

# America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

JAN. 2, 2017 \$4.99



## Anxious Hearts

A FAITHFUL LOOK AT A FRIGHTENING EMOTION

GREGORY POPCAK



# OF MANY THINGS

**T**he March for Life, the annual gathering of pro-life activists, clergy and civic leaders, will take place in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 27. In our pro-life commitment, **America** is allied with the sentiments expressed in the statement by the Society of Jesus of the United States, "Standing for the Unborn," which was published in **America** on May 26, 2003. As is our annual custom, we republish excerpts from this text as an expression of our solidarity with the women and men who will march this month in the nation's capital.

**MATT MALONE, S.J.**

When we, the leadership of the Society of Jesus in the United States, survey the developments unfolding in our culture, we are deeply distressed at the massive injustices. A spirit of callous disregard for life shows itself in direct assaults on human life such as abortion and capital punishment, as well as in senseless violence, escalating militarism, racism, xenophobia and the skewed accumulation of wealth and life-sustaining resources. These realities compel us to speak out against what Pope John Paul II has called "the culture of death..."

Some influential voices posit a zero-sum conflict between "women's reproductive rights" and the right to life of unborn children. Jesuits ought to find their place among those who demonstrate the obvious confluence of women's rights and respect for life in all its forms. Pope John Paul II summed this partnership up when he wrote: "Therefore, in firmly rejecting 'pro-choice' it is necessary to become courageously 'pro-woman,' promoting a choice that is truly in favor of women..."

As Catholics and Jesuits, we would naturally prefer to live in a country where every citizen, voter and court consistently favor legal recognition of and

protection for the unborn.... We must acknowledge, however, that phrases such as "the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"...are phrases with contested meanings that others understand differently than we do.... The more attractive option seeks neither to flee nor to dominate situations of pluralism. It commits us rather to a process of engaging those who initially disagree with us on some issues, seeking to create an acceptable consensus wherever possible by building upon those truths on which we can reach agreement....

This path of "proposing, rather than imposing," was described by the great American Jesuit theologian of the past century, John Courtney Murray. While emphasizing the value of tolerance and mutual dialogue, he also advised against any sort of moral relativism....

Another way of describing this stance is to say that Jesuits are committed to narrowing the gap between the current civil law of our nation and the demands of the moral law as we understand it. Our long-term goal remains full legal recognition of and protection for the unborn child—from the moment of conception.

In the near future, we cannot realistically expect complete agreement among all participants in the abortion debate. We must listen respectfully to others' opinions, just as we expect a fair hearing of our own arguments against abortion. Our confidence in the persuasive power of well articulated defenses of pro-life positions sustains us, even as we acknowledge the long struggle ahead.... In the meantime, our common calling is to stand in solidarity with the unborn, the "least of our brothers and sisters" (Mt 25:40), through prayer and political activism.

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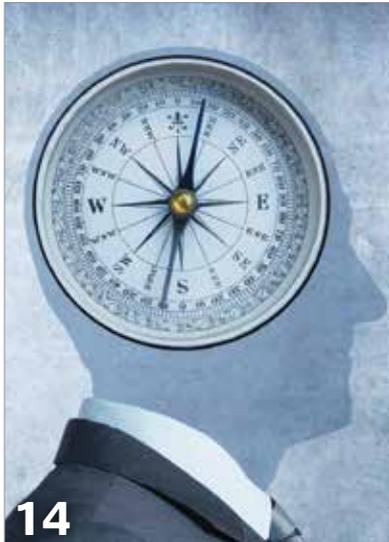
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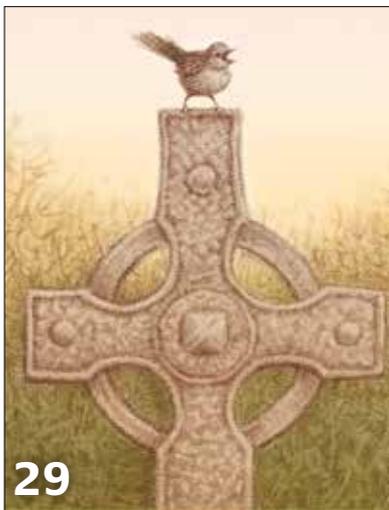
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## ON THE WEB

The composer J. J. Wright talks with James Martin, S.J., about the future of **Catholic sacred music**. Plus, a look back at the **biggest Catholic stories of 2016**. Full digital highlights on page 17 and at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).



### The Senate's Responsibility

The constitutional process for approval of cabinet appointments has rarely seemed so crucial. The lack of experience in government or public service in expected nominees like Rex W. Tillerson, for secretary of state, Andrew F. Puzder, for secretary of labor, and Ben Carson, for secretary of housing and urban development, is just the beginning of the issues the senators will have to consider when vetting these individuals.

There are also large potential conflicts of interest for billionaire and multimillionaire nominees, who, like President-elect Donald J. Trump himself, must try to set their business interests aside for the terms of their service. The warm relationship of Mr. Tillerson with Vladimir Putin of Russia makes his nomination especially troubling.

The policy positions held by a number of the nominees raise questions about whether they have been appointed to lead departments or diminish them. Rick Perry has proposed eliminating the Department of Energy, which he is now being named to head. The Labor Department nominee, Mr. Puzder, is a fast-food industry executive who has fought raising the federal minimum wage. Scott Pruitt, named to head the Environmental Protection Agency, has opposed President Obama's efforts to combat climate change. And while we applaud Betsy DeVos's fight for vouchers, her strong criticism of public schools makes her an odd choice for the Department of Education.

The Senate has a duty to ensure that the president's power to choose his own nominees for cabinet posts does not become a license for executive branch appointees to unilaterally reshape policy goals set by the legislature. Maybe these nominees can put aside conflicts of interest and negative attitudes and become stellar public servants. But they will be better on the job if the Senate does its job by carefully examining Mr. Trump's picks.

### Let There Be Peace on Earth

"Peace is the only true direction of human progress—and not the tensions caused by ambitious nationalisms, nor conquests by violence, nor repressions which serve as mainstay for a false civil order." These words appear in this year's papal message for the World Day of Peace, but they do not come from Pope Francis. They are the words of Pope Paul VI, written for the first World Day of Peace, observed on Jan. 1, 1968. Nearly 50 years later, as Francis points out in his own message, these words have "lost none of their significance or urgency."

Even as we continue to strive for peace, the world often

seems more chaotic than ever, filled with uncertainty, global tensions and wars, often trapping innocent people amid violence. In response, Francis urges peacebuilding and active nonviolence on both a personal and a political level, calling with equal urgency for both nuclear disarmament and an end to domestic violence. Although the prospect of peace, whether between nations or family members, may seem remote, we must never give up working toward it. Francis acknowledges these challenges, but also offers an invitation to use the Gospel message of the Beatitudes as our guide.

The beginning of a new year, right after celebrating the coming of the Prince of Peace, is a good time to recommit ourselves, our families and our church to building peace in this world, drawing strength from the one who promises us peace in the next.

### A Dangerous Occupation

It is not a good time to be a journalist in Turkey. Since the failed coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan last July, his government has been cracking down on its critics in the media. As of Dec. 1, 81 Turkish journalists were in prison facing anti-state charges, according to a new report from the Committee to Protect Journalists. Typical is the case of Mehmet Baransu, a former columnist for the daily newspaper Taraf, who was arrested and charged with "obtaining secret documents, insulting the president and having membership in a terrorist organization." He is facing a sentence of 75 years.

Turkey is not alone in its offensive against a free press. The C.P.J. reports that at least 259 journalists around the world—the highest number in almost 30 years—are currently in jail for simply doing their jobs. It is hard to comprehend that in the 21st century, repression of this basic right continues. Countries that do not uphold freedom of the press, like China, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Iran, deny their citizens the right to be informed about the world about them.

Thomas Jefferson wrote that to "preserve the freedom of the human mind...and freedom of the press, every spirit should be ready to devote itself to martyrdom." Those are strong words, yet prescient ones. It takes courage and fortitude to be a journalist today in many corners of the world. In 2016, 47 journalists were killed on the job, and at least 17 of them were murdered. In the United States, we should honor their sacrifices by protecting a free press at home and remaining vigilant against any attempts to impede the ability of journalists to keep citizens informed.

# The Right to Ride

In contrast to education or health care, few think of transportation as a basic human right. But the ability to get from one place to another became an essential part of daily life as soon as farming ceased to be the way most people made a living. “We are all in a prison, physically speaking, where the walls are where we can get to in a reasonable amount of time,” the author of *Human Transit*, Jarrett Walker, said in a speech in December at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design. This statement rings true for anyone who has struggled to keep a job without spending an unsustainable amount of free time or money to get there.

The “transportation prison” is trapping more and more people in the United States, unable to keep up with the renewed sprawl of jobs and homes. In “Laudato Si,” Pope Francis described the “suffering” associated with a worldwide dependence on cars, “causing traffic congestion, raising the level of pollution, and consuming enormous quantities of non-renewable energy” (No. 153). But despite such warnings, more housing is being built far from urban centers, and after the premature proclamation that the United States had hit “peak driving” in 2007, motorists are now logging more miles than ever. To promote economic growth, reduce global-warming emissions and, in many cases, provide enough hours for sleep, we need not only better roads but better and more equitable public transit. President-elect Donald J. Trump frequently complains about what he calls our “third world” airports, but the bigger embarrassment is that our national capital has a subway system that is falling apart and losing customers only a few decades after it was built.

Expensive rail projects are not always the answer. Taxi supplements like Uber, employer-provided shuttle buses and even bike-sharing programs can pick up the slack for people who cannot afford cars or parking. But these patchwork measures may not be enough in regions that face congestion on a wide scale. They may also worsen the economic divide, with low-income neighborhoods left to depend on decaying public transit lines while innovative services are offered elsewhere in the city. The Metro system in Washington, D.C., is partnering with Uber to provide reduced-fare service from certain subway stops, but it is not clear that privatized services, which have yet to show long-term profitability, can meet the demand from low-wage workers who must travel to distant neighborhoods at odd hours. Several studies have

also shown that ride-sharing services can be affected by racial prejudice, with African-American customers having to wait longer for service.

There were some hopeful signs for public transit in November’s election. In Atlanta, located in a region notorious for sprawl, voters easily approved a half-cent sales tax to raise \$2.5 billion for improving bus and rail service. The win came after a report by regional and state chambers of commerce saying that a long-term plan to expand the Marta public transit system would keep Atlanta competitive with other metro areas by reducing traffic congestion and increasing the number of jobs accessible by rail. (Passengers in that city have also volunteered to assist new riders and have contributed toward new bus schedules and trash bins at bus stops—a kind of do-it-yourself activism reminiscent of parents donating crayons and notebooks to public schools.) Voters in Indianapolis; Los Angeles; Seattle; Columbus, Ohio; and Charleston County, S.C., also passed tax hikes to improve public transit. And Illinois and New Jersey passed constitutional amendments mandating that revenue from fuel taxes be spent on transportation projects, as opposed to going into each state’s general funds—though this is no guarantee that transit money will be spent equitably or wisely.

But there seem to be few fans of public transit in the Trump administration or among congressional leaders. Last year’s Republican Party platform called public transit a form of “social engineering” and opposed using revenue from gas taxes on anything that does not involve moving cars around. This is short-sighted. Use of federal funding is appropriate when tackling a problem that crosses state borders; employers and businesses across the country depend on accessibility to workers and customers of all income levels. Traffic congestion hurts both the economy and the environment.

We hope that the new administration and Congress work toward transportation solutions without a bias toward roads and fossil fuels. If that does not happen, state governments, perhaps in regional partnerships, may have to assume more responsibility for ensuring that the transportation prison does not inhibit economic growth or opportunity.



## REPLY ALL

### Media in Democracy

Re “All the News That Causes Fits” (Editorial, 12/12): At the post-election review forum at Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Kellyanne Conway, Donald J. Trump’s senior campaign manager, said the fakest news of the 2016 election was the headlines that with few exceptions repeated that Donald Trump could not win.

The mainstream media entirely failed to prepare the public for the large Trump victory that was about to take place. Accordingly, the public was shocked and completely unprepared for what actually happened.

Mr. Trump’s win in 30 states resulted from Trump voters completely disregarding the mainstream media’s polling predictions, endorsements and numerous editorial criticisms against Trump. Political analysis warned that there was a hidden Trump vote not being properly reported by the mainstream media. The election results speak for themselves. Conspicuously, the results showed there was a very

large economic issue of general job and income security that converted blue state voters into Trump voters.

The mainstream media needs to be reminded that the nation is a democracy. What is going on in the minds of the voting public is more important to know than the insulated opinions of media and establishment elites, who to a person said Trump could not and should not win. Enough voters, however, wanted Trump for president to win him the Electoral College.

TOM MAHER  
*Online Comment*

### The Pope Listens

Although I am a long time subscriber to **America**, I have only recently become a big fan of the Vatican Dispatch report written by Gerard O’Connell. I particularly appreciate his reports on Pope Francis. His latest, “Francis the Preacher” (12/12), is very well written. How Pope Francis prepares his weekly homilies is fascinating. The fact that even the pope sometimes struggles to find the right words to say proves that he is human like all of us. The pope’s suggestion that priests listen to their

people is important. He states that the words “you must” or “you must not” communicate nothing. The pope says that it is an error to speak of a “reform of the reform,” a topic that will be addressed in the next issue’s Vatican Dispatches. I can’t wait.

JOSEPH P. NOLAN  
*Waterbury, Conn.*

### Faith in Prison

Re “Field Trip to Rikers” by Edward W. Schmidt (12/12): Thank you for this. I have a friend I visit in prison. I’ve known him since he was 5 years old. He has been in prison since he was 18, and he is now 42 years old. Because of his circumstances he has developed an interior discipline (and hope) that I find rare. It is not a fair comparison to make, but I do compare him to a monk in a (very cloistered) monastery. I love the depth and introspection of our conversations. Yes, he is naïve in many ways about the world, but he is also wise. He is not religious, calling himself a “humanist,” but once I watched him watch his mother and brothers leave, and could see nothing but prayer on his face.

BETH CIOFFOLETTI  
*Online Comment*

### A Time to Listen

Re “After November,” by Margot Patterson, Kevin E. Stuart, Jane Sloan Peters, Cecilia González-Andrieu, C. C. Pecknold and Jim McDermott (12/12): What a stunning chorus of voices the editors have given us here. Thank you. Surely the dissonant harmony of thoughtful people who think differently is the cure for the ideological warfare that is undermining representative democracy and making possible more virulent forms of hatred. As I’m sure many others do, I have my own thoughts about the imperfections in each individual voice, but perhaps now is a very appropriate time to simply listen.

BRYAN VINCENT  
*Online Comment*



## Burying Significance

Parts of “After November” (12/12) gave me pause. Though it is risky to pick single thoughts out of multiple paragraphs, it seems two writers tried to bury significantly negative aspects surrounding the election of Mr. Trump with more sanguine platitudes.

Margot Patterson asserted that people voted for Donald J. Trump, “[not] because they are virulent racist, Islamophobic or hateful... [but] because they chose the boy.” C. C. Pecknold tried a similar tack. “Set aside thinking that the millions [who voted]...are racist xenophobes.”

Throughout the campaign and even when it ended, I heard directly from many who voted for Mr. Trump declaring proudly: “He tells it like it is. He said what I think but can’t say.” Devoid of credible policy ideas, the core of Mr. Trump’s message was anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-Muslim and too often expressed with racist and misogynistic rhetoric. With what illogic can this disposition of racism and xenophobia be denied as consciously or unconsciously at the root of millions of Trump supporters be soft-pedaled or denied? Reduced to merely “voted for the boy?”

It is not for me to judge those who voted for Mr. Trump. Pray we must. Pray for wisdom to combat and stand against this man’s vulgarity, ambition, his naked manipulation of our worst instincts, and his woeful unpreparedness to be president. We must likewise find ways to overcome those worst instincts within ourselves, but that will not be achieved by pretending millions who voted for him are not what they themselves have said they are.

RITA HESSLEY  
*Cincinnati, Ohio*

## Understanding Polarization

Re “New U.S. Cardinals Condemn Polarization Inside the Church,” by Michael O’Loughlin and Jeremy Zipple, S.J. (12/12): With respect to the headline writer, “condemnation” of

“polarization” will not cure the cancer. The U.S. cardinals, however, are wisely targeting this pervasive and corrosive issue. Like any disease, including one harmful to the health of civic life, a diagnosis must come first. Cardinal Cupich’s comment that “life is full of ambiguity” is a thoughtful admonition to those who see the world as black and white. The demands of critics of Pope Francis for true or false answers to complex human life experiences are imprudent and even impudent.

JOSEPH W. BELLACOSA  
*Ridgefield, Conn.*

## Catholic Moral Ground

Re “Not in Our Name,” by the Rev. John Gallagher (11/28): When I graduated from Holy Cross College, I was pretty sure that figuring out the necessary syllogism was the key to solving my life’s problems—and probably the world’s problems too. In the six decades since then, I’ve learned that a good syllogism goes a long way, but, as Pascal put it, “The heart has its reasons which reason knows not.”

