39. During her brief career, she wrote two novels and 31 short stories, for which she received several major writing awards. After her death, her complete short stories (collected and published posthumously) received the National Book Award for fiction in 1972.

O'Connor wrote this prayer journal from 1946 to 1947 while she was a student at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. The book could be called a faith journey. But O'Connor arguably would disapprove of that term. The inherent pretentiousness of the words might elicit in her what she describes as a "faint nausea," which comes on her when she confronts insincerity.

If there is one defining characteristic of O'Connor's life and writing, it is her disgust at pretension. In these prayers, she scrutinizes the superficial side of herself and her world. It could be argued that O'Connor kept this journal as a way to purge herself of every vestige of affectation.

She was also hard on her perceived writing faults. O'Connor composed, revised and cut paragraphs and pages from this journal when she thought they were poorly expressed: "Tore the last thing out..." she says. "It was worthy of me all right; but not worthy of what I ought to be."

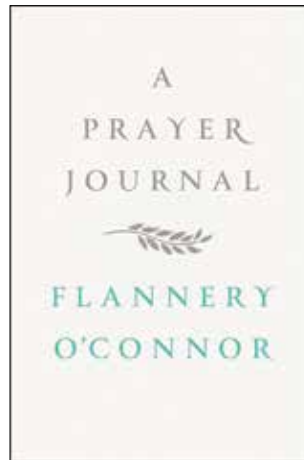
She wrote these prayers partly because ordinary religion had begun to leave her cold. The rosary and other everyday prayers had become rote to her, "a few memorized prayers babbled over once lightly." She could not concentrate at Mass even after receiving communion:

"[T]houghts awful in their pettiness & selfishness come into my mind even with the Host on my tongue," she says.

She portrays herself as weak, insipid, stupid, cowardly, mediocre, lazy, uncharitable or lacking in faith, imagination and talent. She says she does things in a "picky fish bone kind of way." It's hard to believe that she would later be considered one of America's greatest authors, up there with Faulkner and Hawthorne, whose themes play out in O'Connor's own fiction—albeit enhanced by her brand of irony.

Although this is not a journal about writing, it does refer to writers she finds inspiring—especially Georges Bernanos (*The Diary of a Country Priest*) whose influence can be seen here. O'Connor offers a few tips about the craft of writing, including this one, which is central to her work: "To maintain any thread in the novel, there must be a view of the world behind it & the most important single item under this view of [the] world is [a] conception of love—divine, natural, & perverted.... [W]hen a view of love is present..., no more need be added...."

Seeded through these prayers are O'Connor's musings on her drive to write. When her writing goes well, she ascribes her success to God: "Don't ever let me think, dear God, that I was anything but the instrument for your story—just like the typewriter was mine." Above all, she prays that her work be permeated by Christian values. The position, she says, is not an easy one. Nor is it an easy one to make transparent in fiction or, for that matter, in fact. But as she suggests in this compelling journal, she cannot settle for anything less.



DIANE SCHARPER teaches English at Towson University in Towson, Md. She is the author of several books, including *Radiant: Prayer/Poems* (Cathedral Foundation Press).

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Established as San Francisco's first institution of higher education in 1855, the University of San Francisco is deeply embedded in the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural life of one of the most innovative, diverse, and dynamic cities in the world. USF presently serves over 10,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in Arts and Sciences, Education, Law, Management, and Nursing and Health Professions. USF has 1033 faculty members, 1,029 staff, and an operating budget of over \$385 million.

The next president will succeed Rev. Stephen A. Privett, S.J., now in his 14th year as president. Under Fr. Privett's leadership, the university has significantly enhanced its academic programs; achieved sustained enrollment growth; acquired a Downtown Campus in the heart of San Francisco's financial district; transformed the main campus with the addition of several new buildings, including the recently opened John Lo Schiavo, S.J. Center for Science and Innovation; considerably raised its visibility in the San Francisco Bay Area; and embraced a meaningful university-wide commitment to social justice.

