

VOCATIONS

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The First Five Years

STEPHEN J. ROSSETTI

Matthew 9:9 is a favorite Scripture passage for vocation promotion events. I've heard it read at such gatherings at least a dozen times in the last 10 years: Jesus "saw Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him."

What has always struck me about this passage is Matthew's immediate yes to Jesus' invitation. "And he got up and followed him." Just like that. The first time I heard this, I rather flippantly wondered whether the author had left out some crucial bits of the story. A lot must have happened between the time when Jesus said "follow me" and when Matthew finally decided to do it. What about Matthew's lengthy discernment, his eight-day retreat at an oceanside house of prayer, his numerous meetings with his vocation director, his trip to World Youth Day?

I'm kidding, of course. And yet I'm not. Who would just get up and go? During these initial years of my priestly ministry, I am stumbling into an answer.

The Second Vatican Council reminded us that the "books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation." In other words, we can trust that the most important part is there on the page—namely, that Matthew "got up and followed him."

Perhaps all of the "stuff" that might occur between God's invitation and our definitive yes is not really the point; it certainly wasn't for Matthew. St. Ignatius reminds us that deeds are more important than words, especially in acts of love, which are the most important acts of faith. A vocation then isn't an idea about how to live our lives, but the active gift of our lives to others and ultimately to the person to whom Matthew responded with such daring and hope.

It cannot be any other way. Who among us would leave everything we have for an idea? Well, quite a few of us, I suppose, if history is any guide. But if the information age teaches us anything, it is that ideas are plentiful and therefore cheap and, apart from ultimate truths, maddeningly fleeting. I know I could not leave everything for an idea; I simply lack the courage.

What stands in the way of most people's yes to God, however, is not their fear but rather their shame, the sense that they are somehow unworthy of the yes. I've certainly said to God: "I cannot do this. I am a great sinner. I wish I could say that my greatest sin is collecting taxes." Then, as surely as there is a balm in Gilead, God usually responds: "Matthew, son of John, you are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Now cut the crap. You wonder whether you are worthy? Well, wonder no more: you're not. You are unworthy not because you are the worst among my creatures but simply because you are the creature and I am the creator. And the difference between those two things is the difference between something and everything. And that difference is totally a gift."

Now some of that may sound a little harsh, but it's actually quite freeing. "I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners," Jesus tells us. Amen to that. I do not need to be God or even general manager of the universe. I don't need to be perfect; I can't be perfect. I simply need to live out of the truth of who I am: created and redeemed by a God who loves me without a *because*, without conditions, simply because of who God is—this God in Christ through whom I become a gift to others, not in spite of all I have done and failed to do, but precisely because of it.

"And he got up and followed him." O.K., now I get it.

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Cover: Priests give their blessing to newly ordained priests in St. Peter's Basilica. CNS photo/Paul Haring.

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ON THE WEB

Ray McGovern, a former analyst at the **C.I.A.**, describes some of the challenges the agency faces today. Plus, Michael V. Tueth, S.J., reviews the film "**Black Nativity**." All at americamagazine.org.



Bring Them Home

Since the end of the 18th century, Afghanistan has chewed up its invaders and spit them out. Each of them imagined that despite its geography and harsh terrain, Afghanistan could be overcome by force. The United States arrived in October 2001 to punish Osama bin Laden and the Taliban. Since then about 2,290 American soldiers have died, more than 1,500 have lost arms or legs and a third suffer traumatic stress related to combat.

Although the Obama administration had promised a total withdrawal in 2014, it is currently negotiating to extend the presence of 12,000 troops for another 10 years. President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, angered by an air strike that killed a child and injured two women, insists that U.S. and NATO forces cease all drone strikes and raids on Afghan homes and allow U.S. soldiers to be tried in Afghan courts.

The recent rise in the killing of aid workers (36 as of November) might suggest that U.S. troops should remain in order to enforce civil stability, but nation building is not the responsibility of the military. As Afghanistan prepares for a presidential election in April, the Karzai family, which has a reputation for corruption, has announced Hamid's brother Qajum will be his successor.

The protest against drone killings and other military atrocities is justified and is an additional reason for the United States to withdraw. Once again, Afghanistan has worn down its would-be conquerors. It is time for Afghanistan to confront its own internal problems, and for U.S. forces to leave.

A Courageous Bishop

The Mexican gang that calls itself the Knights Templar, known by its ceremonial white robes with red crosses, enforces a strict code of moral conduct on its members and vows to protect the oppressed, the widow and the orphan. They also have a corner on the methamphetamine market in the western state of Michoacán. Taking their name from the medieval Christian order of crusaders, this quasi-religious drug cartel has cowed or bought off local officials and police and extorts heavy fines from business owners and farmers in the region. Civilians in at least six towns, unconvinced that leaders in Mexico City have the will or the way to take on the drug lords, have formed armed self-defense groups to throw off the reign of terror.

One Catholic bishop, Miguel Patiño Velazquez, 75, of Apatzingán, spoke in remarkably blunt terms about his support for the militias in their struggle against the

cartel, which he called out by name at great personal risk. "Kidnappings, abductions, murders and bribes have increased, to the point that entire families have been forced to emigrate," he wrote in a pastoral letter issued on Oct. 16. He said Michoacán is becoming a "failed state" and called on the government to restore the rule of law.

Over 60,000 lives have been lost across Mexico since former president Felipe Calderón escalated the quite literal war on drugs, deploying thousands of troops to root out drug lords and corrupt police forces, a militarization of the conflict that his successor has reluctantly continued. During his trip to Latin America in July, Pope Francis said the scourge of drug trafficking "requires an act of courage from society as a whole." We hope many more in Mexico and the United States will be inspired to act by the example of one very brave bishop.

Pension Pinching

Detroit's public sector workers had counted on city pensions as the foundation of a dignified and decent retirement. But on Dec. 3 a federal bankruptcy court cast those expectations aside, green-lighting the city's Chapter 9 filing.

What happens in Detroit will not stay in Detroit. Scores of other municipalities teeter on a fiscal brink. City managers may now perceive municipal bankruptcy, previously a civic anathema, as a plausible recourse to escape long-term pension and health care obligations that were publicly negotiated, then negligently funded. But seizing on municipal bankruptcy as an easy out—or using the threat of bankruptcy to extort punitive concessions from embattled public sector workers—cannot become a new exemplar of "fiscal realism."

Detroit's demise has many authors. Like the tortured obituaries that can be written for other struggling cities, its tale would not be complete without understanding the role and responsibilities of multiple forces, including the epic implosion of Wall Street-facilitated financing schemes. Yet in the public imagination, it is the weight of pension obligations that seems to pull down U.S. cities.

Detroit's 21,000 retired workers had been anticipating modest retirement incomes of \$19,000 to \$30,000 annually. They now face pension reductions that will ruin them. Michigan politicians have taken the position that this outcome, though regrettable, is an inevitable outcome of the fiscal forces at work in Detroit. Not so. A state that can locate \$283 million to subsidize a billionaire's new hockey arena can scrape together the resources necessary to honor the promises it made to its own citizens.

A Collegial Church

Pope Francis demonstrated his collegial style in the first moments of his papacy. Speaking from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica on March 13, 2013, he made five references to himself as a bishop instead of invoking titles like pope or supreme pontiff, and he asked for the assembled people to bless him and pray for him. He said: "Now let's begin this journey, bishop and people, this journey of the church of Rome, which is the one that presides in charity over all the churches—a journey of brotherhood, love and trust among us."

At that time the church had felt the power and significance of the first papal resignation in nearly 600 years, a great act of humility by Benedict XVI and a decision with consequences for the papacy. Now in "Evangelii Gaudium" ("The Joy of the Gospel"), an apostolic exhortation published on Nov. 24, Pope Francis lays out his ecclesial vision and calls for a broad program of renewal and reform that touches every level of the church.