Father Gallagher mixes up his take on history and philosophy and religion to come up with the solution to most of our society’s moral problems: teach people how to think logically and critically, per Catholic tradition in the West. A short note doesn’t permit close examination of the non sequiturs in his article, nor exposition of his straw men. Nor does his article answer my question: “What about the millions of our brothers and sisters on this planet who never heard of Greek or Roman or scholastic philosophy, or of the Catholic Church, or of Jesus or of syllogisms, but who lead moral lives themselves and lead others to do the same?”

The article’s subtitle, “State power can lead to groundless morality,” is somewhat limited. Any power, even religious power, can—and often does—lead to groundless morality. We do need articles like Father Gallagher’s to encourage reflection on how we Catholics

continue to contribute to the moral ground of our society.

Thanks for a stimulating piece.  
J. RICHARD DURNAN  
*Online Comment*

## Alma Mater Pride

Re “Through the Motions” by Nicole Bazis (11/28): Having graduated from the Cardinal O’Hara High School some 44 years ago, I was proud to have read this moving account of my alma mater helping to bring Ms. Bazis to faith in Christ and the Catholic Church.

TOM HIGGINS  
*Online Comment*

## A Change of Heart

In the Nov. 28 issue, four articles (Of Many Things, Editorial and two Signs of the Times) have the common theme of the divisiveness of the current election and the need for Catholics to do something to heal the wounds. Others have written of “deep wounds of poverty, racism, etc.,” and “the toxic brew of intolerance and hate.” I think the first thing that’s needed by all of us is a change of heart whereby we come to see each person as a child created in the image and likeness of God, and so start moving our political and religious discourse and relationships from toxic to at least civil. A starting point for a change of heart is Jesus’ command “Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven”—which receives scant attention from the pulpit or Catholic media. Surely if I could come to love an enemy who does me physical harm, then I could come to love those with whom I disagree strongly on political or religious issues. So here’s my plea to readers: Think and pray about Jesus’ command; and to writers and editors: Keep reminding us.

DON RAMPOLLA  
*Redondo Beach, Calif.*

*Editor’s Note: The next issue of America (Vol. 216, No. 2, Whole No. 5153) will be published on Jan. 23. After that America will appear biweekly.*

IRAQ

## Fight for Mosul Drags On While Displaced Numbers Grow

**A**fter more than two months of sometimes savage street fighting, the Iraqi army has so far been unable to dislodge troops of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, from Mosul. As many as 100,000 people have already fled the city, but thousands more inside Mosul, trapped by the fighting, have been waiting for opportunities to escape.

Speaking from Baghdad on Dec. 14, Kevin Hartigan, Catholic Relief Services' regional director for the Middle East, Central Asia and Europe told *America* that his team was bracing for what may be unprecedented numbers of people in flight from the contested city. "The numbers still are not nearly as large as we expected because the battle for the city is looking to be a long and slow one, unfortunately for everybody.

"Mosul is a very big city and up to now what has been happening is people are moving between neighborhoods within the city, and that may be the pattern of the displacement we see," Mr. Hartigan said.

"They have more possibility of finding shelter within the city without venturing into the desert around it." That is a treacherous enterprise not only because of exposure to the elements but because of the possibility of becoming caught in the crossfire between ISIS and Iraqi defense forces or falling prey to ISIS militants. Scores of displaced people have also been killed by improvised explosive devices as they attempted to reach safety.

Displaced Iraqis are already arriving from other smaller cities, where the fight to extricate ISIS has been just as intense as in Mosul.

"We're providing a lot of assistance to the people coming out of the town of Hawija," Mr. Hartigan said. The strategically significant Hawija, once a city of more than 100,000, is an ISIS stronghold about 130 miles north of Baghdad and 34 miles southwest of Kirkuk.

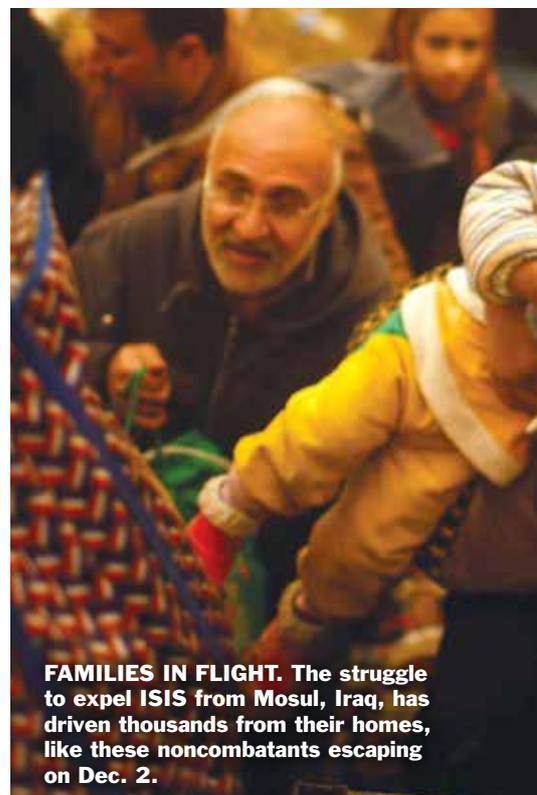
"They're arriving on foot and they're really fleeing...active battles," Mr. Hartigan said. Many have to "seize a moment to escape" as lulls in fighting occur. That means recently displaced people arrive at the camps with little more than the clothes on their backs. "They have remarkably few possessions with them, even by the standards

of displaced people," Mr. Hartigan said.

C.R.S., in conjunction with local partner Caritas Syria, has also been assisting scores of families among more than 85,000 who fled previous fighting in Fallujah to relative safety in central and northern Iraq.

The newcomers will be facing harsh winter conditions as they await the conclusion of the struggle against ISIS. North of the Nineveh Plain in Kurdistan, "it will be snowing and below freezing at night." More temperate weather can be anticipated closer to Baghdad, but even there cold and wet weather is typical at night. Conditions in the camps can be "very unhealthy, particularly for small children."

While many have hunkered down in temporary shelters in camps for displaced people, others have taken refuge in unfinished buildings that are often exposed to the elements. C.R.S.



**FAMILIES IN FLIGHT.** The struggle to expel ISIS from Mosul, Iraq, has driven thousands from their homes, like these noncombatants escaping on Dec. 2.

teams, in addition to providing kerosene space heaters, blankets and mattresses at the camps, have been assisting in winterizing these impromptu shelters, sealing openings and installing temporary windows and doors.

No one can say when or if people will be able to return to their communities after ISIS is driven out. The region's infrastructure and communities have been pounded by months of street fighting, suicide car bombs, I.E.D.s and U.S. and coalition air strikes. Many communities have just been "demolished," Mr. Hartigan reports.

"There is a question how safe these places are; a lot of them are still near conflict zones," Mr. Hartigan said. Christian and Sunni families hoping to return to villages near the front lines have to contend with unexploded ordnance, booby traps and mines, according to Mr. Hartigan.

**KEVIN CLARKE**



‘AMORIS LAETITIA’

## Archbishop Coleridge: Resist ‘False Clarity’

**A**rchbishop Mark Coleridge thinks some of his fellow prelates are afraid of confronting reality.

As the head of the Archdiocese of Brisbane on the east coast of Australia, the archbishop was a delegate to the meeting of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 2015. There, he said, he witnessed healthy disagreement about issues important to families during the two-week meeting—prompted by Pope Francis’ call for open and honest dialogue. That debate has continued more than a year after the synod came to a close, with some bishops calling for greater clarity from the pope. But

Archbishop Coleridge told *America* that uncertainty is simply part of modern life.

“At times at the synod I heard voices that sounded very clear and certain but only because they never grappled with the real question or never dealt with the real facts,” he said. “So there’s a false clarity that comes because you don’t address reality, and there’s a false certainty that can come for the same reason.”

The archbishop, who worked in the office of the Vatican secretary of state in the late 1990s, was responding to a question about critics of Pope Francis who have taken issue with his apostolic letter “*Amoris Laetitia*,” in which the pope calls for a pathway to Communion for divorced and remarried Catholics. Critics of the pope have stepped up their attacks on the document in recent months, emboldened by a letter sent to the pope by four cardinals in September asking for yes or no answers to five questions about the document. They say the pope is sowing confusion in the church on questions settled by previous popes.

But the pope’s supporters, including Archbishop Coleridge, say Francis is simply asking the church to confront challenging questions.

“I think what Pope Francis wants is a church that moves toward clarity and certainty on certain issues after we’ve grappled with the issues, not before,” he said. “In other words, he wants a genuine clarity and a genuine certainty rather than the artificial clarity or certainty that comes when you never grapple with the issues.”

Archbishop Coleridge said he agrees with a fellow Australian, Cardinal George Pell, who said in London recently that some Catholics are “unnerved” by the debate about “*Amoris Laetitia*.”

“I think that’s probably the right

word, and I sensed in the words of the four cardinal men who were unnerved,” Archbishop Coleridge said.

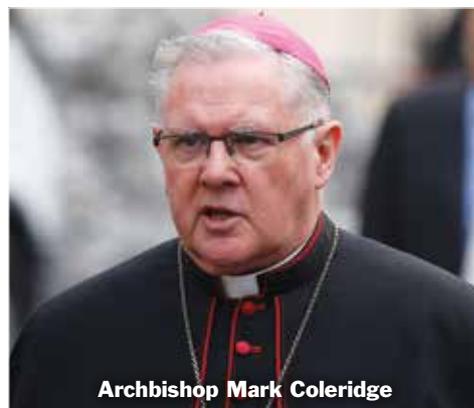
But where Cardinal Pell went on to suggest the pope needed to offer clarity on the issue, Archbishop Coleridge said Francis is simply acting like a pastor. The pope, he said, is “bringing out into the very public setting of the papacy what any pastor does in his parish or diocese.”

He noted that pastors are “very often dealing in a world of grays and you have to accompany people, listen to them before you speak to them, give them time and give them space, and then speak your word perhaps.”

Ultimately, individual believers have to discern where God is at work in their own lives—a process that does not always lend itself to simple yes or no answers. He said Francis is moving the church from a static way of doing business to one that is kinetic, something those used to a different kind of papacy are finding difficult.

“But there are still people who are more comfortable, for various reasons, with a more static way of thinking and speaking,” he said. “And there are people who are perhaps more comfortable in a world of black and white and who find the process of discernment—which deals in shades of gray—messy and unnerving.”

**MICHAEL O’LOUGHLIN**



Archbishop Mark Coleridge

## Colombia Peacemakers

In an unexpected diplomatic initiative to consolidate the fragile peace accord in Colombia, Pope Francis on Dec. 14 brought together the country's president, Juan Manuel Santos, and his archrival, former president Senator Álvaro Uribe, a strong opponent of the accord. In a statement issued after the meeting of the three leaders, the Vatican said, "The pope spoke about the 'culture of encounter' and emphasized the importance of sincere dialogue between all members of Colombian society at this historical moment." Francis has supported the peace process in Colombia, hoping and praying for a definitive end to the 52-year civil war between the government and the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC). The original peace accord was narrowly rejected in a nationwide referendum. The Colombian parliament approved a revised version at the end of November, but difficulties remain.

## Refugee Office

Moving quickly to strengthen the Section for Refugees and Migrants in the new Vatican department for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, Pope Francis has appointed as under secretaries a Canadian Jesuit, Michael Czerny, and an Italian member of the Scalabrini Fathers, Fabio Baggio. The Vatican announced the appointments on Dec. 14. Father Czerny emphasized that the department will work directly under the pope on what has become "one of the most important and urgent human phenomena of our times," the movement of people across the globe. "There's hardly a place on the planet which is not touched by this phenomenon," he said. He described the role of the section for "refugees and migrants" as that of "accompanying"

## NEWS BRIEFS

**Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns**, known as the "cardinal of the people" and one of the most active voices against Brazil's military dictatorship, died in São Paulo on Dec. 14. + Pope Francis celebrated his 80th birthday on Dec. 17 by having breakfast with **eight homeless people** from different countries at Santa Marta, the Vatican guesthouse where he lives. + Britain's fertility regulator approved controversial techniques on Dec. 15 allowing doctors to **create babies** using DNA from three people—what it called a "historic" decision to help prevent a small number of children from inheriting potentially fatal diseases from their mothers. + Germany's churches denounced their country's **growing arms sales** to the Gulf states on Dec. 12—arms exports had risen 96 percent in 2015—and demanded tighter export controls on weapons manufacturers. + Egypt's Coptic community held a funeral service on Dec. 12 for **25 Christians killed** in a bombing the previous day at a church next to the main cathedral in Cairo—one of the deadliest attacks in recent memory on the country's religious minority.



**Pope Francis' birthday breakfast**

people on the move from war zones, poverty, economically depressed areas and ethnic zones, as well as addressing the xenophobia that is spreading in many countries. This new office "touches all the dimensions of human experience" of people who are on the move for whatever reason, he said.

## Gay Priests Prohibited

The Vatican on Dec. 7 declared that "persons with homosexual tendencies" cannot be admitted to Catholic seminaries. This reaffirms a 2005 policy now seemingly at odds with Pope Francis' famous response, "Who am I to judge?" when asked about gay priests in 2013. The document, entitled "The Gift of the Priestly Vocation," was drafted by the Vatican's Congregation for Clergy, and it is meant to offer wide-ranging guidelines for

priestly formation. Three of the document's 210 paragraphs are devoted to "persons with homosexual tendencies" who desire to become priests, drawing primarily from a 2005 document that bans candidates with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies." Pope Francis approved the document, according to a letter signed by Cardinal Beniamino Stella, who heads the clergy office. Quoting the 2005 teaching, the new document says that men "who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called 'gay culture'" cannot become priests. Men who experience a "transitory" attraction to other men could be admitted to seminaries, it says, though "such tendencies must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate."

From America Media, CNS, RNS, AP and other sources.

## A Concrete Vision

Not far from where Wilshire Boulevard cuts northwest along its journey from downtown Los Angeles to the Pacific Ocean, and just across the street from the oldest Jewish congregation in the city, stands the statue of a cloaked woman. Her eyes look toward the heavens, her hands extended skyward in a moment that captures either ecstatic praise or heartfelt petition. The marker at the statue's base reads: "Our Lady of the Angels."

Behind Our Lady of the Angels sits a unique piece of Catholic architecture in California: St. Basil Roman Catholic Church. Designed in the late 1960s by Albert C. Martin Jr., an architect who has designed much of the downtown skyline, St. Basil is a massive concrete structure consisting of 12 towers, each over 80 feet high, connected by window shafts filled with multicolored, shattered-like fragments of stained glass. The church spire soars even higher, 160 feet, with a cross on the top.

Mr. Martin's idea for the structure was to marry the fortress-like feeling of an ancient monastery with then-contemporary architectural trends toward exposed, unadorned concrete at enormous scale. It was in many ways a strange choice for a post-Vatican II church; the self-proclaimed Brutalist style he drew from informed the massive housing projects and blighted government buildings of the time. Brutalist architecture—a name first used to suggest the raw, undisguised

material (think concrete) often used in construction rather than the design's overall effect—was eventually associated with a kind of severity and inhumanity.

As Prince Charles of England said of Brutalism: "You have to give this much to the Luftwaffe: When it knocked down our buildings, it didn't replace them with anything more offensive than rubble."

To sit with the God of St. Basil's Church is to see one's own fears and concerns grow smaller.

Yet Mr. Martin saw within the style a way of recalling "the time when the church often served as a place of refuge." And to the architect's credit, St. Basil has none of the coldness of other Brutalist work. The long, smooth walls of concrete, bright against the blue skies and set at slight angles to one another, catch the eye and implore a closer look.

And there is much within to commend investigation. The brilliant shards of stained glass shine out like an orchestra of light. Above the altar, a 14th-century crucifix hangs upon a gorgeous modern setting of winding, teak-covered tubes. The design has the feel of a wind drawing Jesus and the weight of his suffering up from the earth.

What is most striking about the interior of St. Basil, though, is the sense of presence that fills it. Even after seeing from the outside how high the church's castle-like ramparts rise, how

far its walls extend, upon entering one feels as though one has stepped into another world entirely, a vast and empty expanse.

But no, not empty; something abides in that space, a presence that is huge and silent and completely still. Images of divinity that are often shied away from in contemporary life here are palpable—the God who is eternal, the God who is power and might, the God who sees and judges all our actions.

And yet even as that presence humbles those who come here, it also draws them into his silent witness. From the back of the church the altar is distant; the action of the liturgy appears small, much as the activity of the world might appear to God.

Every church tells a story. Not just in its statuary and artwork but in the pour of its walls and pillars, the shape of its bones, every church offers an image of God, a vision for us. Often today that story has something of the character of a children's Christmas pageant—up close, nonthreatening and personal.

We're right there in the manger with Mary, Joseph and their baby; we're sitting in the fields with the shepherds when the angels announce good news of great joy for all people; we walk with the three kings under the stars to find a child of light and life.