As the external and internal leader of the university, the next president will be expected to:

- ▶ Embody USF's Mission and Core Values as a Jesuit Catholic institution
- ▶ Unite the community around a shared vision for academic excellence and distinction
- ▶ Create a financial model for the future that clearly places the academic enterprise at the core
- ▶ Realize the vision of USF as "San Francisco's University"
- ▶ Define the pathway for student success from enrollment to engaged alumni
- ▶ Lead an ambitious fundraising effort
- ▶ Leverage a powerful and dedicated Board of Trustees as partners in success

Review of confidential nominations and applications will begin immediately and will continue until the position is filled. Please direct all inquiries or nominations, and applications, including a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, and list of professional references (with full contact information) to:

- ▶ **Julie Filizetti, Cathy R. Daniels and Sabrina Singh**
Isaacson, Miller, 1000 Sansome St., Ste. 300, San Francisco, CA 94111-1347
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Family in Flight

HOLY FAMILY (A), DEC. 29, 2013

Readings: Sir 3:2–14; Ps 128:1–5; Col 3:12–17; Mt 2:13–23

“Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him” (Mt 2:13)

Family life in antiquity was a life of insecurity, though families in many parts of the world still know this insecurity well even today. The warm pictures we might concoct of ancient families—though certainly the ancients loved their children, and spouses loved each other just as families do today—was leavened with something modern Westerners do not know as intimately as our ancestors did even two generations ago. Death was always lurking, threatening the fabric and integrity of the family.

Infant mortality in the Mediterranean world was high; perhaps as many as 50 percent of children in the ancient world did not live to see their fifth birthday. We should not forget that maternal mortality was almost as high at childbirth, due to complications in pregnancy, poor medical standards and hygiene, subsequent infections and the young age, from our perspective, at which so many mothers, girls or teenagers gave birth.

But this was not the only threat to the family. In addition to the constant possibility of death were the realities of food insecurity, often due to lack of sufficient work, especially for day laborers in Jesus’ day. Unless one was among the wealthy few who could purchase whatever they needed when they needed it—which in the first century was a distinct minority of people—or store up food to compensate for poor harvests or famine, food was something that people

needed to purchase daily or lacked daily. The stress this put on parents and children was immense.

Families in antiquity were also strictly hierarchical. The father in the Roman family, the *paterfamilias*, wielded almost unlimited power over the life and death of his child.

The *patria potestas*, the authority of the father, was not just theoretical power. While Jewish and Greek fathers had less power than a Roman father, the authority of the father was unquestioned.

There is, finally, the fact that slaves, who might have amounted to 30 percent to 40 percent of people in the ancient Mediterranean world, could not form legal families. Slave families that had been formed on a de facto basis could be destroyed by the selling of a child or parent whenever a slave owner chose.

These issues are important if we want to see the family into which Jesus was born in its context. For one thing, the fact that Jesus was born and survived and that his mother gave birth and survived would have been cause for celebration in the broader family and kinship network. Surviving birth was not to be taken for granted. The fact that Joseph took Mary as his wife, though he was not the father of the child, was an act of compassion that would not have been expected of any man in antiquity. Matthew’s Gospel tells us that Joseph received revelatory guidance, but it was guidance to care for the most vulnerable

of people: a young, unmarried pregnant woman.

And still, the story of the holy family brings into play yet another, broader level of insecurity: political insecurity at the hands of an ancient ruler. The conception of human rights as we envisage them did not exist, and the judicial system would have had little impact if the king decided to kill you. The Holy Family had to make a decision to flee to save itself. Conceptions of justice did exist in the ancient world, but depending

upon your status and position, access to such power was absent or extremely minimal. If the king wanted you dead, your death was imminent.

The family life of the Holy Family resonates today, not because of an-



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on the vulnerability of the Holy Family, Joseph, Mary and Jesus. How might you honor them today by caring for other vulnerable families?

cient hierarchical conceptions of family, in which strict subordination of the lesser to the greater within the family mimicked the social structure of the day, but because whatever threats challenged the family and whatever the construction of the ancient family, people did love one another and cared for one another no matter the circumstances. The Holy Family is a model of a family sticking together as refugees, with internal tension and external threats and insecurity challenging them at every step of the way. In the same way God protected and sustained them, we need to reach out to vulnerable families today, who model how God chose to send his son to us: in the midst of the human family.

JOHN W. MARTENS is an associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn.

Manifest Divinity

EPIPHANY (A), JAN. 5, 2014

Readings: Is 60:1–6; Ps 72:1–13; Eph 3:2–6; Mt 2:1–12

“They knelt down and paid him homage” (Mt 2:11)

The Magi knew how to treat the king. After seeking him far beyond the bounds of their country, these astrologers, “when they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” The word translated as “paid him homage” means an act of reverence, in which people fall to their knees and place their heads upon the ground. The Magi acted toward Jesus with the reverence due the divine king. Jesus was, after all, an epiphany, a word derived from the Greek *epiphaneia*, which described the manifestation or appearance of divinity and was usually applied to Hellenistic and Roman rulers.