"Since I am called to put into practice what I ask of others," Francis explains; "I too must think about a conversion of the papacy." An essential element of this conversion is a renewed emphasis on collegiality, the collaboration and shared leadership among bishops in the governance of the church. In the exhortation, Francis expresses the hope of the Second Vatican Council that episcopal conferences could "contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realization of the collegial spirit," and he acknowledges that the "juridical status" and "genuine doctrinal authority" of episcopal conferences "has not been sufficiently elaborated."

This collegial spirit is demonstrated and practiced in the exhortation itself, in which the bishops' conferences around the world serve as a major point of reference. Pope Francis cites 10 conferences in all, and the list is impressive in its geographical diversity: Africa, Asia, the United States, France, Oceania, Latin America, Brazil, the Philippines, the Congo and India. Francis explains that the papal magisterium should not be expected "to offer a definitive or complete word on every question which affects the church and the world." He writes: "I am conscious of the need to promote a sound decentralization."

This inclusion of regional voices better serves the life and mission of the church. Diocesan bishops, through their service in every corner of the world, have unique access to the experience, perspective, cultural context and pastoral

challenges of the lay faithful in their respective dioceses. It is essential for everyone who exercises authority in the church to renew efforts to reach out and listen to how God is working in people's everyday lives, especially those on the margins of society and the church. Collegiality not only requires greater cooperation among bishops; it also calls for the discovery of new ways to facilitate meaningful and sustained cooperation and dialogue between a bishop and the people of his diocese. In the exhortation, Francis writes that a bishop needs to "encourage and develop the means of participation proposed in the Code of Canon Law, and other forms of pastoral dialogue, out of a desire to listen to everyone and not simply to those who would tell him what he would like to hear." Dialogue and collaboration are meaningless unless every participant is willing to truly listen with an open heart. Structures are needed to ensure this co-responsibility for fulfilling the church's mission.

Significantly, Francis is implementing this vision in the preparatory stages of the synod of bishops by inviting the participation of every member of the church. Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri, secretary general of the synod, has said the Vatican's questionnaire about pastoral challenges to family life should be distributed "as widely as possible to deaneries and parishes." In a recent interview with The National Catholic Reporter, he explained the consultation is intended to "gather information from the grass roots and not limit itself to the level of the Curia or other institutions."

This process is a superb example of bishops and people on a journey together. Archbishop Baldisseri has repeatedly emphasized that while this consultation is not a popular referendum on church teaching, it must still be meaningful and effective. He has said that after his office collects the summaries from the bishops' conferences, an ad hoc group of experts will examine and summarize the feedback, which will be used to create the *instrumentum laboris*, the working document for the synod.

The group of experts should include laity and clergy, men and women. Archbishop Baldisseri has said, "We have started taking a different approach...and this will help us a great deal." This new approach embodies the reality that the church is the entire people of God, clergy and laypeople alike.



REPLY ALL

Open the Doors

“The Continuing Crisis,” by Jon Fuller, S.J., M.D. (12/2), addresses important issues and appropriately recognizes terrific work Catholics are doing to combat H.I.V./AIDS. That being said, as a young Catholic working in the H.I.V./AIDS community, I believe important questions for our church remain.

New H.I.V. cases are spiking among poor young men of color in the United States. This population does not use drugs or have unprotected sex at higher rates than others, but they are infected far more often. As a church, we should continue to promote universal access to health care. Additionally, we should not turn a blind or judgmental eye to these young men, many of whom believe the doors to God’s house, the church, are shut on them because they have fallen short of moral expectations.

We must ask ourselves: Can we open our arms and welcome them into our community and remind them that they too are loved? In “Evangelii Gaudium,” Pope Francis says the church cannot be “shut up within structures...within rules which make us harsh judges...while at our door people are starving.” Doing this push-

es our brothers and sisters farther into the shadows, which leads to more infections. It makes for bad public health and bad Catholicism. The church doors should be wide-open.

MATTHEW RYAN
Hartford, Conn.

Make Effective Laws

In her brilliant piece “Criminal Injustice” (12/2), Margot Patterson once again illustrates that brevity is indeed the quintessence of eloquence. She properly notes that both liberals and conservatives bought the lie of “lock ‘em up and throw away the key” as the path to public safety. It never was and never will be the pathway. Nation after nation around the world illustrate that the only ways to go are humane treatment, addiction services and mental health support.

What is of paramount importance for us as Catholics and Christians is that the power to change all of this is in our hands. We got into this terrible situation by misguided, harsh and inhumane legislation, starting in the early 1980s. The best way—if not the only way—out of this is through effective and efficient reform legislation. States like Arkansas, Georgia and South Dakota are already on their way.

We should all heed Ms. Patterson’s words and speak out for Christian

treatment of our incarcerated brothers and sisters in Christ.

JOHN S. SANTA
Southport, Conn.

Not Only Prisons

I agree with everything Margot Patterson writes about the injustices permeating the “U.S. criminal justice system.” But I would note that the criminal justice system encompasses more than imprisonment. Ms. Patterson, like many other Christians, focuses on only one prong of the criminal justice system: incarceration and, specifically, prisons. Similar attention should be given to other components (the police, the courts) of the criminal justice system.

TOBIAS WINRIGHT
Saint Louis, Mo.

Suffering in Our Midst

Thanks for writing, in “Criminal Injustice,” so boldly and clearly. Having been involved with prisoners and their families for more than 20 years, I can attest to the pain and fracturing that these terrible injustices cause. I see it as the sin of slavery gone underground. It is frustrating that most Americans are totally blind to this phenomenal suffering right in our midst. Every couple of hundred miles in this country there is a huge compound filled with human beings who are thrown away and forgotten.

BETH CIOFFOLETTI
Online comment

An Artist Responds

Re “Wrong Image” (State of the Question, 12/2): For the most part I agree with Susan Black’s assessment of the cover (using my art) of *America’s* issue on women in the life of the church (10/28). Indeed it could be stronger in image and is too soft in color—although the original is brighter. I don’t know if the muting was intentional in the reproduction or the way the paper absorbed the ink.

The cover was a difficult one, and I struggled with it. Any image of us wom-



CARTOON: HARLEY SCHWADRON

en is inadequate, I write with a smile. I am grateful to know that art is taken seriously and that it can be a powerful teacher. At the same time, I hope one does not get stuck in any image that keeps one from moving into the center. I appreciate the comment. I take it to heart.

ANSGAR HOLMBERG, C.S.J.
Saint Paul, Minn.

Help Requested

In "Reply All" (12/2), Elizabeth Keck questions *America's* limitation of "responsible parenthood" to the topic of natural family planning. I agree with her critique. Responsible parenthood requires discussion about the formation of conscience, a neglected subject in recent Catholic literature.

After Vatican II (1962-65) and "Humanae Vitae" (1968), much was written and many lectures were given on this important topic. Today many people are more aware of the right of conscience, but many remain unaware. Does *America* (and other publications) feel that the effort was so well done that nothing more needs to be said for lay decision-makers in the 21st century? My experience tells me the church needs to do much more repetition on some basic issues.

In the 1960s, a theologian explained how to teach the formation of conscience

to a gathering of clergy. A person asked, "If we explain all this to the laity, won't many of them make mistakes?" The insightful answer: "Of course! But the number of mistakes will likely be about the same as those made by the priests who told them what to do, or not to do!"

Is contraception always O.K.? No. Is it always wrong? No. How can we know the difference? Maybe *America* will help again.

WILLIAM J. PETERS
Pittsburgh, Pa.