But there are other stories of God and other visions. To sit with the God of St. Basil's Church, the God who is mystery, who will not be tamed or fooled, who exists in eternity, is to see one's own fears and concerns grow smaller, less compelling. And yet, like a child looking up to discover the endless night sky, that awareness brings not outrage but contemplation and wonder.

We become aware there is a much bigger story at work.

**JIM McDERMOTT**



# The Riches of the Church

Last month I spent a week in Rome and met someone important.

Despite what you might suspect of the travel habits of Jesuits, I've not visited Rome frequently. All told, I traveled there for the first time after graduating from college ("Look! The Coliseum!"). Twenty years later, on my way back from two years in Nairobi, I spent a week in Rome and visited with my mother's family in Sicily. Finally, in January, I was there on business for our editor in chief, Matt Malone, S.J. Last week took me there for a screening of Martin Scorsese's new film, "Silence," which was shown to 300 Jesuits at the Pontifical Oriental Institute. Later in the week, I spoke at the Lay Centre, a living and learning center for lay students studying at the Catholic universities in Rome.

In the midst of meetings and meals with new and old friends, Jesuits, Vatican officials and journalists, and stopping into various churches to pray, I learned a great deal. For one thing, the new superior general of the Society of Jesus, Arturo Sosa, S.J., is a wonderful man. I hope you've seen by now the video (on *America's* website) of Father Malone's interview with Father Sosa, who is warm and witty. Later in the week, Father General celebrated Mass for the great Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., superior general from 1983 to 2008, who died on Nov. 29. Flying back from a sabbatical in Spain was Father Sosa's predecessor, Adolfo Nicolás, S.J. Thus the Church of the Gesù in Rome hosted a historic event: One superior

general celebrated a Requiem Mass for a former superior general with another former superior general as concelebrant.

Earlier in the week, in fact, a Jesuit friend told me how confusing it was to bump unexpectedly into Father Nicolás at lunch. To Jesuits in Rome, even those who work closely with him, the superior general is invariably "Father General." So when Father Nicolás, recently back from Spain, sat down to *pranzo*, my friend sputtered, "Hello Father Gen... Father... Father Nicolás!" Then next to him sat Father Sosa. "Hello Arturo... Father... Father General!"

Rome for me is a heady place where it's easy to lose your spiritual bearings. It's hard to leave the door of the Jesuit Curia and pass St. Peter's Basilica on the way to a screening with a well-known film director and not get a swelled head. It's easy to forget what's important. Fortunately, God reminds us.

One afternoon, dashing between one meeting and the next, I was importuned by a beggar. "*Panini, panini, panini*," he said plaintively, asking for a sandwich. Now, my rule is to give money when I have it, but I opened my wallet and saw only 20 Euro notes (roughly \$20), which was a little steep for me. So I said, "*Mi dispiace*," I'm sorry, and kept walking.

He kept following me. "*Panini, panini, panini*." I got angry. Why was he following me? I'm busy!

Then it dawned on me. You idiot! Why are you in Rome? Why are you even a Christian? To see beautiful churches? To see a movie? What's the most important thing you could do right now?

So I checked my anger, which was not coming from God, and asked the man to follow me.

Inside a bakery near St. Peter's, my new friend pointed to a sandwich behind a glass case, and we waited. The line was interminable, and my anger returned. Again, I realized how un-Christian I was being. I had barely spoken to him. So I said, "*Come si chiama?*" What's your name?

"Lorenzo," he said quietly.

Rome is a heady place where it's easy to lose your spiritual bearings.

I almost cried when I heard it. I remembered the story of St. Lawrence (Lorenzo), the third-century arch-deacon of Rome who was charged with caring for the church's financial resources. When the Emperor Valerian, after a bloody persecution, ordered Lawrence to bring him the "riches

of the church," Lawrence, who had already distributed the funds destined for the poor, did something surprising. He brought in the poor of Rome and told the emperor, "Here are the riches of the church."

That's who was standing beside me, I realized.

Maybe you read the news about the Jesuit screening of "Silence," which was a success, and deservedly so. It's a magnificent film. But while you may have read about that, I think God was focused elsewhere. When I get to heaven and God asks me what I did during my week in Rome, I won't say that I met with this Vatican official or that one, visited this church or that, or even saw a good movie. I'll answer that I spent a little time with your friend Lorenzo.

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is editor at large of *America* and the author of *Jesús: A Pilgrimage*, *Seven Last Words* and *The Abbey*. Twitter: @jamesmartinsj.

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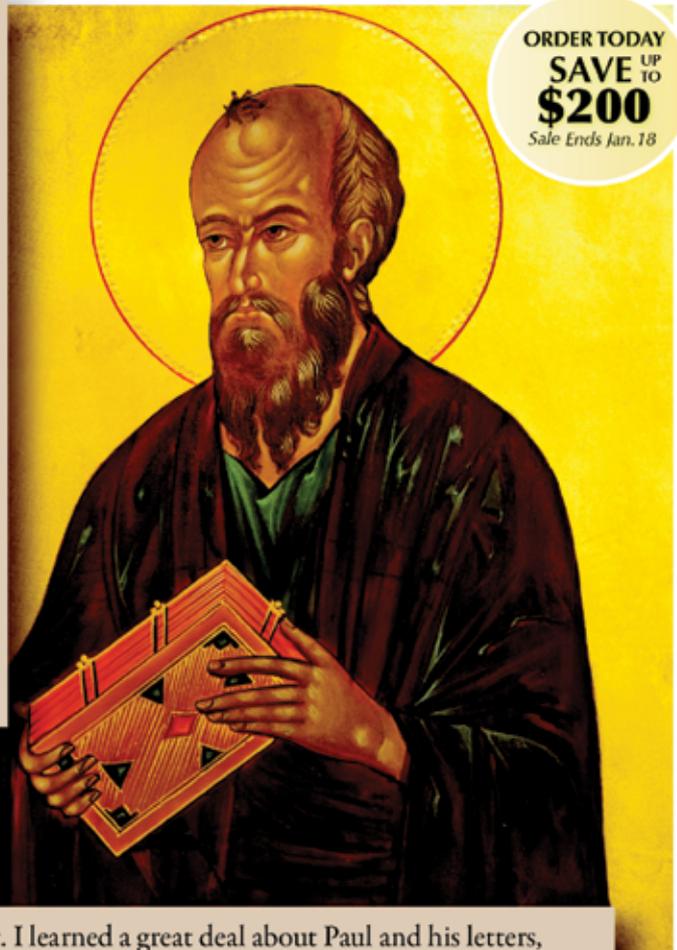
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# Called to Conscience

AMERICANS MUST RECOGNIZE THEIR OWN CAPACITY FOR EVIL.

BY JAMES F. KEENAN



*“Calming the conscience, numbing the conscience, this is a great evil.”*

– Pope Francis, Oct. 9, 2015

Over the past two years I have been writing about the differences between the European and American use of conscience. These differences have led me to believe that we in the United States need to develop a much more rigorous notion of conscience.

This article is in two parts. First, I share findings that I have published elsewhere, most notably in the journal *Theological Studies*. Second, I suggest several elements that we need to retrieve so as to develop a richer understanding of conscience that is more sensitive to the demands of moral truth. In particular, I emphasize that the virtue of humility can help us appreciate why these elements are so necessary. Here I propose that a humble conscience provides us with a deeply relational and accountable source of moral agency.

After World War II, European theologians, having witnessed Catholic participation in unimaginably heinous con-

duct during the war, developed a robust promotion of the call of conscience for all Catholics. These theologians were developing a moral argument that would replace the moral manuals of the 18th through the 20th centuries that they believed had helped lead the way to an obediential passivity in the laity that left them unprepared for the dictatorial rule of the Nazis and their Fascist allies.

Later, they further developed a theology of conscience that was at once deeply embedded in the person yet highly relational and always mindful of the responsibility to hear the call of Christ. Their writings were taught throughout European seminaries and universities, where priests and bishops accepted and embraced these insights, which they in turn as council fathers validated in the celebrated paragraph on conscience in the Second Vatican Council’s “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” (No. 16).

We need to appreciate that their ethics was built in a spirit of humility on a deep conviction of their own wartime guilt. One might make the generalization that the European conscience awoke in a new way when it acknowledged the truth and confronted the consequences of its own actions and inactions in the barbaric rubble of the Holocaust.

After World War II, through a variety of ways, Europeans began a process of understanding their capacity for evil by examining the history of their own actions. That understand-

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human violations of the moral law. When the Americans turned to conscience, they were pleading *individually* against the very law-and-order mentality that American Catholic culture had so strongly supported even as the Europeans turned in a different direction.

Unfortunately the American use of conscience never really settled into, nor emerged from the place it did in Europe, that is, as the source of responsible personal and social moral agency. When we consider the U.S. bishops' recent protest using a conscience clause against the Affordable Care Act, they appear to be doing what Americans normally do when they turn to conscience: They seem to invoke it to opt out of an existing law or command, whether that be the military draft, "Humanae Vitae" or, as in this case, the Affordable Care Act.

I do not think that the arrested development of the American conscience is simply the result of the rejection by U.S. moralists of the European initiative; it is also rooted in the longstanding American incapacity to recognize its own wrongdoing. Indeed, historians comment on the practice of American exceptionalism, in which we excuse many of our actions by presuming that our nation has a manifest destiny that exempts us from the standards that others must follow.

Consider slavery, for example, the quintessential American sin. Despite the nation's own history of enslaving millions of people and of enjoying the benefit of slavery even without owning slaves, America has never collectively faced itself in conscience. As M. Shawn Copeland reminds us, the American conscience is haunted, profoundly damaged by the complex history of slavery in the United States and by its national willfulness to accommodate to and profit from racism.

Still, slavery did not arrive here innocently. The blindness evident in the collective consciousness of many Americans was rooted in the nation's claim of manifest destiny, a claim that concomitantly animated the extinction of Native American populations as well as the enslavement of Africans.

The silence in the United States about slavery has further promoted an American understanding of itself as "innocent" that has played out time and again as the country sees itself as blameless and virtuous in the world. Americans, including American Catholics, never engaged in collective repentance for our own moral abominations in World War II, including intentionally killing innocent civilians in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Dresden. The silent, presumptive innocence claimed by the United States is palpable when we listen to the American perspective on its relationships with Latin America, its understanding of the global ecological crisis or its de facto policy of unparalleled mass incarceration, yet another symbol of the racial entitlement tied to our manifest destiny. Until we can recognize the evidence of our own capacity for evil in the personal and national history of our

ing continues to be visible today when one visits Germany, for instance, and sees public, social reminders of the nation's own atrocities. From the Concentration Camp Memorial in Dachau to the Berlin Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, we can literally enter and see the pangs of the European conscience evident in its enduring testimonials.

In contrast, the contemporary American rejection of the manualist tradition and turn to conscience was not at all through any experience of remorse, either individually or collectively. The war, in fact, prompted no crisis of conscience, because Americans, including their theologians, believed they were on the right side. From the end of the war to Vatican II, most American moral theologians ignored the Europeans' promotion of Catholic conscience. In the "Notes on Moral Theology" published regularly in *Theological Studies*, for instance, American Jesuit moralists routinely dismissed the claims of the European moralists and their appeals to conscience.

Appeals to conscience emerged later in the United States both during the Vietnam War and in response to "Humanae Vitae" in the personal appeals by young men drafted into an undeclared war and in the claims of married couples hoping for a change in church teaching on contraception. These moments of conscience were not begun, as they were in Europe, with the collective social acknowledgement of profound

own actions, we cannot claim to have a conscience, let alone to be exercising one.

## Awakening the American Conscience

An examination of conscience belongs not only to persons but also to societies, an insight that all Catholics can appreciate as they begin the liturgy of the penitential rite at Mass, confessing in common their sinfulness. In fact, at the United Nations, Pope Francis, echoing a language that reminds us of phrases like the “conscience of the nation,” summoned the assembly to an examination of conscience. Referring to military and political interventions that are not based on international agreement, he argued, “These realities should serve as a grave summons to an examination of conscience on the part of those charged with the conduct of international affairs.”

With this in mind, I offer five different theological claims that might help us appreciate the conscience as the personal and social seat of moral responsibility and accountability.

First, the judgment of conscience should prompt us to confront our sinfulness. Commonly, conscience is divided into two significant functions. It looks backward at one’s own deeds, judging its own conduct and behavior, as one does when one examines one’s conscience. The second function of conscience is to discern or to direct agents to moral action. Thus the judicial conscience looks back, while discerning looks forward. These are fairly sequential; our capacity to discern well depends on whether we have judged well. The fundamental ethical mandate to know oneself is evident in this connection, but so too is the liberating work of judicial conscience. By knowing our sinful history we can in grace respond to it, ask for forgiveness, overcome it and try not to repeat it.

Certainly, a judicial conscience can discover not only moral failure but also moral satisfaction; but if it does not discover sin anywhere, then it does not discover the truth of itself. The discovery of one’s own sinfulness is an essential step in self-understanding and moral maturity.

While reaching its full flowering in the Catholic understanding of the sacrament of penance, the birth of conscience through remorse is a common theme throughout history. Any reading of Roman philosophy, for instance, teaches us that conscience was first recognized by its pangs, convictions and stains. Cicero, Julius Caesar and Quintilian refer us to the ways conscience awakens us to recognize our own misdeeds. In that awakening, many of us encounter conscience for the first time. In his book *Conscience: A Very Short Introduction*, Paul Strom remarks that this idea of conscience was so evident that in the very popular rhetorical work from the first century B.C.E., *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, prosecutors were advised to say that his adversary’s client shows “signs of conscience”: “blushed, grown pale, stam-

mered, spoken inconsistently, displayed uncertainty, compromised himself.” To have a conscience is to recognize one’s own guilt.

Why? Because conscience helps us understand the objective moral truth. A guilty conscience is precisely one that recognizes a lack of connection between what we thought was a good to pursue and the realization that, as a matter of fact, it was not a good to pursue. Truth in conscience lets us see that we were wrong. When we first recognize that truth, we begin to realize that not everything we pursue is good; therein is the awakening of conscience: the humble willingness to submit our choices to the truth.

Second, when we discover our sinfulness, we discover our freedom. Some theologians have noted that the confession of sin is itself effective and illuminative. It is effective inasmuch as we do not know the scope of our sinfulness until we begin to acknowledge that we are sinners. Only when we utter “*mea culpa*” do we begin to see our history of sinful harm, which has not only hurt others unjustly, but has also impeded our own flourishing. Until we make this admission, we remain behind artificial blinders that keep us from recognizing the trajectory of effects that have occurred because of our sinfulness.

In that effective acknowledgement of our culpability, we are gifted with an illumination by which we understand first, what we did, but second, what we could have done. That is, the confession of our sinfulness lets us recognize that we could have acted otherwise. Until we have that illumination, we are trapped by an understanding of ourselves as weak and constrained, a convenient stance that literally keeps us from believing that we need to confess.

Thus, when we confess, we often realize that we sinned not out of weakness of will but out of a misapplied strength. Much of the manualist theology of sin, lacking a theology of conscience, made sin look inevitable and our own selves look weak, living in a world without virtue and grace. In that context we confessed sins that we could not have avoided, pleading that other conditions made us do what we did. We need to learn to confess our sins in the light of Christ, realizing in grace that the chance to act otherwise was there and that the excuses we proffer are merely, well, excuses. The honest and full confession of sin makes us realize that the disordered and prideful trajectory of our personal and social history can be changed.

Moreover, in the illumination of our sinfulness, we see just how sinful we are. We might do well to remember the insight of Dorothy Day, who realized as she matured that her own sinfulness was greater than she had realized. That insight brings with it a redemptive humility, a humility burdened not with self-deprecation but rather with an unabashed self-understanding of what it really means for one to act in conscience—that is, to do good and avoid evil in

accordance with God's will.

Conscience grows out of the humble self-understanding we have when the pangs of conscience move us to the confession of our sins. In that confession, we see who we have been called to become as authentic human beings; we recognize not primarily our failings but pre-eminently our calling to repent and move beyond them in God's forgiveness.

## Conscience Is the Key

Third, though deeply interior, the conscience is the key to our relationships with others, our world, ourselves and our God. As the Bible teaches us, through our consciences we examine our past histories and set the course of our future, always with others in mind. The word conscience, *suneidēsis* in Greek, appears in the New Testament 31 times, mostly in Paul, and almost always in terms of our relationship with others, for it is about our awareness of them. A key example of this is the question about meat dedicated to idols (1 Cor 8:1-13; Rom 14), where Paul asks us whether our decisions in freedom are mindful of the needs of our fellow Christians growing in faith (see also 2 Cor 1:12; 5:11).