Reverence was not the response of Herod the Great, however, who after gathering information slyly from the Magi, decides to put an end to this supposed king, a manifest threat to his own power. Once the Magi are warned by a dream of Herod’s plan, they do not return to him. Herod desires the death of the newborn king and will go to any lengths to bring the deed to pass. Herod’s response is brutal and savage: “When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according

to the time that he had learned from the wise men” (Mt 2:16).

Matthew’s infancy account has at its heart a theological and narrative structure that draws us to Moses and the Old Testament narratives in which his life as an infant child was threatened, and he was adopted into the pharaoh’s family, which saved him from the threat of death. So, too, is Jesus’ life under threat from Herod; and Jesus is adopted, as it were, into the family of Joseph (thus becoming a son of David) who then spirited him away to save him from death. The purposes of the Gospel of Matthew, without question, are to present Jesus as the new Moses, the one who fulfills the prophetic hopes of Israel—Chapter 2 alone presents three prophetic fulfillments (2:15, 17, 23)—and is the divinely promised Messiah, the son of David and Abraham.

But could Herod have done such a thing, killing infants and toddlers to preserve his kingship? We have no historical record of this event beyond Matthew. Yet, even after we account for the theological and literary purposes of Matthew’s infancy narrative, the event that grounds the narrative is not as historically remote as has sometimes been considered. There is much that rings true to a reader.

That Herod would be “greatly troubled” would make sense for a king who had an obvious personal stake in remaining king and whose kingship

depended upon the patronage of the Romans. Why would Herod be troubled at the manifestation of true kingship? He would be troubled at any sort of manifestation of a king, real or imagined, that would have upset the status quo. To be a king like Herod was to be always in a state of anxiety, since one’s position was dependent upon the favor of those even greater than you, the Roman Empire, and the need to maintain order was tantamount for the Romans.

Still the question remains, could Herod have been a type of pharaoh killing all the children under 2 years of age around Bethlehem? Historically, the answer must be yes. Herod had three of his own children killed and one of his wives, Mariamne. If he had his own children killed, he could have killed other people’s children. Besides,

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Think of Jesus’ manifestation of his divinity and kingship. How and where might you pay homage to his kingship in the world today?

Herod is not himself drawing the sword and doing the dirty work, and Bethlehem was small, so we have no idea how many children were actually killed in this way—if it did indeed take place.

This is the easiest way to tell whether your king is making divinity manifest or simply clawing to maintain power: when earthly rulers are threatened, they seek to destroy. Herod came to destroy life and preserve power; Jesus came in weakness to bring life. Herod did not know how to treat the true king because he did not understand the source of true kingship or true power. If he had, he would have fallen to his knees. **JOHN W. MARTENS**

America (ISSN 0002-7049) is published weekly (except for 13 combined issues: Jan. 7-14, 21-28, April 8-15, June 3-10, 17-24, July 1-8, 15-22, July 29-Aug. 5, Aug. 12-19, Aug. 26-Sept. 2, Sept. 9-16, Dec. 9-16, 23-30) 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. Subscriptions: United States, \$56 per year; add U.S. \$30 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. \$56 per year for international priority airmail. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, P.O. Box 293059, Kettering, OH 45429.



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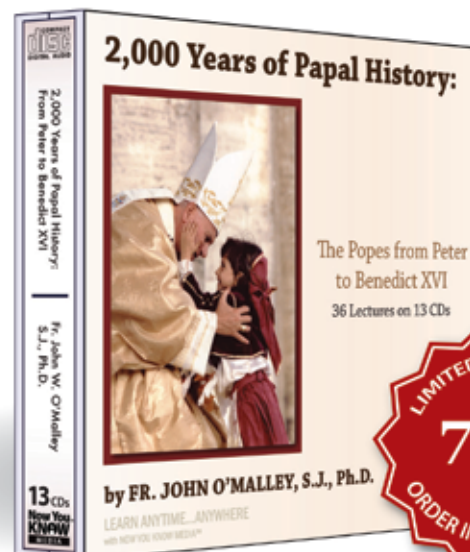
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