History Lessons

I was disappointed when I read "Room for Debate," by Anthony J. Zavagnin (11/25), about the discussion of same-sex marriage with his high school class. He missed an opportunity to explain the church's teaching. Jesus was considered kind and forgiving, but he did not shy away from the controversial discussions of his day. When asked about divorce, Jesus referred to Genesis: "A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife" (Mt 19:5).

Mr. Zavagnin also could have related this teaching to the separatist movement, in which Pilgrims left Europe and came to the New World. The Pilgrims wanted to worship God on their terms and not have the head of state decide religion for them. The

First Amendment gives Americans the right to practice religion outside of church doors, but today there are many examples where people are being sued for following Jesus' message, like when a baker or photographer is sued for saying no to a same-sex couple.

Mr. Zavagnin missed an opportunity to teach religion and history.

YVONNE BALCER
Jersey City, N.J.

Religious Insights

Re "O'Neill's Dark Passage," by Kevin Spinale, S.J. (11/25): In 1946 *Life* magazine published an interview with Eugene O'Neill, in which he made a statement that I found strange, considering his many plays and the known facts about his life. He stated that the most important idea that mankind should remember is "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?"

Also, in "Of Many Things," by Matt Malone, S.J., about the "three Johns" who died in 1963 (Pope John, John F. Kennedy and John LaFarge, S.J.), it should be noted that on the same day Kennedy died, C. S. Lewis and Aldous Huxley died too. Peter Kreeft wrote a book titled *Between Heaven and Hell*, about the three men who died on Nov. 22, 1963.

AL SISTINO
Orland Park, Ill.

f STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to "The Founding Father," by Anthony Egan, S.J. (Web only), on the legacy of Nelson Mandela.

As a South African, it's wonderful to see Madiba recognized and honored with such love and respect. We have lost a true gentleman.

RYAN MCCARTHY

Nelson Mandela was one of the greatest leaders in my life. He led by example as much as he led by his words. His life was a witness to the power of forgiveness, compassion for those who struggle, empathy for

those in power, intellect put to the greater good and fortitude against all odds. I think he is unmatched by any of today's leaders.

TERESA TRUJILLO

The world mourns the passing of Nelson Mandela because this servant-leader gave hope to people in a seemingly hopeless situation. He sacrificed himself for others rather than living a quiet, peaceful life. His is a legacy of the courage to do what is right and good despite the personal cost.

SHARON FLACK MUSSOMELI

Madiba was a spiritual giant who walked among us. In looking over photos of him, I am struck by how many of them show him emanating joy with wild abandon!

CAROLYN KEY KRECKER

Food for thought: A line from the book *Thomas Merton on Mysticism* seems to address those contradictions noted about Nelson Mandela: "Man is not meant to resolve all contradictions but to live with them and rise above them, and see them in the light of exterior and objective values that dwarf them."

DEBORA MORRISON SHORT

GUN CONTROL

Push to Reduce Gun Violence Continues Despite Senate Setback

The Senate's inability last spring to pass a bipartisan plan to expand gun background checks despite strong nationwide sentiment in its favor is motivating a broad coalition of advocates to promote gun violence prevention laws. Advocates say they hope eventually to sway enough House and Senate members to overcome the influence of gun rights groups and firearms manufacturers. Gun violence prevention advocates said the incident at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., where a lone gunman killed 20 children and six adults on Dec. 14, 2012, has galvanized the public to support sensible limits on gun ownership.

"Newtown, to me, is like the Birmingham, Ala., police riots during the civil rights era," said Vincent DeMarco, national coordinator of Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence. "Newtown woke up the country. The same kind of momentum is there on gun violence prevention."

Advocates like DeMarco hope to see several provisions aimed at reducing gun violence enacted at the federal level. They came close in April last year in Washington but could not reach the 60 Senate votes needed to defeat a Republican filibuster challenge. That defeated effort would have expanded background checks for gun purchases, increased penalties for gun trafficking, reinstated the ban on assault weapons and restricted access to high-capacity ammunition magazines. Those measures were endorsed in a letter to Congress on Dec. 9 from Faith



SNOWFLAKES. A winter scene over a memorial for the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Conn., on the first anniversary of the massacre there.

United and 54 faith leaders, including 15 Catholic representatives. Among its signers was the Rev. Larry Snyder,

FEDERAL BUDGET

Catholic Leaders Defend Services For the Poor After Bipartisan Deal

Fallout from the partial government shutdown in October and another looming round of automatic spending cuts in January kept congressional leaders busy at year's end, finalizing a budget deal Republicans and Democrats could live with. By Dec. 18 they succeeded, passing a bipartisan budget deal in both the House and Senate. Through a tumultuous 2013, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and other Catholic advocates, including Catholic Charities USA, had pressed for a budget that does not adversely affect poor people.

The bishops and other advocates

hoped to throw a "circle of protection" around programs like poverty-focused international assistance, affordable housing and community development, education, Head Start, workforce development and emergency unemployment compensation. The budget deal, announced by Senator Patty Murray, Democrat of Washington, and Representative Paul D. Ryan, Republican of Wisconsin, chairs of the Senate and House budget committees respectively, caps spending at slightly more than \$1 trillion in each of the next two years. Though it succeeds in turning back a looming automatic cut to social spending, the agreement will ac-

tually mean reductions in social service discretionary spending when inflation and population growth are factored in, as soon as 2015.

The deal signaled at least a temporary truce on the budget between Democrats and Republicans. Under the agreement, \$63 billion in a second round of the sequester, across-the-board spending cuts in military and non-military programs, set for mid-January would be avoided.

Representatives affiliated with the Tea Party movement had opposed any deal that increased government spending, leaving House Speaker John A. Boehner, Republican of Ohio, to rally moderate Republicans to join Democrats in supporting a budget bill. The final budget bill measure does not extend unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed, which expired on Dec. 28.



president of Catholic Charities USA.
 “We have an obligation to protect life and that obligation trumps the

desire that some have in our society for dangerous and life-threatening amusements,” Father Snyder said. “If you look at what we’re asking for from Congress, to me, they are just very common sense things. The majority of Americans already support background checks, so why is it so difficult [to get this passed]?”

The December letter was delivered despite the absence of any pending federal legislation, while gun violence, at times marked by mass shootings in public settings, continued apace in the year since Newtown. If 2013 follows recent annual trends, more than 30,000 people will have died because of violent incidents connected with firearms.

Because of the lack of movement at the federal level, grass-roots groups have turned their efforts to state legislatures. Eight states enacted significant gun safety laws in 2013, while 13 states took smaller legislative steps.

Maryland’s new gun law in particular has been applauded by advocates.

As of Oct. 1, Marylanders must meet fingerprinting and training requirements before buying a gun. The law also bans 45 types of assault rifles and magazines that hold more than 10 rounds and includes steps that make it more difficult for mentally ill people to obtain a gun. DeMarco credited the Maryland Catholic Conference for its role in the law’s passage.

John Snyder, president of the St. Gabriel Possenti Society, a Catholic group that supports gun rights, criticized Catholics, bishops in particular, for advocating limits on gun ownership. “Bishops have a right to speak out on moral issues, but their authority doesn’t extend to political issues in which they have no understanding,” Snyder said.

“The bishops, [whom] I hate to criticize, don’t know what they’re talking about,” he added. “I think they’ve fallen victim to a lot of errant propaganda by people who wish to see Americans disarmed.”

Commenting on the deal in a statement, Network, a Catholic social justice lobby, said: “Although we are relieved that domestic needs programs are not being cut at levels previously proposed by Republican legislators, we continue to believe that military spending [\$520.5 billion in 2014] should be cut further, which would allow more funding for [underfunded] human needs programs.... We are also deeply unhappy that the agreement did not include extension of long-term unemployment benefits for 1.3 million people.” Network called on Congress to pass an extension of those emergency federal unemployment benefits “for American workers still suffering the effects of the economic recession.... Our workers need it and so does our economy.”