*Suneidēsis* does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, but the word most routinely associated with conscience is *kardia*, "heart." In fact, *kardia* is used over 800 times in the Bible, though not ever as a specific bodily organ; rather it always points to the source of all of our affective desires. Curiously,

we Catholics might not realize this because the Catholic version of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible insists on keeping *kardia* as heart, though most Protestant translations refer to it as conscience. In 1 Sm 24:5, for instance, we see "Afterward David was stricken to the heart because he had cut off a corner of Saul's cloak." In 2 Mc 2:3 we read, "And with other similar words he exhorted them that the law should not depart from their hearts." In Sir 42:18 we read, "He searches out the abyss and the human heart; he understands their innermost secrets."

In the New Testament, *kardia* appears four times in 1 Jn 3:19-21: "And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him, whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God."

I believe that it is precisely a humble conscience/heart that helps us to appreciate our relationship to others. If we define humility as knowing our place in God's world, then we should see the Magnificat as a quintessential expression of humility, where the church sings the song of Mary who proclaims the greatness of God's ordering of the world and her place in it. We, too, in humility, can see in the Scriptures, whether in Samuel, the Wisdom literature, John or Paul, that conscience brings with it a new freedom that allows us to see our place among the people of God.

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When we discover our place in God's world and our relationships therein, we begin to see how much we can learn for the formation of our conscience with "the word of God" as "the light for our path," "assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or advice of others and guided by the authoritative teaching of the church" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1785). Learning to take advantage of the insights of our family and the community of believers, including its magisterium, we form our consciences by entering into a journey that only strengthens our capacity to hear the word of God and keep it.

Fourth, humility keeps us grounded. Inasmuch as the word *humility* derives from *humus*, meaning soil or dirt, humility keeps us close to the moral terrain in which we find ourselves. A humble conscience keeps us alert to our environment, our neighbor in need, our own responsibilities and the need to take account of the future and its challenges. Here we realize that the humble conscience engages—and sometimes interrupts—our agenda for our lives, which can so easily proceed automatically.

When we study the American civil rights movement, we can see conscience at work. While from one perspective one could see the entire civil rights movement as no more than a rejection of the racist laws in the United States, from another, we could see that the civil rights movement was at once an argument for the articulation of an objectively true law of justice, fairness and equality to replace the old false one. The movement's leaders worked not only against unjust laws but, more important, in solidarity for the right realization of a dream. In conscience the leaders understood the harmful practices of redlining schools and neighborhoods, of demarcating space in restaurants and buses and of imprisoning and hanging innocent friends and family members. Their feet and eyes were on the American terrain, and they knew their place in God's world, a knowledge that prompted them to sing the spirituals and the blues, their own Magnificat. In conscience, they made the laws right. From them we learn that the humble conscience is mindful of what one is called to do. From their witness we learn to form our consciences.

Finally, conscience brings with it a humility that affects not only how we understand our place in God's world but also how we think, learn and understand. This insight into a humble way of thinking that rejects the imperial ego becomes a relational way of thinking and is complemented by what other theologians call the grace of self-doubt. In humility we discover that there can be a real grace in doubting ourselves and our opinions. This grace animates and informs our humility and helps us to see that the work of realizing

ourselves as disciples of Christ is a formidable lifelong task fraught with misperceptions and yet possible precisely because of that humility.

Make no mistake about it: Conscience is not infallible. Quite the contrary. As Vatican II's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" reminds us, we frequently err. But we can get to the truth only through conscience. Humility, then, is constitutive of the Christian quest for moral truth, because in truth we are always learning and opening ourselves to correction. For Catholic Christians, this process is assisted by prayerful participation in the life of the church, particularly by attention to the preaching of God's word and the reception of the sacraments.

This final insight takes us to the beginning of this section of the article. In conscience we understand that we are bound by the truth as it really is. Truth stands in judgment of our

own misdeeds, a judgment that we recognize in the pangs of conscience. When we confess, we effectively acknowledge objective truth and therein allow the judgment of conscience to rule that we have sinned. In that confession, we recognize truth not as something that we made up, but rather something that compels us. This phenomenon of "obeying our consciences," "heeding the dictates of conscience" and "recognizing the demands of our conscience" captures the sense that conscience allows us to hear the truth as it is. In conscience we experience the claims of truth. This is why, for many, it is precisely a guilty conscience that allows us to have the experience that what we ought to pursue is only the right. We cannot in conscience make what is wrong right. A well-formed conscience, where we learn truth, teaches us in humility to allow truth to have its say. As St. John Paul II's encyclical "The Splendor of Truth" (1993) reminds us, "freedom of conscience is never freedom 'from' the truth but always and only freedom 'in' the truth" (No. 64).

In the United States we need in humility to engage the conscience, to allow ourselves to be judged by the truth. In that experience of humbly submitting our personal and collective history to the truth we will discover both our sinfulness and our redemption together, because it is only as redeemed that we can know the true scope of our sinfulness. I suggest that looking in humble conscience at our histories on race and on the environment, we might begin to find the sources of our error and therein the possibility of acknowledging the truth, not only of our past, but of the course for our future. And then we might discover that our consciences should always be operative—and not only when we want to opt out.

**Make no mistake  
about it: Conscience  
is not infallible.  
Quite the contrary.**



# Anxious Hearts

A faithful look at a frightening emotion

BY GREGORY POPCAK

**G**od must think I'm a horrible person."

Alison, a 34-year-old lawyer and mother of three, was struggling with anxiety that was seriously affecting her work and home life. "I don't get it. I'm so blessed. I have a great job. A good family. But I'm on edge all the time." Her anxiety, which seemed to come from nowhere, had been building for several months. The last straw came when she thought she was having a heart attack at the office and was later diagnosed as having suffered a panic attack after an ambulance trip to the emergency room. "I can usually accomplish anything I put my mind to, but no matter what, I cannot seem to power through this."

Alison discussed her situation with her pastor, who suggested both counseling and meditative prayer. While she welcomed his suggestions, she struggled to bring her anxiety to God: "Every time I pray, I just feel so guilty. God's been so good to me. What kind of a way is this to say 'thank you' for all the blessings I've been given? My pastor told me that my anxiety isn't a sin, but it just feels so wrong on every level. I just feel like I'm letting God down."

## Have No Anxiety?

Even if you are not among the 20 percent of Americans who experience the panic Alison struggled with, chances are you are no stranger to some more common examples of worrying. A friend of mine describes going "from 0 to widow in 60 seconds" when her husband is late from work. On Monday mornings, how many of us wake up feeling crushed by the weight of the week? Or watch the news with a growing sense of dread? The worse our feelings of worry are, the more difficult they can be to reconcile with St.

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Paul's admonition to "have no anxiety at all..." (Phil 4:6). For the Christian, it can be hard not to view worry as some kind of personal failure; an insult to the God who asks us to trust in him with all our hearts (Prv 3:5).

There are different types of anxiety. The most serious anxiety disorders require comprehensive treatment (medication, therapy, spiritual and emotional support) because they have multiple causes (biological, social and sometimes circumstantial). Identifying a healthy Christian response to worry and anxiety begins with distinguishing between the gift of fear, which is protective and healthy, and anxiety, which is neither. We develop the capacity for fear early. By eight months *in utero*, a baby's fear and protection circuitry

is fully developed and ready for action. Throughout life, in the face of a real threat, this circuitry causes chemicals to be injected into our brain and bloodstream that ramp up our senses and speed up our reaction time so that we can see all the ways we could respond and, if necessary, escape. When the fear systems in our brain are working properly, they serve a protective function, warning us away from danger and easing off once the threat has passed.

Anxiety hijacks this danger-alert system and causes us either to fear things that could be good for us (e.g., new opportunities, commitment in a healthy relationship), experience disproportionate responses (either in intensity or duration) to actual threats or suffer feelings of panic when, in fact, no danger exists (e.g., panic attacks).

For the most part and for the majority of people, the everyday worry we all face is a persistent, but not insurmountable, obstacle to a joyful, peaceful life. But when ongoing anxiety threatens our ability to enjoy our relationships or function well at work, it becomes a clinical disorder usually requiring professional help. In short, fear, as unpleasant as it may be, can be a great gift, a servant of our physical, emotional and spiritual health and well-being. But anxiety represents a threat to our physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual integrity that, left unchecked, can tear our lives apart.

### **Being Mindful of Anxiety**

People often say they feel “burned out” by their struggles with anxiety, but most are unaware of the deeper truth behind this metaphor. Imagine soaking your hands in bleach for several hours, even days. You would most likely get a chemical burn that left your skin severely raw and irritated. Even brushing up against something afterward might hurt tremendously. In a similar way, the chemicals produced by the brain’s fear response are caustic. When persistently stressful or traumatic events trigger prolonged or too intense exposure to these chemicals, this creates something like a chemical burn on your amygdala, the chief executive officer of the fear/protection system. At the very least, this can cause us to feel every stressor more acutely, making it harder to respond in a calm, rational way. At worst, we can develop an anxiety disorder in which an undercurrent of constant worry or even bursts of terror intrude upon every aspect of our lives.

Having an anxiety disorder is never a person’s own fault. Even if a person receives various treatments or tries many different techniques in response to the anxiety, it may not

go away altogether. Such is the mysterious nature of mental health, even in the psychiatric and psychological spheres. However, mindfulness remains a powerful tool for responding to feelings of anxiety, even if it is not a cure-all. Recognizing the bodily basis for anxiety is not the same thing as saying there is nothing, besides taking medication, that we can do to heal. Research in the field of interpersonal neurobiology, which investigates the impact of the psychosocial environment on our neurological functioning, and, in particular, work by Daniel Siegel of U.C.L.A. and Louis Cozolino of Pepperdine University, among others, reveals that the thoughts we think, the habits we cultivate,

the choices we make and, especially, the relationships in which we participate all send a constant wash of chemical reactions and neurological impulses through the brain and body. Through a process called neuroplasticity these psychological, social and even spiritual influ-

ences are perpetually rewiring the ways different regions of the brain interact with each other as well as the brain’s ability to form new connections.

A recent study by the University of Tel Aviv confirmed previous research that anxiety sufferers, by using certain psychological techniques, can learn to consciously modulate the degree to which their amygdala is triggered by stressful events. In particular, through the practice of mindfulness—the habit of adopting a kind of third-person-observer perspective on our own lives, by which we learn to be more conscious and intentional about our thoughts, habits, choices and relationships—we can both learn to respond more effectively to anxiety-producing situations and take steps to heal the damage even serious anxiety can cause. Mindfulness represents the intersection between spirituality and neuroscience.

Although psychologists often associate mindfulness with Eastern forms of meditation, this is not an essential connection. Mindfulness accompanies a wide variety of contemplative practices. For the Catholic, in particular, mindfulness is akin to the Ignatian practice of active contemplation by which one learns to prayerfully observe one’s circumstances and feelings with a desire to understand what God is communicating through our experience of the moment.

Of course, beyond mindfulness, a healthy spiritual life in general—one that facilitates a holistic integration of faith and life and encourages our active participation in loving, supportive communities—can have a powerful impact on both our ability to resist anxiety and heal from it. In his

## **Through the practice of mindfulness, we can take steps to heal the damage even serious anxiety can cause.**

## A Human Hero

By Eloise Blondiau

Bruce Springsteen's career is built on appealing contradictions: He is both an unremarkable everyman and a genius who wrote rock 'n' roll history. That neither aspect of his identity can be considered in isolation is part of his allure. Springsteen revels in the hallmarks of an almost clichéd manhood—leather, sex, cars and women—but he is never boxed in by this archetypal masculinity. Though a multimillionaire, he is still able to illuminate and empathize with the working class. Springsteen even remains charming and relatable while delighting in the worship of his fans.

While Springsteen seemed to have mastered paradox long ago, this year fans and critics alike appeared to forget his complexity when reacting to his discussion of his decades-long struggle with depression in his recent autobiography.

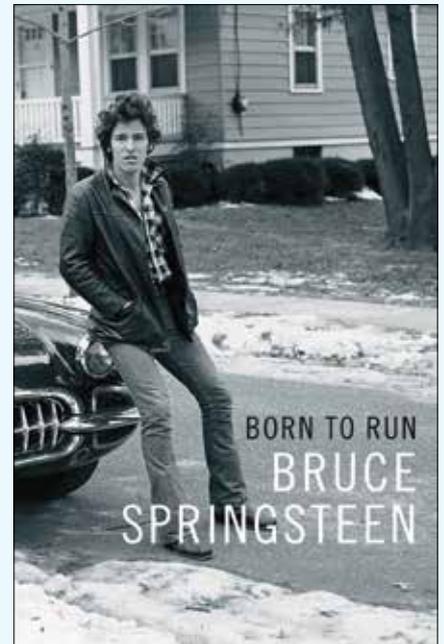
In his book review of the memoir *Born to Run* in *The New York Times*, Dwight Garner describes learning about the musician's history of serious depression: "I will admit that this information shook me. If Bruce Springsteen has to resort to Klonopin, what hope is there for anyone?"

In the eyes of Garner, and perhaps many others, Springsteen's power as both a man and a rockstar is at odds with how he understands mental distress. Mental health problems, depression especially, are often wrongly associated with weaknesses of

character. According to the cultural wisdom, people who experience depression should have something to be depressed about; otherwise they are regrettably—even culpably—oversensitive to life's grievances.

Along with drawing attention to these stereotypes, discussion of Springsteen's experience with depression has highlighted an alternate, and equally misleading, stereotype: that mental distress is the necessary flipside of exceptional talent. Jim Beckerman, of the Asbury Park Press, raises this mad genius stereotype somewhat facetiously. "Of course Bruce Springsteen is a great artist," he writes. "Look at how depressed he gets.... Think of Woody Allen...Virginia Woolf, Leonard Cohen.... All, in their different ways, important artists. All, in their different ways, depressives." In this version of the stereotype, Springsteen becomes another type of person: an impossible example of how to be acceptably depressed.

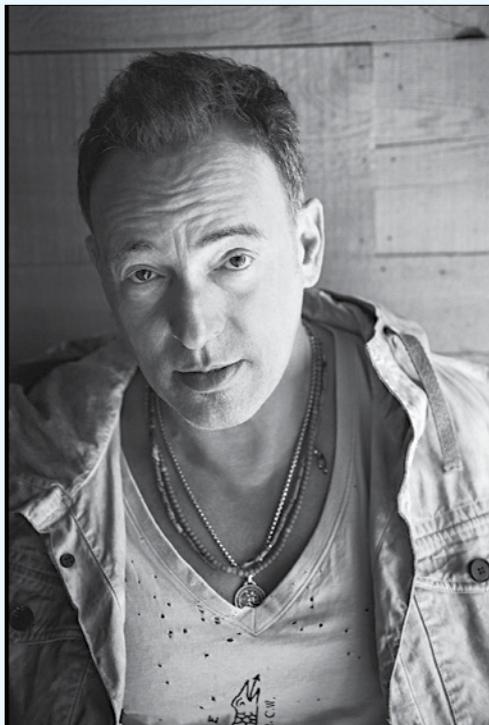
The two opposing stereotypes, one of weakness and one of genius, overlook the complex causes and manifestations of various mental health issues.



Conditions like depression, anxiety, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, among others, are caused by an intersection of genetic, economic, social and circumstantial factors. What's more, these conditions do not explain the entirety of sufferers' lives or personalities, but rather indicate certain aspects of their experience.

These stereotypes are not just untrue—they can actually intensify mental distress. In many scenarios, perceptions of inherent weakness or superhumanity prevent people from receiving and seeking the emotional support they need from their parishes, friends, family and coworkers, and even from receiving adequate treatment from medical professionals.

With this broader understanding of mental health in mind, news that Springsteen has experienced mental health issues should not disappoint fans, but enrich how they understand a musical legend. Let's allow Springsteen to teach us another lesson about complication: Mental health problems are neither the fault of sufferers, nor their saving grace.



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award-winning text *The Psychology of Religion and Coping*, Ken Pargament, a Bowling Green University psychologist, describes the results of hundreds of studies demonstrating that healthy religious commitment, especially when combined with personally meaningful spiritual practices, can play a strong protective role against anxiety and a host of stress-related disorders. Such practices can also enable religious persons to recover more quickly if they do fall prey to anxiety and the myriad emotional and physical maladies that accompany it.

Taking the value of mindfulness into consideration, it is key to note that while persistent worrying or mild anxiety can be managed independently with tactics like these, it is not advisable for sufferers of severe anxiety to attempt to shoulder the burden of their distress alone, with mindfulness as their only tool. Medication, counseling and other forms of therapy are also available and are most effective when made use of together.

### Is Anxiety a Sin?

Upon learning that something can be done to address anxiety, many people, like Alison at the beginning of this article,

are sometimes left feeling that they are somehow to blame; that if they just worked or prayed harder, maybe they could leave their worries behind. It is easy to understand the confusion on this point. Considering the number of Scripture passages that counsel, "Do not worry" (Mt 6:25) and "Cast your anxieties on him" (1Pt 5:5-7) and "Do not let your hearts be troubled" (Jn 14:27), it would be easy to believe

## We are not to blame for our anxiety. But if we can, we must cultivate our ability to respond to our initial emotional reactions.

that having feelings of anxiety is somehow letting God down, or even sinful. But of course it is not.