In a statement on Dec. 13, Archbishop

Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, the new chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, commended Ryan and Murray for embracing civil dialogue and setting aside partisanship in crafting a modest replacement to sequestration. “Millions of working families across the country and around the world struggle to survive and achieve stability. While this agreement is an important first step to accomplishing that, more needs to be done,” the archbishop said. “Congress and the administration still face serious and consequential decisions regarding appropriations for fiscal year 2014.”

Archbishop Wenski urged “wise bipartisan leadership in tar-

geting this limited sequestration relief by drawing a circle of protection around programs that protect poor and vulnerable people at home and abroad, advance the common good, and promote human life and dignity.”



BUDGET PRIORITIES. Getting down to business at the Baltimore Catholic Charities Head Start program in Edgewood, Md., in June.

Decline in Death Penalty

In 2013 the use of the death penalty continued its steady decline by almost every measure, according to a report released in December by the Death Penalty Information Center. Executions in the United States dropped by about 10 percent from 2012, to 39 from 43, marking only the second time in the past 19 years the number was below 40. Executions in 2013 were carried out in nine states, the center reports, with 59 percent occurring in Texas (16) and Florida (7). Most death penalty states had no executions in 2013 or 2012. The D.P.I.C. reports that the number of new death sentences was also near its lowest level since the death penalty was reinstated in the 1970s. Maryland became the latest state to repeal the death penalty (for future offenses), as the number of states that used capital punishment decreased to 32. Public support for the death penalty, measured in an annual Gallup poll, declined to 60 percent, its lowest level in 40 years.

Chaos in South Sudan

As fighting continued in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan, and spread to other Sudanese cities, Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian leaders urged reconciliation and offered to serve as mediators in the conflict. Thousands have fled to the presumed safety of U.N. compounds after street fighting broke out in Juba on Dec. 15 between supporters of the former vice president, Riek Machar, an ethnic Nuer, against supporters of President Salva Kiir of the dominant Dinka clan. "Whatever has happened in Juba over the last few days, we are concerned about the consequences," the church leaders said in a statement released on Dec. 17. Referring to the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement,

NEWS BRIEFS

On Dec. 13 a federal judge granted Catholic organizations in the Archdiocese of New York and the neighboring Diocese of Rockville Centre a **permanent injunction** against the federal contraceptive mandate in the health care law. • In an escalating standoff, Catholic clergymen were taken away for questioning on Dec. 18 by Chinese authorities after China's Tangshan Diocese announced **it would not bury** the deceased Bishop Paul Liu Jinghe until the government returns a former church cemetery. • Matthew McGarry of Catholic Relief Services described the situation as "quite bad" as **thousands were evacuated** after snowstorms and torrential rain in mid-December led to flooding throughout the northern Gaza Strip. • Pope Francis issued a decree declaring one of his favorite Jesuits, **Blessed Peter Faber**, a founding member of the Society of Jesus, a saint on Dec. 17. • **National Migration Week** will be observed in dioceses around the country from Jan. 5 to 11. • Archbishop Dieudonne Nzapalainga of Bangui, Central African Republic, joined Imam Oumar Kobine Layama, president of the Islamic Central African community, in a call on Dec. 11 for **interreligious dialogue** following several days of fighting between Christians and Muslims in the Central African Republic.



Floods in Gaza

he said, "There is a political problem between leaders. This should not be turned into an ethnic problem. Sadly, on the ground it is developing into tribalism. This must be defused urgently before it spreads." Hundreds have been killed and injured so far in the conflict.

Saving Christians

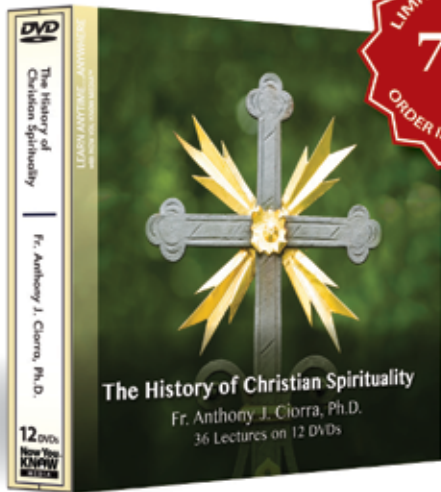
"Extremist political Islam is growing in the Middle East," prompting Christians to flee and causing death and upheaval among Christians and moderate Muslims alike, said the head of the Chaldean Catholic Church. At a conference in Rome on Dec. 14, Patriarch Louis Sako of Baghdad said moderate Muslims must be more courageous in defending a pluralistic Middle East, and the region's Catholics

should consider writing a document that explains to Muslims the Christian faith and the importance of religious freedom. More than 10 years after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, "we don't have security yet," the patriarch said. "In 2013 alone, 6,200 persons were killed. There are daily attacks, explosions, kidnappings and murders." In 1987, Iraq was home to more than 1.2 million Christians. "Today," he said, "less than half remain. Even more troubling is that the numbers continue dropping." Throughout the Middle East, he said, fighting among different Muslim groups has created openings for extremist Muslims, threatening even simple tolerance of Christians and making full religious freedom a distant dream for many.

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A Terrible Beauty

On a visit to Dublin this past Thanksgiving (traveler's tip—it's cheap to fly on Thanksgiving...as long as you're leaving the country), I had the chance to visit the major sites of the Easter Rising of 1916, a failed attempt by Irish nationalists to throw off centuries of English rule and establish an Irish Republic. In the aftermath of the rising, the ringleaders of the rebellion were brought to Dublin's Kilmainham Gaol, a classic example of a panopticon-style prison, where guards could see into every cell and hear even whispered conversations. In a walled and windowless courtyard, the ringleaders were executed against a wall by firing squad, except for Constance Markiewicz (the English considered themselves far too civilized to execute a woman) and James Connolly, who was near death and too wounded to stand. Undeterred, the English commandant simply ordered him brought from the hospital by stretcher and tied upright to a chair, where he was executed in turn.

The Easter Rising was a turning point in Irish history, memorialized in countless plays, songs and poems, including William Butler Yeats's "Easter 1916," with its iconic lines: "All changed, changed utterly/ A terrible beauty is born." What is less known is that until the executions of Connolly and his companions, their cause enjoyed little support among the residents of Dublin. Much of the populace resented them for bringing ruin upon Dublin's city center, which the English shelled mercilessly while the rebels

were holed up in the General Post Office, and many saw the rebellion as a lost cause from the beginning.

All that changed utterly once the news of the executions spread; the executed prisoners (court-martialed over a matter of hours without legal representation) became a symbol of Irish resistance to English rule and the inspiration for a whole new generation of patriots. Today, memorials to the leaders of the Easter Rising are everywhere, not just in Ireland but in the United States and everywhere else the many descendants of the Irish diaspora live. Many an Irish romantic (I am one) has a copy of their "Proclamation of the Republic" framed on the wall.

And yet, the sober-minded historian must ask the question: Why these men and women? Why that moment in history? Why did this somewhat bungled attempt at revolution inspire within three years a full-scale rebellion against British rule?

Part of the answer lies in the casual way British soldiers regarded the leaders of the rising as simply a pestilence to be eliminated; another can be found in a picture one of my brothers has on his wall: an early 20th-century shop sign reading "No Dogs or Irish." The sign is from Boston, but speaks to a common perception in England (and to a lesser degree in the United States) that the Irish were somehow subhuman. English magazines from the 19th century were rife with depictions of the Irish as apes, many of these caricatures published even as the Great Hunger of 1847–49 was starving the Irish (more

than 1.5 million died) while English ships were carrying off grain from Irish ports. One thing the Irish knew from history (particularly the Irish poor) was that equality would never be given to them by the English. All that was needed was an incident or a movement that could galvanize that realization, that could convert resignation to resistance. Patrick Pearse, another executed leader of the rising, wrote as much:

"And I say to my people's masters, Beware/ Beware of the thing that is coming, beware of the risen people/ Who shall take what ye would not give."

Soon after Easter 1916, this sense of the Irish as expendable pawns became even more explicit: the British Army attempted to institute an Irish draft for

service in World War I. In the aftermath of Kilmainham Gaol, a new question was raised: Why fight for a nation that is simultaneously killing your countrymen? Here is Yeats again, in the voice of an Irish pilot serving in the British air force: "Those that I fight I do not hate/ Those that I guard I do not love."

Those nuisance rebels of 1916 and later sought, along with a nation, the equality and dignity denied them for centuries. The same story has played out across the globe, where the sacrifice and courage of a few gives voice to the desire of millions, from South Africa to Latin America to our own American South to other present-day milieus, where economic and cultural oppression still hold against other rising peoples.

The executed prisoners became a symbol of Irish resistance.

JAMES T. KEANE is an editor at Orbis Books in Ossining, N.Y., and a former associate editor of *America*.

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(*Centesimus Annus*, 28)

How do we begin to discuss the justice of issues of the economy? Do the contexts of the economy and the world financial markets reflect a commitment to the common good and the priority of the poor in our social, political and economic structures? As we read “the signs of the times,” this call for papers invites contributions that address the application of Catholic social teaching to the following concerns:

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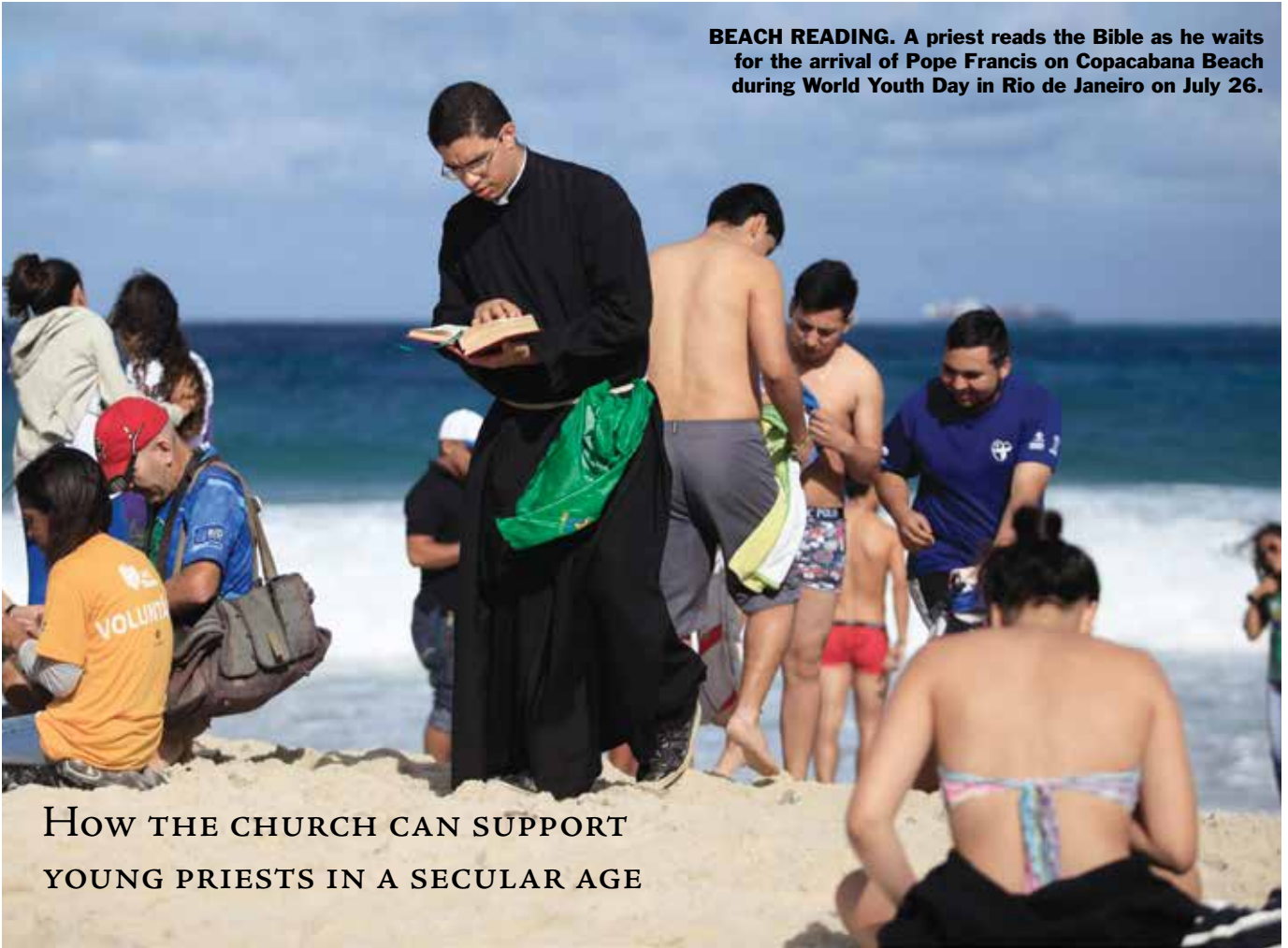
Papers must be submitted by November 1, 2014 to Executive Editor: barbara.wall@villanova.edu

For more information about submissions, see:

<http://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/mission/office/publications/journal/authors.html>



BEACH READING. A priest reads the Bible as he waits for the arrival of Pope Francis on Copacabana Beach during World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro on July 26.



CNS PHOTO/RICARDO MORAES, REUTERS

HOW THE CHURCH CAN SUPPORT
YOUNG PRIESTS IN A SECULAR AGE

The First Five Years

BY STEPHEN J. ROSSETTI

Every so often a rumor arises that young priests today are not faring well. It is suggested that they are dispirited and leaving the priesthood in large numbers. In 1999, this rumor was so rife that the Catholic sociologist Dean Hoge led a research project to investigate. Dr. Hoge concluded in his study *The First Five Years of the Priesthood*, published in 2002, that it was not possible to determine the exact resignation rate of priests in their first five years of priesthood, but he estimated it to be between 10 percent and 12 percent, much lower than expected.

In these days of reduced numbers of priests, every loss is particularly painful. But my own professional experience and my research, which was compiled in *Why Priests are Happy: A Study of the Psychological and Spiritual Health of Priests* (Ave Maria Press), suggests that

MSGR. STEPHEN J. ROSSETTI is a priest of the Diocese of Syracuse, a clinical associate professor at the Catholic University of America and the president of Saint Luke Institute, a Catholic education and treatment center that primarily serves clergy and men and women religious. This article is based on a talk presented at an international symposium titled *The Training of Priests Today*, held on June 2–5, 2013, at Laval University in Quebec.

young priests today are happier, more optimistic about the priesthood, accepting of Catholic teaching and personally committed to priestly celibacy than the cohort before them.

Therefore, the first question we might ask ourselves is not “What we are doing wrong in forming and supporting our new priests today?” but “What are we doing right?” Why are most young priests happy and prospering in the priesthood? Indeed, there is much to commend the quality of seminary education today. Seminary faculties are well trained, dedicated and faithful to the church, even as they face challenges.

There is also much greater emphasis on pastoral preparedness, including stronger human formation programs.

Nevertheless, these positive findings should not leave us complacent. The first five years of priesthood present unique challenges to the men adjusting to life after ordination. More important, the context of ministry today is changing rapidly and profoundly. The challenges facing priests today are much different than they were only a few decades ago. Formation and support for priests in ministry must focus more intently on these contextual changes and must make significant adjustments.