To commit a sin, we have to *choose* to do what we know is wrong. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that sinful actions must be willful, conscious and informed at least to a reasonable degree (No. 1860-2). A worried state of mind, even a heightened one, is none of these. Emotions like worry and anxiety begin as a preconscious, embodied experience that triggers so-called "automatic thoughts" that bubble up, unbidden, from the limbic system (our emotional/reactive brain) several milliseconds before our conscious mind is even aware of them. Emotions, including anxiety, can never be sinful.

But beyond knowing that anxiety is not sinful, it can be encouraging to note that God does not require us to achieve anxiety-free status as a prerequisite for sainthood. Paul Vitz, an emeritus professor of psychology at New York University, published a paper noting that St. Thérèse of Lisieux (who is not only a saint but a doctor of the church) struggled with a serious separation anxiety disorder and anxious attachment issues caused by her sainted mother's premature death.

Likewise, St. Alphonsus Liguori famously battled with scrupulosity, which today is understood as a variety of obsessive compulsive disorder that makes people anxious about spiritual, rather than bacterial, contamination. It should be a great comfort to any Christian to

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know that sainthood depends much more on God's infinite mercy than upon our ability to achieve psychological perfection—much less spiritual perfection—on our own merits. It is refreshing to note that when St. Paul experienced anxiety about his own inability to overcome certain flaws, God reassured him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).

## Cultivating Response-ability

We are not to blame for our anxiety. But if we can, we must cultivate our ability to respond to our initial emotional reactions in thoughtful, graceful and productive ways that work for our good, facilitate godly relations with others and empower us to build God's kingdom. This is exactly the skill that mindfulness-based approaches to anxiety treatment teach even to clients suffering from severe anxiety, although people who experience more common levels of stress and worry can also benefit from this approach.

That said, doing this often requires people to both make a mental shift about how they think about their feelings and learn new skills to deal with them. Many people experience their emotions—especially feelings of anxiety—as a tsunami against which resistance is futile. They feel that the best they can do is "manage" the onrushing emotional tide, desperately trying to limit the damage, but research shows we are capable of much more.

Brain scientists sometimes suggest that free will might more accurately be understood as "free won't." Although emotions rise up from the unconscious mind before our conscious mind is ever aware they are present, we can train our conscious mind to catch these surges of emotional energy and say, "I *won't* react that way. I *will* respond this way instead." Learning to take advantage of the tiny gap between our experience and our reaction to that experience is what psychologists call "response flexibility," and it is the key to learning to modulate our own stress/anxiety response.

In a sense, mindfulness-based practices increase this space that exists between the *trigger* for our anxiety and our *experience* of anxiety, allowing us to respond to situations in ways that are healthy and ultimately healing. It takes practice, but the basic capacity to develop this skill is one of every human person's most basic God-given freedoms. In the words of the psychoanalyst Viktor Frankl, who studied what gave concentration camp survivors

the will to live—in some cases, heroically—despite their terrible conditions, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Response flexibility is the very heart of free will.

Of course, one cannot simply decide one's way out of a mental illness, but most people can choose to get help via counseling and/or medication and mindfulness. Research into mindfulness-based approaches to cognitive therapy for anxiety consistently shows that even for those struggling with serious anxiety disorders, cultivating this mindful *responsibility*, this *ability to respond* in appropriate, proportionate and healthy ways to our worries can be a powerful tool for facilitating emotional and spiritual healing.

It is true that anxiety is an almost unavoidable part of modern life, but Christianity is clear that worry is not part of God's desire for us. It is God's intention to one day deliver us from all anxiety. In the end, when God re-establishes union with us and surrounds us with the perfect love that casts out all fear (1 Jn 4:18), we will find that peace beyond all understanding (Phil 4:7) is both our beginning and our end. This is God's promise to us. Although we, like Adam and Eve, often feel naked, profoundly ashamed of our insufficiency and all too aware of our incompetence in the face of the challenges of life, God promises us that we are not alone. We are his. We are loved. And in God's arms, we are safe. ▲

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# Immigrants and the Jinn

New and ancient paths to better mental health

BY ERIK RASCHKE

**T**here is no address for Holland's largest refugee camp. The national refugee department has nothing about it on its website. When I asked for directions to the camp—which closed after my visit—people at the several restaurants and gas stations I visited blinked with incomprehension. Concealing the presence of nearly 3,000 Muslim immigrants from the largely secular citizens of a densely populated country is no easy feat. What is especially surprising is that immigration centers all over the country, to which this large camp sent many refugees before it closed, have been the scenes of vicious protests against refugees and have dominated the headlines for months. The police have recently reported a large number of violent incidents at these centers, committed by refugees and directed at one another but also by outsiders. Some police departments report that they are called daily to settle conflicts. The Dutch government has outsourced the work of creating and managing these massive centers to a semi-private organization that rarely comments to the press.

Heumensoord, as the refugee center is known, shares its name with the national forest in which it is situated, near where the Netherlands meets Belgium. In order to get a closer look, I had to park near a day spa and hike in. After about 20 minutes, I came upon light poles leaning to the side in hastily dug holes and temporary fences, the kind used for concerts and protest marches, linked by plastic ties and wobbling unsteadily in the Dutch autumn winds. And through the trees I saw rows of stark, white tents made of the thick, elastic vinyl usually used for wedding parties and outdoor business gatherings and steeped like the Denver International Airport.

There is only one road leading in and out of this massive encampment. One must pass a security gate, dozens of guards and use a single road that goes through at least a half-mile of forest. When the refugees are allowed to take the occasional trip into town, they trickle into an adjacent hamlet, Malden, a suburb of Nijmegen. Malden is supremely upper-class

Dutch—straw thatched roofs, trimmed hedges, gravel driveways, each with petite-bourgeois name-boards like “Water’s Edge” or “Little Castle.”

Malden has a McDonalds where the refugees shuffle to the counter, then quickly retreat to the back with their dollar meals. They are mostly young Syrian mothers or boys who stare out at the town shyly, with a fascination that suggests their troubled pasts. Even from a distance, it is easy to see that these refugees are suffering not only psychologically but also physically. Scars stand out in this clean, orderly Dutch town.

Over the last few years there have been dozens of suicides across the country by asylum seekers whose application for asylum is taking too long or by those whose traumas have not been treated. Protests against refugees contribute to an acute sense of anxiety and unwelcome felt by refugees. When plans are released for building asylum centers in distant Dutch towns, riots break out, as in the town of Heesh, where a dead pig was hung on a rope with a sign warning immigrants to go away.

In November 2016, a leading polling organization announced that the Dutch anti-immigrant party, the Partij voor de Vrijheid, or Party for Freedom, was leading all other political parties. The P.V.V. leader, Geert Wilders—who was recently convicted of inciting discrimination for his comments about Dutch Moroccans—was also tapped as most likely to become the next prime minister in March. In 2014 the Netherlands took in 23,000 asylum seekers; in 2015 it was 45,000, almost twice as many. This year it dropped back down to 23,000. That is almost as many people as in the town Geert Wilders is from, Venlo.

There are an estimated 10 million immigrants arriving in Europe, a mass migration fleeing war and brutality. And while the shootings in Paris in November 2015 remind us that a miniscule number of these refugees have come with the intention of violent jihad, the vast majority are desperate and weary, seeking solace in the safety of Europe. An international study in 2008 linked mental illness and immigration. Immigrants living in white, Dutch neighborhoods were more than twice as likely to have some form of schizophrenia. It was a startling

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find, one that reminded psychologists and many others that bringing immigrants to the supposedly safe, white bastions of Europe might have very complicated results.

A recurring controversy in the Netherlands focuses on the fact that Moroccan and Turkish citizens, who largely come from Muslim backgrounds, visit the hospital far more than white Dutch citizens, costing taxpayers more. Geert Wilders has brought this up repeatedly in his speeches.

Very few people have taken the time to ask why Muslim immigrants visit the hospital more than other Dutch people. The answer could be that most immigrants reach the Netherlands after long struggles and in their new home face significant economic, cultural and social challenges, which affect both physical and mental health. The Calvinist Dutch have a long history of believing that suffering through pain is a path to righteousness, which is a difficult culture for most immigrants (including for me, as an American immigrant) to enter into. It is also quite possible that Muslim immigrants are returning to doctors and hospitals more often because their ailments are not being adequately treated or addressed.

Unfortunately, Dutch mental-health service offerings are meager. Most insurers allow visits to psychologists only in 8- to 10-week bursts. By then, they assume, a patient should have the tools to deal with mental distress independently. Within those limitations, patients who are not healed are left to their own devices. There are chat rooms filled with Muslim mothers and fathers searching for ways to help their children who are bipolar or emotionally distressed. Their children have stopped going to the mosque. They sit in bedrooms, in the dark or behind a computer all day long. The Dutch medical system has failed them, these parents write. Now they are looking for alternatives.

### Turning to *Hijama* and *Ruqya*

While immigrants struggle to find essential mental health treatment, practices of exorcism related to Islam are growing in popularity. These exorcisms target demons called jinn. Many Muslims believe that the jinn, like humans, are either believers in the Quran or they are evil. Almost all jinn, however, are unable to resist the words of the Quran.

Though not all Muslims recognize exorcisms as part of their faith (in fact, some Muslims see these practices as incompatible with their religion), clinics that prescribe so-called Islamic remedies are sprouting up around Europe. Examples of such remedies are *hijama*, a traditional method of cupping and bloodletting, and *ruqya*, a ritual that includes the recitation of the Quran. In some countries exorcist practices are growing so quickly that conservative political parties are trying to ban them.

Abdurrahmaan Miro, a 21-year-old Syrian-Dutch man from Tilburg, is one of these exorcist practitioners. Miro speaks fluent English, and his office, located above a gym, is



Above: “Imam Ali Conquers Jinn,” unknown artist, Ahsan-ol-Kobar (1568), Golestan Palace. Opposite: refugee center, Heumensoord.

clean and modern, the room decorated like a Westin hotel.

Miro was proud of his vast collection of oils and herbs, and he explained in rich detail how he performs *ruqya*: by first anointing with oils and then placing his hand upon the patient’s forehead while reciting the Quran. For Miro, jinn are different from mental health problems, which is why Western psychology and psychiatry have failed so many of his patients. Most of his patients had gone through Western psychoanalysis, he told me, but psychoanalysis could not exorcise jinn or genies from a person suffering strange maladies, and he said the jinn account for more than 70 percent of his patients’ maladies.

In his practice, Miro says he has come across jinn that are thousands of years old, grumpy and stubborn, fighting to stay inside a woman’s body. Just the other day he was working with a particularly troubled patient. A *sifr*, or curse, was placed upon a local Dutch-Moroccan man, a curse that had been ad-

ministered in Morocco but had been transposed to a man in Tilburg. Miro said he was able to remove the jinn and the man was healed.

## The Dutch Exorcist-Doctors

In addition to Islamic ritual remedies and limited Dutch medical options, Muslim immigrants experiencing mental distress in Holland have another option: the Parnassus Group, which falls somewhere in the middle. My first introduction to the Parnassus Group was through Jan-Dirk Blom, head of the Outpatient Clinic for Uncommon Psychiatric Syndromes. Blom is a clean-cut, white Dutchman with a soft demeanor and endlessly calm tone. He exudes a gentle, if limited, patience. He is the author or co-author of dozens of works on schizophrenia and immigration, and is now a professor in Leiden.

In much the same way that Abdurrahmaan Miro described his own clinic, Blom sees the Parnassus Group as an outpost of last resort, a place where immigrants with a range of psychological ailments come when they run out of options.

Often, Blom will see a Muslim patient who is struggling with certain psychological issues. This patient will likely have seen psychologists for years without any alleviation of the symptoms. Then Blom will ask this patient about jinn possession. Slowly, the patient will tell a story about a cousin who had *ruqya* or *hijama* back in Morocco, before admitting that he or she has also received Islamic treatment for jinn possession or *sibr*.

Blom has a jinn check-list. If a patient believes he or she is possessed, the patient is asked to describe the encounters in detail, so that Blom's team can get a better understanding of what the patient is actually experiencing. He receives patients who see green jinn lurking in every corner, dark shadowy jinn and jinn pressing down on their chests.

Like Blom, Anastasia Lim, his colleague at the Parnassus Group, is the author of several papers linking immigration, assimilation, integration and jinn possession. Lim's parents are from Indonesia—a country with one of the largest Muslim populations, as well as the source of countless YouTube clips of jinn possessions and exorcisms.

Even though Lim was born in the Netherlands, few people consider her Dutch. Lim admits that for most of her life she has felt she doesn't fit in Holland or in Indonesia. Compounding the dissociation, the Parnassus patients often say to Lim, "But at least you understand." Since she is non-white Dutch, they feel a connection with her.

Unlike her patients, however, Lim is decidedly Western-

scientific. Instead of talking about the jinn as powerful, real creatures mentioned in the Quran, she sees these possessions as "cultural-bound syndromes." Her thinking is closer to Blom's than to Miro's. For Lim, the project is not to figure out whether or not the jinn are real but to treat the psychosis that is present.

## Where East Meets West

With anti-immigrant parties rising to power in Europe, vulnerable immigrants will be under even more pressure to integrate into society—pressure that in itself negatively affects mental health. In this context, the Parnassus Group has found that the most humane and effective response to mental distress takes into account all causes and thus all treatments—even exorcism.

In 2012 Jamila Zacouri, one of the few female imams, joined the Parnassus Group to help carry out this mission to branch out from a purely Western medical model of mental health. Zacouri speaks Arabic, Berber, English and Dutch. She attended the Free University of Amsterdam, studied Islam, received a master's in mental health care and is married to a Turkish man.

Her first experience with the jinn was in a hospital where she worked with a woman

who did not want to eat, because the woman thought there was something in the food: *sahir*, black magic. Unlike Miro, Zacouri was convinced of the possibility of mixing Eastern and Western medicine effectively. When her patients asked for *ruqya* only, she told them that they should take their medicine as well.

By the time she was 16, Zacouri herself had been sick for almost four years. The doctors were unable to reach a diagnosis. Her illness returned when she was 30, and after visiting a host of psychologists and doctors, she was still disappointed. She experimented with Islamic medicine, mixed it with Western psychology and discovered, for the first time in her life, a new yet ancient method of healing.

While Dutch doctors break jinn possession down into medical language and treat it with medication and therapy, *hijama* practitioners like Miro see jinn possession as a spiritual malady beyond medicine. To Zacouri and the rest of the Parnassus Group, however, jinn possession is both a psychological problem and a social, spiritual and cultural ailment. Healing thus comes from medicine and doctors, but only in conjunction with cultural understanding and spiritual community. While it may seem eccentric or absurd to some, a jinn exorcism coupled with mental health therapy can be far more effective, not to mention cheaper, than years of antidepressants on their own. **A**

**She experimented with Islamic medicine, mixed it with Western psychology and discovered a new yet ancient method of healing.**

# Morning essentials.



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# No Slowing Down



Pope Francis enters the new year enjoying good health and, it seems, extraordinary inner peace. On March 13 he begins the fifth year of his ministry as successor to St. Peter. While the Jubilee of Mercy was an action-packed year for him, 2017 promises to be no less so.

When a close friend recently suggested that he should slow down, Francis calmly responded that at his stage of life one has to move even faster. Though his agenda has been only partially defined at the time of this writing, what is known already confirms his intention to continue at high speed over the coming 12 months. As pope, he has made 17 foreign trips outside Italy, visiting 26 countries as well as the European Parliament and Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, and there are more on the horizon.

He is expected to visit Colombia, perhaps in April, as he promised he would do once the peace accord between the government and the left-wing revolutionary group FARC was ratified, ending the 52-year civil war. After a nationwide referendum narrowly rejected the first accord, the Colombian Congress unanimously approved the revised version in late November, thereby opening the door for him to come. He might also decide to visit another Latin American country on what will be his third visit to his home continent.

The Argentine pope will visit Fatima on May 12-13, for the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady to the three shepherd children in this town in

Portugal. This was announced by the Patriarch of Lisbon, Manuel Clemente. Francis will be the fourth pope to pray at this Marian shrine, following Paul VI (1967), St. John Paul II (1982, 1991 and 2000) and Benedict XVI (2010).

After visiting Africa for the first time in November 2015, when he went to Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic, Francis wants to return this year. Among the countries being considered, two stand out: the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. Both are caught up in armed conflicts. The D.R.C. is a mineral-rich country gravely wounded by decades of war, violence, corruption and political crises. Its president, Joseph Kabila, visited Francis in the Vatican last September, but whether the pope can go to this land, where 43 percent of the population is Catholic, depends on the political situation. Another possible destination is the conflict-torn, oil-rich South Sudan, where 37 percent of the population is Catholic, as is the president, Salva Kiir Mayardit, whom Francis met in Kampala during his visit to Uganda.

The Jesuit pope believes the church's future is in Asia. He has visited this continent twice already, going to South Korea, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, and will return this year, perhaps in November, to visit India—a majority Hindu country, and Bangladesh—the world's third largest Muslim country.