New Challenges

Two of these profound changes are secularization and decreasing numbers. While we are all familiar with these changes, I believe we do not fully recognize their import and their consequent impact on formation and priestly support. While the sacrament of priesthood is unchanging, the experience of priesthood is radically changing.

Cardinal Donald Wuerl of the Archdiocese of Washington often speaks of a “tsunami of secularization” sweeping our country. It is impossible to overemphasize how this tidal wave is shifting the lived experience of priesthood. The happy images of priesthood, though certainly idealized in movies like “The Bells of St. Mary’s” and “Going My Way” in the 1940s, have been supplanted by images of priests as deviant, unhappy and members of an anachronistic era of faith—a perception fueled by the crisis of sexual abuse of children by clerics. I believe, however, that these distorted images are most fundamentally the result of a growing gulf between the Christian faith and the secular culture.

The entire climate that surrounds a person choosing the

Catholic priesthood and ministering in the church today is changing. A short 50 years ago, if a young man stood up and declared his intention to become a priest, the response was likely to be one of admiration and support, even in the larger culture. Today, responses too frequently range from disbelief to actively discouraging the young man.

Should a young man still choose to become ordained, his first years of priesthood will surely be a challenge. Walking down the street wearing a Roman collar today evokes strong emotions from some passersby. For many others who have

long since stopped asking spiritual questions, the priest is seen as an oddity or simply ignored. As humiliating and disheartening as it is to read stories of clerical misconduct, the “tsunami” of indifference may ultimately leave its own wake of destruction.

The second change that profoundly affects the lives of priests today is the

reduced number of priests. Many priests are now responsible for two, three or even more parishes. But the full impact of declining numbers is yet to come. One of the things that has been shielding us from the drastic impact of fewer priests is the dedication of older priests. In my diocese there are over 30 priests beyond retirement age who still voluntarily participate in full-time ministry. Some are even in their 80s. When these generous men soon retire, the full impact of our reduced ranks will be felt.

Already young priests are beginning to shoulder the weight. When I was ordained almost 30 years ago, a priest ordinarily did not become a pastor until he had celebrated his silver jubilee. Today, it might happen in two or three years. The newly ordained are now not only adjusting to priesthood, celibacy and ministry; they are also adjusting to becoming leaders of parishes, with all the attendant administrative, leadership and management challenges.

In Need of Support

Although research suggests that burnout rates among priests are generally low and that the vast majority of priests are happy, the youngest priests are more likely to be overwhelmed and in need of support. With these new demands upon priests come new requirements in priestly formation and support. Initially, three come to mind: a personally integrated faith, a masculine spirituality and a strong personal support network.

The daily assaults on a priest’s faith are relentless, and many of these challenges are also experienced by the lay faithful.

ON THE WEB

A conversation with the former CIA analyst Ray McGovern.
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A personally integrated faith. Perhaps what is most needed and truly demanded in ministering in a secular age is a strong, integrated faith. The daily assaults on a priest's faith are relentless, and many of these challenges are also experienced by the lay faithful. A young priest must face secularism head-on and hold his ground. His beliefs cannot be simply a regurgitation of theological phrases that he read in a book. He must know the faith and internalize it in his own life, using the language and culture of today.

When we say, for example, that Jesus Christ is our savior, the secular response is likely to be, "He saved us from what?" If the priest responds, "Sin," then the next secular question might typically be: "What sin? I have done nothing wrong." Then the real discussion, perhaps evangelization, begins.

Most Americans still believe in God, but many, including some Catholics, have drifted into a collage of ideas that are not compatible with our faith and tradition or present half-truths. It is not uncommon to hear statements like, "I'm spiritual but not religious." "I don't do holy days." "Why should I go to confession? I confess to God directly." "Why do I need to go to Mass every week when I find God in nature?" "Jesus was a holy man, but so was Gandhi." The young priest who cannot convincingly, sincerely and compassionately respond to such typical comments might not only find himself an ineffective teacher of the faith, but also having his own faith shaken. Can we help seminarians and young priests to integrate their faith and give them the tools to evangelize in our increasingly secular culture?

A masculine spirituality. When speaking of a masculine spirituality, I am not referring to something that is the sole province of men. Rather, psychologists like Sandra Bem speak of masculine and feminine characteristics that both men and women potentially possess. Among "feminine" characteristics Dr. Bem would include traits like compassion, warmth and sensitivity. These qualities are obviously essential for every priest.

In my own study of 115 priests, respondents were given a list of Bem's "masculine" and "feminine" traits and then asked to rank in order the most important traits to possess. The first nine chosen by the respondents were feminine traits; the masculine traits were clearly less preferable to the priests. But in this increasingly secular age, many of Bem's "masculine" traits are becoming more essential for priests, like "willing to take a stand," "defends own beliefs," "willing to take risks," "assertive" and "acts as a leader."

Lay men and women in the church should, of course, exhibit such traits, but it is important for the sake of evangelization that young priests also take these qualities to heart. Without such characteristics, young priests might be tempted to withdraw, trying only to conserve the faith of those who are left in their pews. Such a passive and defensive posture is doomed to slow erosion and eventual failure.



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Rather, what is needed is a bold, new proclamation of the faith, that is, the new evangelization. Pope Francis, in the now celebrated words from his homily on Holy Thursday 2013, urged us “to go out...to the outskirts” to get “the odor of the sheep” on us. Far from being passive, his clarion call demands a bold, assertive faith, without becoming judgmental or lacking respect for others. Are we helping our new priests not only to have important “feminine” qualities, but also to internalize a “masculine” spirituality? Will they be bold proclaimers of the faith, or will they sit in their rectories as their congregations slowly dwindle?

A strong personal support network. A personal challenge to all who minister in a secular environment is the temptation to feel unwanted, ignored and/or unsupported. Diocesan priests are becoming more akin to missionaries, being sent to largely uncatechized and sometimes unsupportive environments. Being part of a supportive community of faith has been an important part of what helps our priests prosper, especially diocesan priests. It has been an integral part of their very spirituality.

Today there are fewer priests, and they are more isolated from each other, with increasing workloads. Formerly, there were often several priests living in the same rectory. Now one priest may have two or three rectories to himself as he rotates from one parish to the next. The tendency will be to overwork and become isolated. Mixing isolation, overwork and a lack of support is a recipe for personal disaster. Such situations make priests more susceptible to loneliness and separation and sometimes to the temptations all too prevalent in our sexually addicted society. To make matters more difficult, a priest’s celibate commitment is increasingly viewed with suspicion, and this affords him less external support for his celibate lifestyle. More than ever, the fraternity of priests must be fostered. More than ever, communities of faith must support their priests. A priest is assigned to a parish to love and nourish the faith of the people. But it is also their love and faith that sustains him.

No matter the size of our faith communities, their importance in our society remains. Each becomes an oasis in a spiritually desiccating world. We ought to help our new priests develop the tools and opportunities to build the fraternity of the priesthood. Our new priests must also learn to build and find support from the many committed lay people and religious in these communities of faith.

The lived experience of priesthood is changing dramatically before our eyes. The priesthood for which we are preparing men today is not the priesthood of the past. We as church must form and help the new cohort to thrive in this radically new and challenging reality. Having worked in priestly formation and witnessed their strength, I am confident that these new men, with our support, will be up to the task.





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Joy to the World

Responses to ‘Evangelii Gaudium’

The Dignity of the Vulnerable

BY Meghan J. Clark

‘**T**he dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges’ (No. 218). In a simple sentence, Pope Francis summarizes the bedrock of Catholic social doctrine: human dignity, the common good and the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. While he states that “The Joy of the Gospel” (“Evangelii Gaudium”) is not a social document, it offers an integrated spirituality that links the church’s social teaching and evangelization. In 85 pages, there is much on poverty as exclusion, inequality as social sin, violence, unjust economic structures and the idolatry of money, to name a few. All of these issues are highlighted because the primary mission of evangelization is to spread the good news of God’s love for all.