Since becoming pope, Francis has reached out repeatedly to Muslims. In recognition of this, for the first time ever, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, Sheik Tayeb, the world's most prestigious institution of Sunni Islam (who

account for 85 percent of all Muslims), visited him in the Vatican on May 23, 2015. "The meeting is the message," Francis stated then, and the interpersonal dynamic was so positive that the sheik invited him to visit Al-Azhar, in Cairo, for a joint initiative. That could happen this year.

Apart from foreign trips and pastoral visits to the archdioceses of Milan and Genoa, Francis will have an extremely busy year not only receiving heads of state and dignitaries from all continents but also meeting brother bishops from many countries making their *ad limina* visits to the Holy See. (These visits were suspended during the Jubilee Year of Mercy, and there is now a backlog.)

Following tradition, Francis will lead the major liturgies at St. Peter's Basilica during Holy Week, Pentecost and Christmas and will preside at canonization ceremonies from time to time.

During the year, Francis will hold bimonthly meetings with his nine cardinal advisers to advance the reform of the Roman Curia and promote synodality and decentralization in the church worldwide. He will make senior-level personnel changes in the Vatican and might even hold a consistory to make new cardinals at the year's end.

Pope Francis has taken personal charge of the Vatican's work for migrants and refugees and is likely to surprise us with some daring and incisive initiatives in this and other fields in 2017, as he has done since his pontificate began. **GERARD O'CONNELL**

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

# Songs on the Wing

What a mockingbird can teach us

BY EMIL A. WCELA

As long as I have lived here, almost 30 years now, a mockingbird has arrived every spring and stayed until the approach of winter. Year after year his instinct tells him this place is home. Having read that the females rarely sing in summer, I think this bird is a male. And since the oldest known mockingbird lived only to age 14, I realize that the *same* bird has not been stopping by for decades. Still, I like to think of the current songbird as the son or grandson of the mockingbird I first listened to with such pleasure.

You can't miss a bird that chooses the highest tree branch as his stage. Often that stage is on a green ash that grows 100 feet from my bedroom window or a tall blue spruce planted in the cemetery behind our rectory. Another favorite perch is a 15-foot Celtic cross, carved from granite, that overlooks a grassy circle at the cemetery entrance. On many evenings I walk through the cemetery or sit on a bench to hear the mockingbird's serenades. His repertoire includes long-lasting arias and an



occasional midnight performance.

The mockingbird uses so many different calls I have stopped trying to count them. Bird experts can tell where a particular mockingbird has been by identifying the region where the birds live whose song is being repeated. Repeated, yes. But mocked? I think the mockingbird has been misnamed. Rather than “mocking” other birds, maybe he has found something beautiful, pleasant or interesting in their songs that he cannot help but share. The mockingbird I hear shares many songs with this parish on the eastern end of Long Island. His free concerts cause me to reflect.

Two long-gone pastors from this town lie buried beneath the bird's Celtic-cross podium. One pastor served Irish immigrants who came to work here and eventually bought parcels of rich, Long Island farmland where they settled. The other pastor ministered to a parish half a mile away where Polish immigrants, who arrived 30 years later, also cared for the land. While they lived, these Polish and Irish parishioners sang life songs of their own. Some were likely long-lasting arias, others midnight performances.

Those life songs traversed time, lilted across generations. They are still being sung by Polish and Irish descendants in this town and in these churches. At the cemetery, I hear the mockingbird broadcast his melodies over their graves and the graves of other people from many lands.

The mockingbird, who remembers where he has been and what he has heard, enriches others with songs that have become a part of his life. He is one of nature's reminders, telling us over and over who we are as daughters and sons of God. We, too, are called to recognize the songs of others—the truth, beauty and wisdom in their

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**MOST REV. EMIL A. WCELA** is auxiliary bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

lives. We are to make those gifts part of our lives and to share them widely. St. Paul writes (1 Cor 12) that all the baptized make up the many members

of the one body of Christ. Through that body God continually touches our world, heals it, forgives it, redeems it and brings it peace. Recast with respect

to the mockingbird, one could put it this way: We are all called to join the chorus, while God sings to our world through Christ and all creation. **A**

## GENERATION FAITH

# Discerning Desire

God was calling me. I just wasn't sure where.

BY ANDREW HEYER

I began my journey of discernment in high school believing it was an easy and almost magical process. I saw it play out fruitfully in the lives of others, but as I entered the seminary in my senior year, my own discernment took on a dynamic that I was not eager to face. Discernment was often a challenging and frustratingly long process for me. While deciding on a vocation can be incredibly joyful and fulfilling, the path to this decision can be a challenging one to walk with God. Yet, eventually, it became a source of great joy and hope.

I entered discernment with the desire to be married, which was an idea present in my mind since fifth grade. But as I grew in my faith during high school, a new desire arose to do something great and remarkable with my life. I developed a desire to be a leader in my faith and to spread my newfound love of God to others. So God's plan for my life and my own conceptions about my future began to interact. I saw priesthood as the higher calling and, in a way, a better way for my life. I believe this ideal of priesthood came from the experience of observing only



a few married fathers who were leaders in their faith. I had a belief that, since I wanted to do amazing things for God, I must have a calling to the priesthood. But deep down I still wanted to be married and a good father. This mindset followed me as I entered seminary in Minnesota.

There were a variety of exterior factors that added to the challenges I faced in my discernment process. First were the reactions of other people. Parishioners in my church acted as though they were convinced I would be

a priest from the moment I told them I was going to enter seminary. Many affirmed me since they saw me as helping to solve the dreaded "priest-shortage crisis." Others thought I acted too hastily, and my friends often could not place me in the priestly role or understand my decision.

The first semester in seminary went by quickly. But the feeling that I still desired to be married persisted during the following semesters. I continued to try to be open and believed my doubts were simply part of the natural reactions one

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**ANDREW HEYER** is a biology major at the University of Northern Colorado. This essay was a runner-up in *America's* 2016 Generation Faith essay contest.

has within the discernment process. But as the first summer arrived, the problem quickly became that I believed I needed to figure out all the solutions to the puzzle God had seemingly given me. In this process I was rarely at peace. I became frustrated and impatient, believing that I must either be doing something wrong or that God was making me wait through this challenging process for some reason.

What I realize now is that I had completely missed how God was speaking to me, and I was overly attached to my discernment. I did not really understand or give much credit to the second mode of Ignatian discernment and found too much comfort in the advice and confirmation of others. I discounted the movements of my heart and my desires and my dreams to live out my life in a certain way as not enough to affirm my vocational choice.

As I entered my third year in seminary, two events greatly affected my ability to understand my discernment.

The third year was dedicated to prayer and discernment at St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Denver. I decided early on to rest more and worry less about my vocation. I wanted to be more open to God's voice in my discernment. I was able to make this change with the sound advice of my spiritual director. I also trusted that the 30-day silent retreat at the end of the year could give me the clarity I needed to decide. The second major event was a visiting priest's talk at the seminary about the three modes of discernment of St. Ignatius. This was when I finally came to understand the second mode of discernment and how God was speaking to me in my vocation since fifth grade. This year helped me be more trusting of God's ability to lead me in my vocation and helped me understand how he was speaking to me.

During a five-day silent retreat in the spring, I decided, with the support of my spiritual advisers, to make the vocational choice that I was called to marriage.

God confirmed this choice to leave the seminary by giving me four days of consolation. I then left in the peace I had hoped for.

Being at peace with one's vocation is a great gift. But this gift is not easy to find. The process of discernment may take months or years of listening to God, growing in the spiritual life and growing as a person. The process of discernment is not meant to be so challenging that it seems meant for only a few chosen people. For each Catholic discerning his or her calling, discernment allows God to enter one's life and offer affirmation. It is in finding our vocation that we will find joy and peace in serving God and our fellow human beings. As in my own discernment, there can be many challenges that burden or complicate the process. Still, we must enter into this uncertainty. For it is in living out our vocations as Christians that we experience the full fruits of our baptismal gifts, rooted in the reality of Christ's redeeming love. ▲

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## Deliver Us From Hatred: Does Religion in America Have a Race Problem?

Thursday, February 9, 2017 | 6 p.m.

Costantino Room | Fordham Law School | 150 W. 62nd St. | New York City

Religions claim to both promote social harmony and affirm universal human dignity. But religious institutions haven't always measured up when confronted with racial injustice and intolerance, even in their own communities.

In what ways is religion complicit in America's race problem? And how can faith communities help heal racial tensions and lead the way forward?

**Willie James Jennings**

Yale Divinity School

**Jacqueline Lewis**

Middle Collegiate Church in Manhattan

**Maureen Costello**

Southern Poverty Law Center

**Iva Carruthers**

Educator, social advocate, and author

**Lisa Sharon Harper**

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# BOOKS & CULTURE

IDEAS | LEO J. O'DONOVAN

## THE CRUCIBLE OF A CULTURE

*Inside the new Museum of African American History*

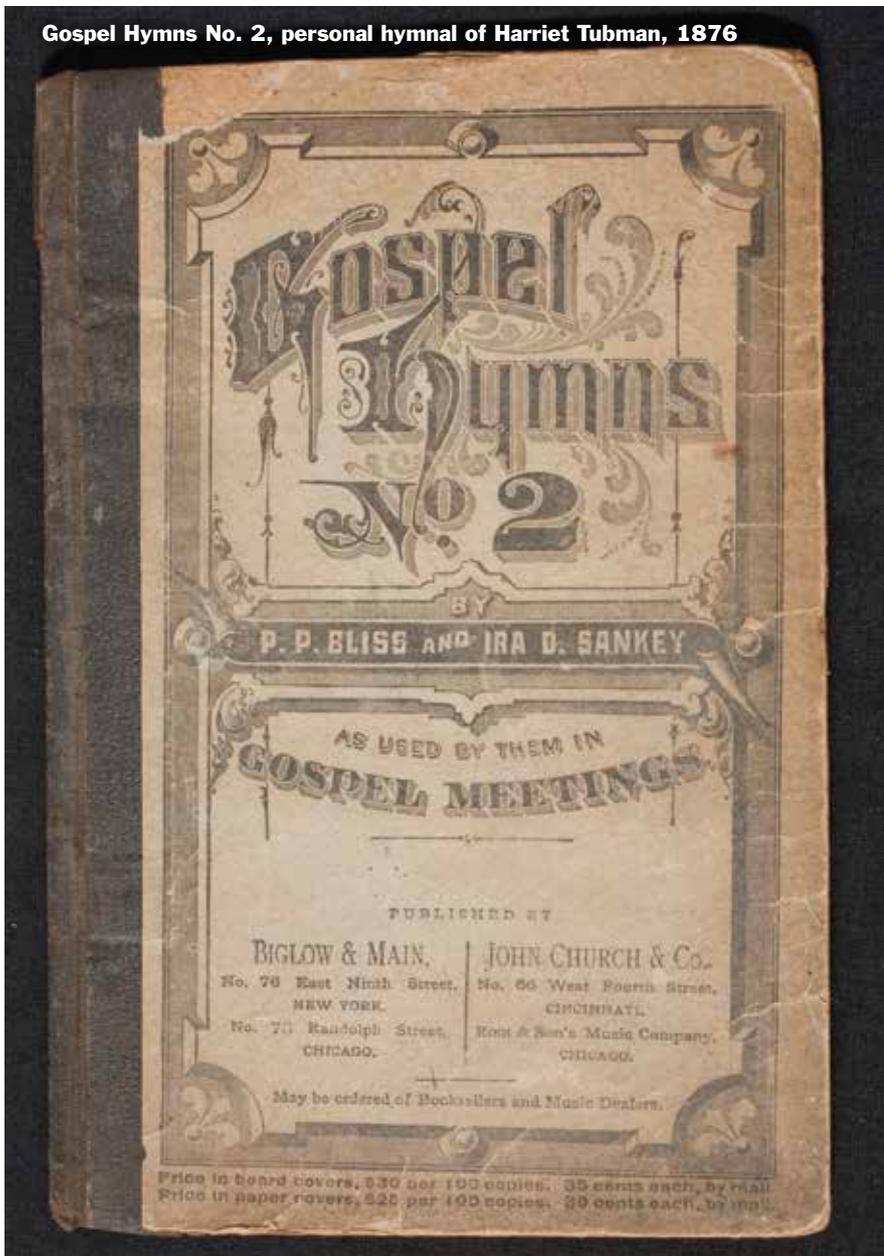
Before the transatlantic slave trade that began in the early 16th century and continued through the American Civil War, there were no people who identified as African-American. Nor did people of

the different nations and regions of the continent of Africa think of themselves primarily as “Africans” but as members of cultures—such as the Mbundu people, under the politically astute Queen Nzinga. Like the queen, leaders from the different cultures conducted robust trading with the new nations of Europe. But with the emergence of a global economy, trade shifted from the exchange of things to the sale of people, identified by race and treated as commodities.

The harrowing story of these enslaved people, 12,500,000 of whom were forcibly shipped to the Americas, is told on the three floors of galleries below ground level at the impressive National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., last September. These floors are the museum’s aching but resilient heart, beginning on the lowest concourse with material on “Slavery and Freedom.” The Middle Passage of the slave ships crossing the Atlantic is unsparingly presented, followed by accounts of slavery in the different regions of the colonies up until the Revolutionary War, in which enslaved men served gallantly. The Federalist period through to the election of Abraham Lincoln and then the Civil War comes alive with memorable individual objects—the lace shawl Queen Victoria gave to Harriet Tubman, an 1835 bill of sale for a 16-year-old “Negro” girl named Polly (worth \$600), Nat Turner’s well-thumbed Bible.

Next, the “Era of Segregation (1876-1968)” exhibit speeds through almost a century from the end of Reconstruction through the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. The

Gospel Hymns No. 2, personal hymnal of Harriet Tubman, 1876



PHOTOS: COLLECTION OF THE SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

**The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Inset: view from the interior**



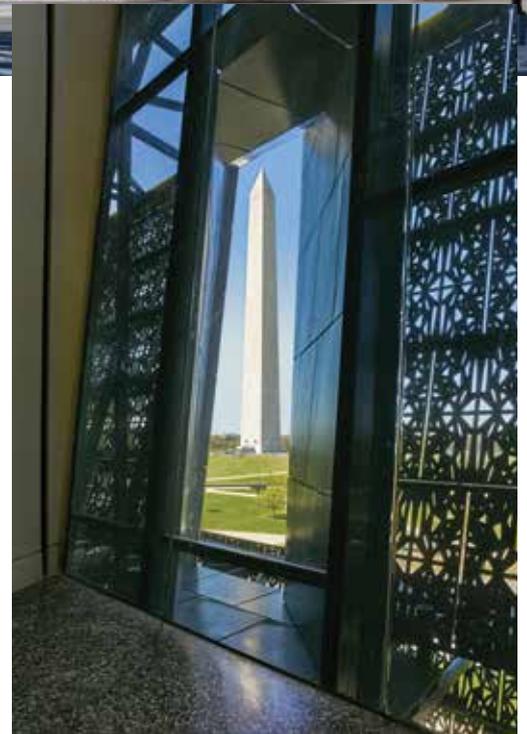
excellent exhibition designer, Ralph Applebaum Associates, has divided the story into meaningful chapters about the creation of a segregated society in which the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments were countered by the Jim Crow laws that proliferated until the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The final historical section, “A Changing America: 1968 and Beyond,” poses the question, “What are we to make of the last 50 years of progress and paradox?” Vivid images of movements like Black Power (and the F.B.I.’s surveillance of it) and the Black Arts Movement are followed by scenes from popular culture and the Poor People’s Campaign of the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, the growing influx of Caribbean and African immigrants, the stardom of Oprah Winfrey (who contributed \$21 million to the museum and for whom its 350-seat theater is named) and the election of President Barack Obama in 2008.

While 60 percent of the museum’s gallery space is below ground, the

glass-enclosed Heritage Hall, a large welcoming and orientation space, and the three floors floating above it give the museum its public image. The Ghanaian-British architect David Adjaye designed the upper stories in the shape of three inverted pyramids, one on top of the other. He then clad them with a “corona” of 3,600 lace-like panels, cast in aluminum and painted bronze, that are based on grillwork enslaved craftsmen created in 19th-century New Orleans and South Carolina. In strong sunlight the corona turns golden, while in shade it can appear very dark indeed—a not inappropriate signal for the story within.

The Community Galleries on the third floor above grade encompass a revealing exploration of the “power of place” through case studies of how African-Americans built their lives in environments as varied as Chicago and



Tulsa, Okla., Oak Bluffs on Martha’s Vineyard and South Carolina’s low country. The fourth floor with its Culture Galleries offers unadulterated joy. If the sight of Chuck Berry’s cherry red Cadillac is not enough to stop you in your tracks, the music and visual art, the seemingly unlimited richness

Red Cadillac Eldorado owned by Chuck Berry, 1973



of black style and the excerpts from the creative achievements of African-Americans in theater, film and television will surely bring you almost to song. And the wonder is that Lonnie G. Bunch III, the museum's founding director, was charged to collect all this material from scratch. He likes to say that when he started, 11 years ago, he "had nothing. No collections. No site. No money. No staff." Today, it is a collection meant to keep growing indefinitely.

In these first months of its life on the Mall, with crowds still thronging to visit, the museum is at once a triumph and a test. Visitors black and white will be chagrined and not infrequently brought close to tears—at the sight of the small adjustable brass ring that the Rev. Alexander Glennie used to marry over 400 slave couples (for whom marriage was deemed illegal), for example, or before the small coffin of Emmett Till, the 14-year-old black boy who in 1955 was brutally beaten and then murdered for having supposedly flirted with a white woman. But the resilience, creativity, courage and nobility of the people chronicled in the building rises again and again to the surface.

Critics have already expressed their doubts. The museum's ambition is to be encyclopedic, and encyclopedias all too often enshrine the past. The question is whether they can as expertly open and welcome the future as they preserve, celebrate or even mourn what has been. May Mr. Bunch find many allies for the cause going forward.

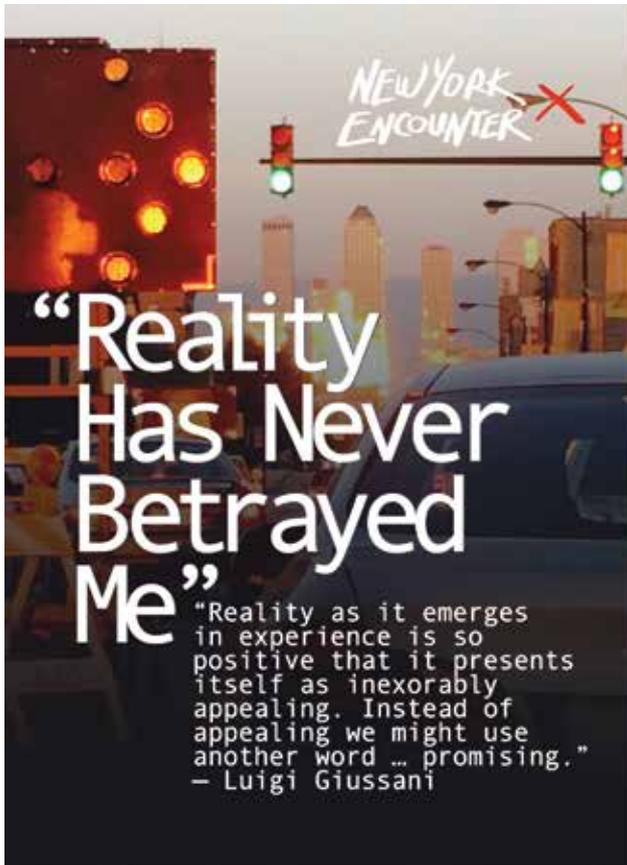
Meanwhile, in this exceptionally tense and stressful time in our republic's history, I would urge any visitor not to miss one presentation in particular. It reverently recalls Mary McLeod Bethune, the educator and activist "First Lady of the Struggle" and a close friend of Eleanor and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Here you can listen to the speech she gave on NBC radio's "America's Town Meeting of the Air" in New York on Nov. 23, 1939, addressing the theme of "What American Democracy Means to Me." "Democracy is for me, and for 12 million black Americans, a goal towards which our nation is marching," she began. "It is a dream and an ideal in whose ultimate realization we have a deep and abiding faith." And she concluded, eloquently evoking President Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address:

We have fought to preserve one nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Yes, we have fought for America with all her imperfections, not so much for what she is, but for what we know she can be. Perhaps the greatest battle is before us, the fight for a new America: fearless, free, united, morally re-armed, in which 12 million Negroes, shoulder to shoulder with their fellow Americans, will strive that this nation under God will have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, for the people and by the people shall not perish from the earth.

As the historic presidency of Barack Obama comes to an end, our country is reminded that the African-American story continues to be written today. And as a new political era dawns, all who fight for a new America, "for what we know she can be," march on.

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**LEO J. O'DONOVAN, S.J.**, is *president emeritus of Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., and director of mission for Jesuit Refugee Service.*



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Include contact information on the same page as the poem.

Poems must be postmarked or sent in by Submittable between Jan. 1 and March 31, 2017. The winning poem will be published in the June 12, 2017, issue of *America*. Two runner-up poems will be published in subsequent issues.

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# MOONLIGHT AND MANHOOD

“Who is you, Chiron?” Kevin asks his childhood friend toward the end of Barry Jenkins’s film “Moonlight.” The question comes after they have been reunited in their late 20s following a decade apart marked by prison time and massive personal change. In the asking, Kevin voices the profound concern at the heart of a film that is rightfully being touted by many as the best movie of the year.

It would be tempting to categorize “Moonlight” as a coming-of-age story about a gay, inner-city, African-American man, but that would be confusing its form for its essence—a bit like describing “Citizen Kane” as a biopic about a media tycoon. “Moonlight” is set in an African-American community in Miami that is plagued by addiction and poverty, but its resonance extends far beyond that. Through his main character, Chiron—depicted episodically as a young boy, a teenager and a young adult—Jenkins has created a heartbreaking meditation on manhood, suffering and the boundless ache for human connection.

Growing up with a crack addict mother and fending off bullies, Chiron speaks so sparingly that he’s practically mute. But in the hands of Alex R. Hibbert, Ashton Sanders and Trevante Rhodes—who play Chiron at different stages of life—the character is imbued with an almost operatic voicelessness. With so little to say, Chiron’s face and body language are like open wounds radiating subtle waves of pain, confusion and vulnerability more than any dialogue could possibly convey.

Chiron explains to his friend that

since their last encounter as teenagers, “I built myself back up from the ground up to be hard.” Hard and soft are the polarities upon which Chiron’s life teeters, and he understands which one determines survival. He lives in a world where manhood is defined by violence, control and domination.

This reductive vision of masculinity defines the dangerous streets Chiron lives on, but that same spirit is just as recognizable on Wall Street and suburban Main Street—not to mention in the tone of our politics, which now overflow with everything from strongman posturing to innuendo about “hand size.” Regardless of the setting, the consequences of this distortion are deadly.

“The very phrase ‘Be a man’ means, ‘Don’t feel it.’” the psychotherapist Terrence Real has said regarding his book *I Don’t Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression*. Real believes “typically male” problems—like alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, failures in intimacy—are linked to a “covert depression” in men. “We tend not to recognize depression in men because the disorder itself is seen as unmanly,” he writes. “Depression carries...the stigma of mental illness and also the stigma of ‘feminine’ emotionality.”

Jackson Katz, the documentarian behind “Tough Guise,” posits that school shootings and rampage killings—98 percent of which are committed by men—are not simply a crisis of guns and mental illness but a mas-

culinity issue as well. “The weapon becomes an integral part of how men and boys try to establish and prove they’re real men,” he says, “especially when they’re scared and their manhood is under attack.”

Michael Kimmel, a professor of sociology at Stony Brook University in New York, says one problem is conflicting definitions of masculinity. “If

you were to ask men... what does it mean to be a good man, they’ll all tell you: honor, integrity, responsibility,” Kimmel told *The New York Times*. “But ask what it means to be a real man, and we’re talking about never showing your feelings, never being weak... winning at all costs, getting rich, getting laid.”

This lack of connection does not bode well for men in a globalized world that is sprinting toward greater competition, complexity and nuance. Of course, counterexamples turn

up that reflect a more complicated vision of manhood, whether it’s the bromance comedies of Judd Apatow or Seth Rogen or an iconic artist like Bruce Springsteen, whose recent autobiography painfully recounts the deep depression from which he has suffered for years.

Cultural archetypes and expectations formed over generations do not change easily, but if we continue to exclude essential relational values like sensitivity and emotional connection from our definition of what it means to fully be a man, we will doom men to a state of perpetual war not only with others but with their own humanity.

The very  
phrase  
‘Be a man’  
means,  
‘Don’t feel it.’



**BILL MCGARVEY**, a musician and writer, is the author of *The Freshman Survival Guide* and owner of *CathNewsUSA.com*. Twitter: @billmcgarvey.

## PORTRAIT OF A MARTYR

### A RADICAL FAITH

#### The Assassination of Sister Maura

By Eileen Markey

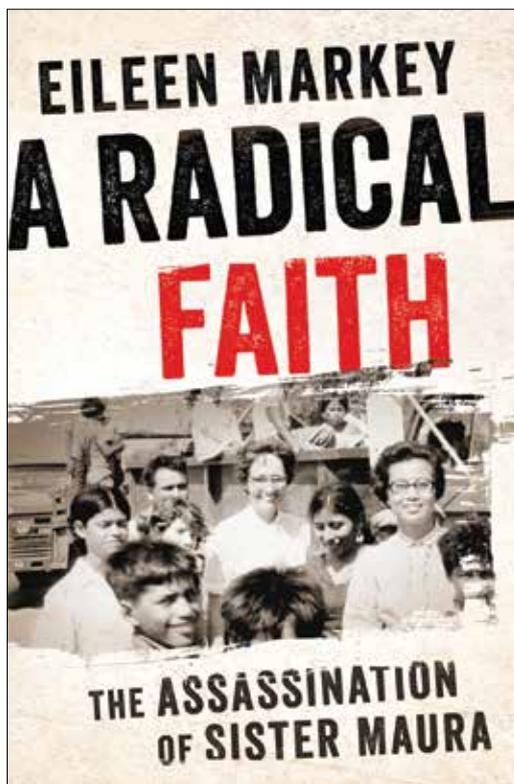
Nation Books. 336p \$26.99

Overused in contemporary parlance, the word *martyr* has perhaps lost its power to move us. It is either rendered ridiculous through misapplication to minor situations or seems so sublime that our paltry mortal minds cannot grasp its meaning. In her book *A Radical Faith: The Assassination of Sister Maura*, the investigative journalist Eileen Markey sets about reclaiming one such martyr from the remoteness of the pedestal: Maura Clarke, who along with two other nuns, Dorothy Kazel and Ita Ford, and a laywoman, Jean Donovan, was murdered by National Guard troops in El Salvador in early December 1980.

*A Radical Faith* is, as its subtitle suggests, framed by a grim black border of death. “The grave was fresh,” the book begins. The final chapter opens: “The death squads came in the night.” Yet long after the last page is turned, Markey’s story resounds in the reader’s heart as a deeply felt and profoundly stirring affirmation of life, of a singular life. She succeeds brilliantly at transforming the martyr Maura, symbol of ultimate Christian commitment, into a recognizable human being—incarnate, immediate and arresting in her individuality. And in doing so, Markey opens up all sorts of possibilities for us. Because if Maura, the martyr, is like us—imperfect, thirsty for God, responding to the challenges of her time and place as best she could—then perhaps we can be like Maura.

The book is well-written, well-paced and well-researched. Markey draws on a wide variety of sources to craft her

story: government documents, reports from human rights organizations, parish journals, newspaper articles, books, journals, letters and interviews with family members, Maryknoll sisters and countless people in Nicaragua and El Salvador whose lives Maura Clarke



touched. There are nearly 40 pages of footnotes at the book’s end. While in other cases I find it irritating to have to flip back and forth between text and endnotes, here the burden was light. Whenever Markey presented some granular detail—about an article of clothing, a personal foible, a conversation—I wondered, “How did she learn that?” and turned eagerly to the relevant footnote.

The forensic work, then, is sound, bolstered by dogged research and clear reporting. But Markey’s account is neither dry nor dehumanizing, perhaps

because it is animated by a compassionate curiosity: “How did this woman get here?” She recounts Maura’s early years growing up on the narrow peninsula of the Rockaways at Long Island’s western edge—a lovely, lively, generous soul who yearned to stretch beyond the bounds of childhood geography to make a difference in the world. She depicts Maura’s life in the Maryknoll novitiate, a rigid but spiritually redolent pre-Vatican-II environment, where the young nun developed a deep and enriching prayer life that would serve her well in bleak and turbulent circumstances. She follows Maura’s trajectory from her first assignment in the wilds of the Bronx (of which Markey amusingly notes, “This felt a little like being called to the junior varsity team”) to her many years in Nicaragua, to the final searing sojourn in El Salvador.

Markey’s range is telescopic and impressive. She sensitively portrays some of the psychological underpinnings of Maura’s personality—her need for approval, her aversion to conflict—as well as the joy Maura took in participating alongside the lives of the people. At the same time, Markey trains her attention, and ours, on the broader backdrop against which Maura was living out her call. Whether it is a concise summary of 20th-century U.S. policy toward Nicaragua, a consideration of the Irish Revolution or an account of the changes wrought by the Second Vatican Council, Markey grasps the larger context and aptly demonstrates its relevance, switching gears easily among the religious, the political and the personal.

It was, perhaps, the confluence of these three that led to the death of this loving and remarkably generous woman. Maura’s years in Central America coincided with a period of sweeping transformation in the church’s understanding of its role in the world. Unsurprisingly, the Maryknoll nuns’ perspective on their work evolved accordingly. Originally fo-

cused on teaching skills that would allow poor Nicaraguans to improve their lives, Maura's sense of purpose became more radically identified with the poor and infused with a desire to change the structural inequities that created and perpetuated poverty. Yet her posture was not political, but spiritual: The work of the Christian is to build the world Christ ushered in, by affirming the dignity and basic human rights of every person. Maura's approach to the people of Nicaragua and El Salvador was one of complete, transcendent generosity and love.

Like tens of thousands of Salvadorans who ended up tortured, mutilated or killed by the government-backed (and in many cases, U.S.-trained) death squads, Maura might appear to have been a loser in the fight for human dignity. Not so. As a young girl, during evening strolls with her father on the boardwalk of the Rockaways, Maura was taught that people who stand up for the underdogs and oppose the principalities and powers often lose their battles, and even their lives. But their legacy, as Markey summarizes, is "immortality in memory." In this sense, Maura's legacy is manifold.

Some years after the deaths of the four churchwomen, Ita Ford's nephew, Bill Ford III, went to El Salvador to carry on his aunt's work. Plagued by illness, he persisted nonetheless, until a Salvadoran nun said to him, "You do not have to be in El Salvador to continue your aunt's mission." Bill Ford returned to the United States. With tenacity, hard work and the help of a dedicated group of recruits, in 2004 he finally realized the dream of opening Cristo Rey New York High School, a college preparatory school whose students—75 percent of whom are Latino—engage in a rigorous curriculum and work at entry-level business jobs. These students, who honor Ita Ford, Maura Clarke and their two colleagues as the spiritual founders of Cristo Rey New York, are rising to a better life on the wings of

dedication and generosity of heart typified by these four women.

The British mystic Evelyn Underhill wrote, "We believe that the tendency to give, to share, to cherish, is the mainspring of the universe...and reveals the Nature of God: and therefore that when we are most generous we are most living and most real." Thanks to Eileen

Markey's marvelous book, Maura Clarke lives on through her soul's wide generosity, challenging us to animate the world around us with a similar spirit of self-giving.

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**ELIZABETH KIRKLAND CAHILL**, a frequent contributor to *Commonweal* and *America*, is the co-author, with Joseph Papp, of *Shakespeare Alive!* (Bantam Books).

KATHLEEN NORRIS

## OUR FIRST LOVE

### ON LIVING

By Kerry Egan  
Riverhead Books. 224p \$24

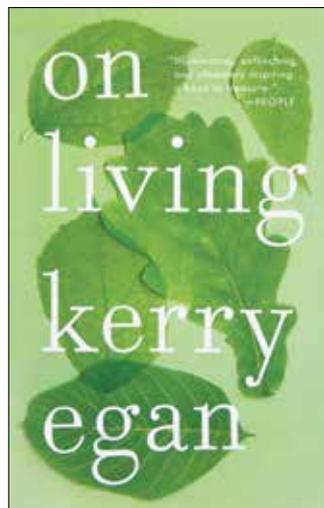
This is one of the best books I have read all year: moving, inspiring, beautifully written. It offers a valuable look into the work of a hospice chaplain, but also, and perhaps more important, it will be of use to people who put off visiting a friend who's in hospice because they feel uncomfortable and don't know what to say. According to Kerry Egan, you don't have to say much. The important thing is to listen and make room for dying people to talk, to say whatever it is they need to say.

Egan helpfully dispatches the misconceptions people have about the work she does, admitting that "meaningful spiritual care is, by its nature, nebulous and ineffable, and trying to describe it tends to make you sound silly." She encounters skepticism from a woman who equates Egan's attempts at making "a peaceful presence" for patients with serving them coffee. Her 5-year-old son describes her work as making people die so they can go to heaven.

Egan generously shares her stories about her discoveries on the job, learning to ask evangelical Christians, for example, "What was it like for you when you were saved?" Even the most despondent patients, she finds, respond to that question with joy. She offers the reader many glimpses into the grace she has witnessed in unlikely people. The victim of a severe stroke, a violent, aphasic man whom the hospice staff had found difficult to work with,

proves to have something to say when she hands him a Bible and asks him to find his favorite verse. After great difficulty his clumsy hands finally settle on a verse from Jeremiah: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."