“How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality” (No. 53). As he often does, Pope Francis challenges himself and us to look in the mirror. In New York, homelessness is at a decade high and rising. In Los Angeles, the City Council is considering a ban on feeding homeless people in public. Whom do we see when we look in the mirror? And whom do we see when we walk down the street? The context is current, thus new, but the message is not. From the Bible, St. John Chrysostom and St. Thomas Aquinas to his immediate predecessors, Pope Francis is reiterating a concern for the dignity of vulnerable people that is first and foremost God’s concern, and therefore it must be ours.

Poverty is exclusion and “those excluded are no longer society’s underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised—they are no longer even part of it. The excluded are not the ‘exploited’ but the outcast, the ‘leftovers’” (No. 53). The ultimate violation of human dignity is to be no longer counted as a human person. The response must be inclusion and participation. Justice as participation animates the church’s social mission lived out from our parishes to the Vatican’s advocacy at the United Nations. And it is the responsibility of us all. “I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security” (No. 49). Thus “The Joy of the Gospel” places the work of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and Catholic Relief

Services at the center of the church’s evangelization. In doing so, we are all invited to live out “an authentic faith—which is never comfortable or completely personal—[and] always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it” (No. 183).

MEGHAN J. CLARK is an assistant professor of moral theology at St. John’s University, Queens, N.Y.

The Church Encounters the World

BY DREW CHRISTIANSEN

Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel” is so long and so rich that I was relieved when the editors suggested a topic. “We need something on the document,” the editors wrote, “as a reflection of a post-Vatican II engagement with the world.” Engagement with the world, to be sure: after evangelization, there is no clearer theme in the text than the need to engage the world on every front, in every possible way, whether in the flesh or in the realm of ideas.

A distinctive intellectual contribution toward engagement with the world comes in a set of four axioms related to the common good and peace in society (Nos. 217–37). One problem that concerned the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI was the risk of division when members of the church were permitted to follow different options in pursuit of the common good. Their solution was to argue that charity should unify us, even if our particular engagements differed. Francis proposes the four axioms as ways to overcome the divisions that arise from diversity and to re-imagine unity.

1. *Time is greater than space.* The first axiom draws on the council’s own sense of God working in history and the people of God walking together in hope of final fulfillment in the kingdom. The first axiom is a counsel to accept our limited achievements in time with hope of their final fulfillment in God. It is, in particular, a kind of wisdom we need when “we are building a people.”

2. *Unity prevails over conflict.* The second axiom addresses the soft underbelly of Catholic social teaching—namely, its failure to address the issue of conflict or, at least, to move toward premature closure when differences arise. Francis, as the principle suggests, takes the Catholic (Pauline) primacy of charity over division, but only after taking a closer, harder look at the problems we confront. “Solidarity, in its deepest and most challenging sense,” he writes, “thus becomes a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity” (No. 228).



GNS PHOTO/L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

3. *Realities are more important than ideas.* The third axiom is a stake in the ground. It marks the differences between Francis' pastoral pragmatism and his predecessors' intellectualism. "It is dangerous," he writes, "to dwell in the world of words alone, of imagery and rhetoric." Ideas can twist and obscure reality. They yield "angelic forms of purity, dictatorships of relativism, empty rhetoric, objectives more ideal than real, brands of ahistorical fundamentalism, ethical systems bereft of kindness, intellectual discourse bereft of wisdom" (No. 231).

4. *The whole is greater than the parts.* The fourth axiom is another take on the question of unity in diversity, but a highly inventive one. Using his own advice that homilists should use images, Francis proposes that instead of thinking of unity as a sphere, we ought to think of unity—in community—as a polyhedron, a multifaceted reality in which the contribution of the diverse parts to the whole are more evident. Francis wants to bring together the global and the local, but with each part growing in its own way, so we constantly broaden our horizons even as we deepen our local roots. Even the Gospel, Francis argues, follows this rule. It must be preached to people in every culture and condition "until it has been proclaimed to all people, until it has healed and strengthened every aspect of humanity, until it has brought all men and women together at table in God's kingdom" (No. 179).

DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J., former editor in chief of *America*, is Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Global Human Development at Georgetown University.

A Multifaceted Message

BY ROBERT P. IMBELL

I venture to highlight two obstacles to evangelization that have particularly struck me in my own reading of "The Joy of the Gospel." One might call them pastoral workers adrift and theology adrift. Chapter 2 of the document is tellingly titled "Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment." Its second section treats "Temptations Faced by Pastoral Workers." In his direct, even blunt, style, Pope Francis deprecates the fact that "one can observe in many agents of evangelization, even though they pray, a heightened individualism, a crisis of identity and a cooling of fervor. These are three evils which fuel one another" (No. 78).

The situation is exacerbated by a media and academic culture that often propagates skepticism and even cynicism regarding the message of the church. This ambient culture, this "social imaginary" (in Charles Taylor's suggestive phrase) weakens the church's evangelical dynamism and can sow noxious seeds among evangelizers. In the words of Pope Francis: "many pastoral workers, although they pray, develop a sort of inferiority complex which leads them to relativize or conceal their Christian identity and convictions" (No. 79). One sees with sorrow Catholics, including priests and religious, who display a "practical relativism" which "consists in acting as if God did not exist, making decisions as if the poor did not exist, setting goals as if others did not exist, working as if people who have not received the Gospel did not ex-

ist” (No. 80). As I remarked before, Francis is nothing if not blunt.

A second obstacle to evangelization and the church’s missionary responsibility lies in the neglect or marginalizing of the kerygma. Francis insists that the kerygma “needs to be the center of all evangelizing activity and all efforts at church renewal.” Though the initial proclamation of the Gospel can be expressed in diverse ways, its core is always Christological and Trinitarian. The church, in the power of the Holy Spirit, proclaims “Jesus Christ who, by his death and resurrection, reveals and communicates to us the Father’s infinite mercy.” And the Jesus Christ the church proclaims is no figure of the past. At the heart of the kerygma is the claim that “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you” (No. 164).

These passages appear in the third chapter of the papal document, on “The Proclamation of the Gospel,” in the section treating “Evangelization and the Deeper Understanding of the Kerygma.” The immediate context is the relation of the kerygma to the church’s catechetical ministry. However, I think it legitimate to suggest that the pope’s remarks are also applicable to an understanding of the nature and mission of theology. Catholic theology too is called to serve the proclamation of the joy of the Gospel, since “all Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma” (165). The church’s identity-constituting kerygma should orient and illuminate not only catechesis, but theology as well.

A theology unmoored from the kerygma is no longer faith wholeheartedly seeking understanding, no longer hope giving an account of its sure basis in the risen Christ, no longer love speaking passionately of its beloved. Theology not anchored in the kerygma has nothing of significance to contribute to the church’s mission of evangelization and becomes, instead, an obstacle. It inevitably loses its ecclesial moorings and drifts into a detached study of religion.

REV. ROBERT P. IMBELLI, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, is an associate professor of theology at Boston College. He was on the founding committee of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, initiated by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin.

On Our Pilgrim Way

BY AMANDA C. OSHEIM

From his brief address on the evening of his election to the publication of “The Joy of the Gospel,” Francis has emphasized his vision of the church as “first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God” (No. 111). The metaphor of the people of God is

deeply scriptural and was used prominently by the Second Vatican Council to describe the mystery of the church in relation to the modern world. Almost 50 years later, in a world many call postmodern, Francis’ invocation of pilgrimage in relation to evangelization challenges us to discern the path anew through the *sensus fidei*.