A hospice chaplain hears a lot of stories, pieces of people's lives that, as Egan writes, they have "poured out and puzzled over, the stories they turned over in their minds like the rosary beads and worn Bibles they turned over in their hands." She discovers that even the repetition that many visitors find disturbing can have value, for as people retell their stories they often find new and expanded meaning in them.



A hospice chaplain learns that people carry burdensome secrets and regrets, and the prospect of dying makes them want to unload them. A woman who had lived for years hating her body says, "If I had only known, I would have danced more." Another comments, "I never did become wise. Y'always think that when you get old, you're supposed to become wise. But here I am, gonna die, and I never did." One woman asks Egan to tell her son who his true father is. The resolution of that situation is one of the gems of this book.

Egan encounters a man in a public nursing home who suffers from severe pulmonary disease but hopes for a lung transplant. Rather than admit that he is far too weak to survive the surgery, he expresses anger with the doctors who seem unwilling to help him. He teaches Egan that "a chaplain's power lies in the powerlessness of the role," because when he is with her—someone he knows can't get him the transplant—he can stop fighting. Instead he is able to imagine something better for himself. "Wouldn't it be great if I could take a deep breath?" he asks, and she responds, "It would be wonderful." Her experience with him leads Egan to reflect: "Regret hones hope, sharpens and clarifies the desire at the heart of it. If you're alive, even if you're on hospice, you can still work on making those hopes come true."

My favorite passage in the book begins with an experience Egan had in divinity school, when a professor mocked her description of her work as a chaplain intern. She had said that it mainly consisted of listening to people talk about their families. "And that was this student's understanding of faith," he had said to a class, "That was as deep as this person's spiritual life went!" Her classmates laughed.

But after 15 years of hospice work, Egan has gained a better understanding of the value of her original insight. "We don't live in our heads," she writes, "in theology and theories. We live...in our

families: the families we are born into, the families we create.... Family is where we first experience love and where we first give it. It's probably the first place where we've been hurt by someone we love, and if we're fortunate, it's the place where we learn that love can overcome even the most painful rejection. This crucible of love is where we start to ask those big spiritual questions, and ultimately it's where they end."

Having listened to many stories of abuse, Egan is well aware that mon-

strous things happen in families. But, she writes, this has made her "amazed at the strength of the human soul. Even the people who did not know love in their families knew that they should have been loved." This passage is typical of the wisdom to be found in *On Living*. It is a book well worth exploring.

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**KATHLEEN NORRIS** is the author of *The Cloister Walk* and *Acedia & Me*. She held the Randall Chair in Christian Culture at Providence College in 2014-15.

## After Simeon

—Lk 2:25-35

"No king has ever calmed these waters. No prophet leaves trouble behind. This world is way-station collapse.

"The higher You rise, small One, the greater will be your fall, because the lost are who You need, and they will not follow willingly, nor for long.

"This world spells Your name now, too. It is my blood that moves in you, the blood of all the unworthy.

You come for those who've traded a goodness they can no longer claim for a guilt that cannot save."

And then, more, what would happen—does for her:

"Oh, crushing of bone, the road You become!

"Whatever is coming will take us all.

"All these people: the great, noble; it will ruin them, me—because it will take You first. Nothing will ever be the same, in the shallows, nor in the deeps, least of all You, my issue, my increase.

"Whatever happens, it will break You, like firewood, popping in the hearth, even as You allow it, watch.

"I must come along."

**DAVID CRAIG**

**David Craig** is currently working on his 22nd book, *Mercy Wears a Red Dress*. He has taught creative writing for 28 years at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, where he also edits the *Jacopone da Todi Poetry Prize*.

# LIVES AND DEATHS OF THE TSARS

## THE ROMANOVS 1613-1918

By Simon Sebag Montefiore  
Alfred A. Knopf. 784p \$35

In popular lore, the impression that most likely comes to mind regarding the Romanovs is one of failure: a dynasty that came crashing down in the maelstrom of war and revolution in the early 20th century. In the longer view of historical perspective, however, the Romanovs were arguably one of the most successful of ruling dynasties, not only in European history but in world history, in terms of both the length and breadth of their hegemony. This dynasty not only ruled for over 300 years, but in their ongoing expansion from the original Russian hinterland, the tsars exercised sovereignty over approxi-

mately one-sixth of the world's surface in an enormous contiguous empire. (By way of contrast, the British Empire, although it covered almost one-fourth of the earth by about 1920, it was in some ways a scattershot collection of territories.)

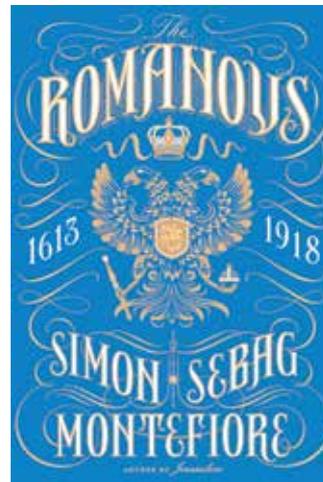
Simon Sebag Montefiore has written several well-received books on specific eras and individuals in Russian and Soviet history, including two books on Stalin. Here he tackles the collective reigns of the 20 or so tsars and tsarinas who ruled over this vast collection of lands and peoples from the early 17th to the early 20th centuries. In many ways this is a traditional history of elites: emperors and empresses, royal courts and families, palace intrigues and political/diplomatic maneuvering. Yet, especially in comparison with most other European powers, the Russian tsars not only reigned but truly ruled over a largely peasant population, with significant economic and political changes coming to the fore only in the last decades of the tsarist era. While the author does incorporate some of the major cultural, economic and social developments that occurred under the tsars, more connections to the great mass of the people would have been helpful. Still, this is an intriguing and insightful tour of Romanov Russia.

As the country emerged from its Time of Troubles in the aftermath of the reign of Ivan the Terrible, Michael Romanov was named tsar in 1613, no doubt in part because he was something of a nonentity. While the same could be said of a number of those who followed him on the throne over the next three centuries, several individuals of unusual if not extraordinary charac-

ter made their mark on Russia and beyond in unmistakable ways. Paramount was Peter I (1682-1725), almost certainly the most influential individual in all of Russian history. Though opposed and even hated by a number of contemporaries both in and outside of Russia, Peter surely deserves the title of "the Great" for the fundamental ways in which he transformed his country, virtually dragging it out of a largely medieval and semi-Asiatic outlook toward a decidedly more modern and European stance through his controversial but decisive policy of Westernization. In order to confront Russia's enemies, especially Sweden (the dominant 17th-century Baltic power), Peter vastly

improved the army, virtually created a Russian navy and introduced a series of related changes throughout Russian society. He famously built his "window on the West," St. Petersburg, which for the first time gave Russia a seaport on the Baltic and connected it to European commerce and culture. Peter was one of those forces of nature who so transformed Russia and its place in the world that there was really no turning back—though some, including his own ill-fated son, Alexei, desired to do so.

It is intriguing for such a male-dominated society, that after Peter's death in 1725 Russia was ruled for most of the remainder of the 18th century by four women, including Peter's strong-willed but somewhat frivolous daughter Elizabeth (1741-61). Most consequential, however, was the other "Great" of Russian history, Catherine II (1762-96). Though a German princess, Catherine rose to the height of power in imperial Russia and made



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her own decisive imprint. In particular, she helped to expand Russia to the south and west and gave it a permanent foothold on the Black Sea, a significant development in its perennial search for warm-water ports. While it could be argued that Catherine's dalliance with the Enlightenment was to a certain extent self-serving and even hypocritical in light of some of her policies, that could be said of the other so-called Enlightened Despots as well, like Frederick the Great of Prussia.

The 19th century witnessed an intriguing range of tsars, from reformist to reactionary or a combination of both. Alexander I (1801-25) in particular was a web of contradictions, being an enigmatic mix of liberal and autocrat, the erotic and the mystical. Sebag Montefiore argues credibly that Alexander has been somewhat underrated by history, especially regarding his pivotal role in the demise of Napoleon. Nicholas I (1825-55), on the other hand, was irrevocably committed to autocracy, Orthodoxy and Russification as the guiding principles of his reign. The pendulum swung again with the accession of Alexander II (1855-81), whom the author lauds as "the most endearing and attractive of the Romanovs." Most famously, the "Tsar Liberator" ended centuries of serfdom. When he faced opposition to this landmark legislation from some of the nobility, this reforming autocrat warned (prophetically) that if change did not come peacefully from above, it might be forced through violently from below. Alexander planned for further changes, which he believed were necessary to modernize Russia, but anarchists finally succeeded in assassinating him, hoping to bring about the radical revolution that they believed would truly liberate the Russian people.

In harsh reaction, Alexander III (1881-94) expanded the network of repression, convinced that autocracy and an iron hand were essential for law and order. Quite unaware that he was fated to be the last true tsar, Nicholas

II (1894-1917) largely pursued the policies of his father, in particular relying on Russification and Eastern adventures to solidify Russia's position at home and abroad. Defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, however, proved to be a prelude to the far greater disaster of World War I. By 1917, Russia's increasingly untenable military stance led to revolution, which finally brought the Bolsheviks to power. Centuries of Romanov rule came to a dramatic and ultimately bloody end when Nicholas,

his family and many Romanov relatives were killed in the midst of civil war in 1918. Sebag Montefiore ends with an intriguing if chilling comparison of past and present, arguing that "Putin rules by the Romanov compact: autocracy and the rule of a tiny clique in return for the delivery of prosperity at home and glory abroad." That, at least, is the facade of power!

**ROBERT E. SCULLY, S.J.**, is a professor of history and law at LeMoyne College, Syracuse, N.Y.



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# To Show the Way

EPIPHANY, JAN. 8, 2017

Readings: Isa 60:1-6, Ps 72, Eph 3:2-5, Mt 2:1-12

*“When you look for me, you will find me” (Jer 29:13)*

In today’s Gospel, Matthew introduces us to two types of characters: those who seek Jesus but do not know where to look and those who know where to find Jesus but fail to seek.

No one knows if the story of the magi is historically accurate, but Matthew’s narrative has inspired Christian imagination from earliest days. Lavish Byzantine frescoes in Jerusalem and Ravenna depict them as high-ranking Persian dignitaries. Western Christians during the Middle Ages, inspired by Psalm 72, depicted them as kings, complete with crowns and warhorses. Separate traditions among Eastern and Western Christians claim that the magi later became Christians and died martyrs’ deaths. Matthew gives us little information about the appearance or background of the magi but instead focuses on what their actions reveal about Jesus.

In Matthew’s day, the word *magi* described many different occupations. The word could be used for learned scholars who studied natural phenomena, like the stars. It could also be used for charlatans in the marketplace who dealt in potions and amulets. English takes the word “magic” from the latter description, but Matthew almost certainly meant the former. The magi

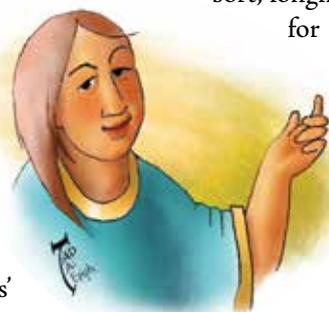
in today’s Gospel were scholars who believed, as did many in the ancient world, that great events were foretold in the shifting patterns of stars and planets in the sky.

We do not know what phenomenon indicated to the magi that a new king of the Jews had been born. A number of astronomical events, including a return of Halley’s Comet, occurred in the decades surrounding Jesus’ birth, but there is no evidence that Matthew is referring to any of these phenomena in particular. What the Gospel emphasizes is not the star itself but the magi’s response when they recognized what it meant. They gave no thought to expense or danger. They collected gifts for a king and set off, trusting the star to guide them to the goal they sought.

The members of Herod’s court could not stand in greater contrast. The chief priests and scribes knew exactly where to look but showed no interest in finding the child themselves. Herod, meanwhile, suspected that the star heralded “the Christ,” but he treated the newborn babe as a powerful enemy. He spoke to the magi in secret to learn about the star and then sent them, like spies, to bring back intelligence. Although Herod and his counselors knew where to look, in their indifference and fear, they failed to seek.

One of Matthew’s original purposes was to confirm something the ear-

ly church found a great mystery: that through Christ, God’s covenant with Israel was now open to the Gentiles. This is also the mystery Paul explains in today’s second reading. Matthew’s lessons do not end there, however. The world is full of seekers. Some of these seekers are men and women at the end of their rope, desperate for a liberator, longing for deliverance from poverty, human trafficking, the sex trade, mental illness, war, violence, poverty or injustice. Some are seekers of a different sort, longing not for deliverance but for a life worth living, a life with meaning and depth, with purpose and love. As Christians, we know that Christ can save every soul and satisfy every longing, and we know where to



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How and where have you sought Christ? Where do you seek him now?
- What do you hope or fear to find in Christ?
- Do you know seekers for whom you can be a guide? What do they seek?

find him. Christ himself told us to seek him among the poor, to find him where two or more are gathered. We find him in Scripture and in the sacraments and in the Spirit he gives us at our baptism. It is too easy for us to be like the chief priests and scribes in today’s Gospel, indifferent to knowledge that would change the life of another. It is also easy to be like Herod and feel threatened by the presence of Christ, who imperils our ego-driven senses of power, comfort, privilege or security. Today’s Gospel challenges us to be both seekers and guides, to be disciples who seek and find Christ, and then to show others the way.

ART: TAD DUNNE

MICHAEL R. SIMONE, S.J., is an assistant professor of Scripture at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.



CATHOLIC INITIATIVES

# Submerged in the Spirit

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), JAN. 15, 2017

Readings: Is 49:3-6, Ps 40, 1 Cor 1:1-3, Jn 1:29-34

*He is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Jn 1:33)*

Some words take on expanded meanings over time. It wasn't long ago, for example, that only birds tweeted. Other words develop narrower meanings. Consider the word *business*, for example, which today primarily means "commercial dealings." Earlier in history, the word meant any kind of "busy-ness" to which one attended—a sense that lives on in the expression "mind your business."

The Gospel today has several words whose meanings are now narrower than they were in Jesus' day. The word *lamb* for instance, meant not just a young animal but also "boy, son or servant." In many ways, it functioned the way the word *kid* does today. The word *baptize*, meanwhile, meant "to dip repeatedly, plunge, submerge." Dyers used the word to describe what they did to cloth, and historians used it to explain what a victorious navy did to enemy ships. By Jesus' day, the word had even expanded its connotation, coming to mean "overwhelm," a sense Jesus used as he considered what was about to happen to him in Jerusalem (Mk 10:38, Mt 20:22, Lk 12:50). Similarly, the word *spirit* meant any moving air. Breaths, breezes and storms were all "spirits," and these could be good or evil in their effects. This word is related to the word we translate today as "soul," which in several ancient languages also meant "throat." Just as breath enters the throat, God's Spirit

entered the human soul. A knowledge of these wider meanings helps make sense of today's Gospel.

We rightly associate Jesus' title "Lamb of God" with his sacrificial death. In today's Gospel, however, when John the Baptist called Jesus the "Lamb of God," he was calling him something like "God's kid." The evangelist John uses this image extensively. Jesus is God's Son who knows everything the Father has to say (Jn 1:18; 14:6-7) and who came to earth to serve the Father's mission by sharing that message with us (Jn 15:15). John assures us that Jesus has told us everything the Father wants us to know.

Jesus started to share this message only when the Father gave Jesus his own breath with which to speak. The Spirit that came down on Jesus like a dove symbolizes the intimate unity of Jesus and the Father and affirms for the readers of John's Gospel that the words they encounter represent a message directly from God.

The simplicity of the message is striking. Jesus gives only one commandment in John's Gospel: "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (Jn 13:35). Jesus illustrated this commandment when he washed his disciples' feet. Jesus was fully human and felt love in all its forms. Because he knew the Father's heart, he also knew that all love finds its fulfillment in self-sacrifice and in service. This is what he taught the apostles when he washed their feet. This is what he showed the world when he chose to die rather than betray his commitment to loving service. This love made him

stronger than death itself. In Jesus' commandment to love, we have God's instructions for conquering death.

John's Gospel and our second reading remind us that Jesus has submerged us in the same divine breath. Jesus received God's own Spirit, and the words that came from his throat were God's own message. His disciples must live the same way. Like a dyer plunging cloth into a vat, God immerses us in the Spirit. Our transformation begins at our baptism but then becomes deeper and richer every time we open ourselves to the Spirit

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How has God's Spirit made itself felt in your life? Who has taught you to love without fear?
- How can you, through word and deed, share that message with the world?

at work in the world.

As possessors of the same Spirit, we need to speak as Jesus taught us. Early Christians, as they brought this message to the world, saw themselves as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, "I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation will reach to the ends of the earth." This remains our mission today. Imagine a world in which every word from every throat was a promise to love without fear, even fear of death. That is God's dream for humanity. That was the message that came upon Jesus. That is our challenge as bearers of God's Spirit to the world.

**MICHAEL SIMONE**

*Editor's Note: The commentary on the readings for Sunday Jan. 22 will appear on America's website.*



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