Reception and response, embodiment and culture—this is the path of living tradition walked by the pilgrim people of God. Receiving the Holy Spirit in baptism, each of the faithful receives as well the gift of the *sensus fidei*. Far from a passive barometer of truth, this sense of faith helps us “discern what is truly of God” (No. 119). Life in the Spirit is active, demanding time, attention and growth.

The *sensus fidei*’s discernment is not a private undertaking, but rather requires dialogue. Through dialogue with one another we discern our personal and communal response to God. Francis indicates that all the baptized are “missionary disciples” and “agents of evangelization”

(No. 120). Our graced response is our collective responsibility. If like Christ the church is sent to the world, then we must have the capacity to discern God’s love for the world. Without the ability to perceive God’s mercy, the church is incapable of rendering a response to God; our communal participation in the divine mission is deadened.

The encounter with Christ and reception of the Spirit transform the faithful into witnesses of the Gospel. Through the *sensus fidei* the church becomes a sacrament of salvation to the world. Francis states, “Grace supposes culture, and God’s gift becomes flesh in the culture of those who receive it” (No. 115). Our mission is embodied within history. As we receive the Spirit and discern God through the *sensus fidei* we also grow in the wisdom that allows us to incarnate the Gospel. God is one, but the agents of evangelization learn their missionary calling within the diverse contexts that give birth to “genuine catholicity” (No. 116). The Gospel cannot be known outside of culture, and the *sensus fidei* is essential for showing the church “new aspects of revelation and giving her a new face” (No. 116). It is through manifold cultures, and not apart from them, that we discern the presence of God and put our response into action.

When the *sensus fidei* is embodied within culture, the church’s tradition is not a stationary monument, but is instead a faithful journey within history. The path is not an easy one, and may leave us “bruised, hurting and dirty” (No. 49). Yet we may find joy in discerning together God’s call to walk under the Spirit’s guidance as we join in Christ’s mission of merciful love for the world.

AMANDA C. OSHEIM is assistant professor of practical theology at Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa.

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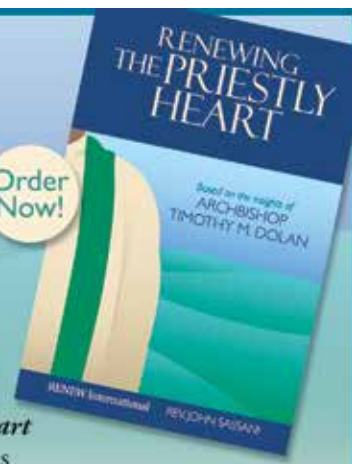
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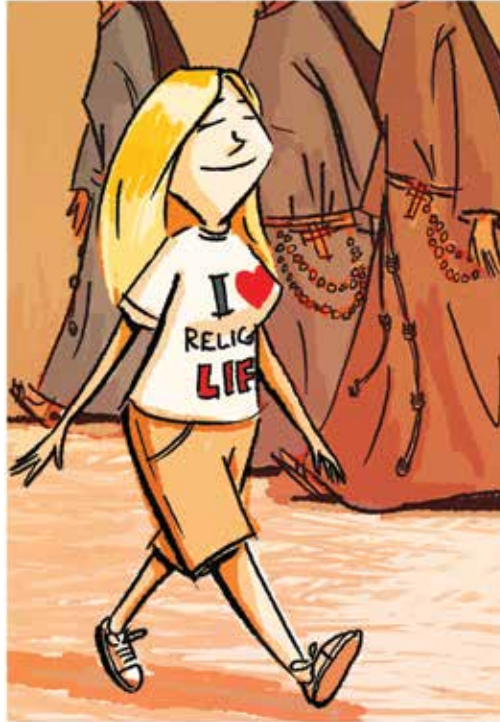
A view of religious life from a young sister

BY JULIA WALSH

The young sister near me—dressed in a colorful tank top, shorts and sandals—speaks from her heart. Young Catholic sisters, about 70 of us, sit in small circles and engage in deep conversations throughout the sunlit room. As I listen, I scribble her thoughts into my journal: Why are women drawn to religious life? In the past the visibility drew many; now the inner call and voice and dream move and call us forward. We get to let go. We are free. We are eager.

Giving Voice—a peer-led, inter-congregational network that creates space for women religious under 50 to discuss hopes, dreams and challenges—brought us together. The network, which includes a monthly e-newsletter, retreats and online interactions, held its seventh national gathering this past summer in Belmont, Calif. Yolanda Tarango, C.C.V.I., the co-founder of Visitation House in San Antonio, Tex., led the conference and challenged us to imagine how we will cross borders in future ministry while living our way into God's dreams for us.

Hope is obvious at the gathering. A few sisters wear T-shirts made by Giving Voice that say, "I [Heart] Religious Life and Believe in its Future!" Many of us grin. At times we wipe tears of joy from our faces. We share contemplative prayer. We enjoy a rousing dance party, serious games of charades and a lot of deep belly laugh-



ter. These activities matter, of course, because they build friendship. The collaboration and connections made possible through Giving Voice help us to keep saying yes to our vocations.

Time of Diminishment?

Some people, focused almost exclusively on numbers, are concerned that religious life is in decline. This narrows our ability to see what God is doing. The total number of sisters in religious communities is shrinking, but I am not discouraged. At age 32, I am the youngest sister in my community, but I am not the newest. There are five of us in formation in my congregation plus a fair number of sisters in their 30s and 40s who have made their final vows. Other sisters in my community

participate in Giving Voice too. A study in 2009 by the Georgetown University-sponsored Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate found that there were about 1,000 women in formation nationwide and that an almost equal number of women in recent years have joined each conference of women's religious communities and their diverse expressions of charism. God continues to call women to this good life, no matter the variety of our backgrounds.

Young sisters are full of hope, but the concerns and fears of others can sometimes cool the fire in our hearts. While many people are grateful, pleased and proud that I am following a call to be a Franciscan sister, it is not unusual for me to hear negative comments about the lifestyle I have chosen. Today people can describe religious life in negative, worry-laden language. They say the life I am living is in decline or, worse yet, "has lost its meaning." This can be frustrating and hurtful. Even some of the beloved elder sisters in my community appear sad that I do not have a classmate or that crowds of young women are not entering each year. But I appreciate my experience as it is.

This experience, of course, does have its challenges. As modern religious life—and its size—evolves, even the most hopeful and eager need to deal with practical consequences of transition. For me, the hardest element of the quickly shrinking population of my community is the regularity of death announcements. I was not pre-

JULIA WALSH, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, teaches religion at Aquinas High School in La Crosse, Wis.

pared for the repeated heart-wrenching experience of attending funerals for women I really want to live the rest of my life with. I was not ready for the difficulty of having clouds of grief swirl into my daily communal living. God's ways are mysterious, but nature teaches us that new life is born out of chaos; all who are near the labor are affected by the cries of pain.

Love for This Life

Religious life is not in decline; it is simply changing. And it should change. New paradigms of religious life can emerge only if we are open to God changing us beyond our limited imagining and dreaming. We need to remember that numbers do not make communities. In fact, I prefer to be part of a community that feels more like a family than an institution. The freer and more open we are, the better we can live the Gospel according to God's vision and not our own ideas. We can experience the freedom to have meaningful conversations about "right-sizing" and new forms of ministry. We acknowledge it can be life-giving for the size of community to decrease; lower numbers can open up new opportunities for healthy, intimate relationships.

Even though I do not—and cannot—fully know what I am getting into with this life, I love being a sister. Perhaps the mystery of God is a thrill-ride for me. I love being a sister because I am permitted to be the best version of myself within a community

of like-minded, prayerful women. In my community I can focus on what I care about—social justice, learning and art—and the community allows a lot of room for growth. The religious vows, prophetic in nature, free me to move to the edges and encounter God in new realms. This vocation creates opportunities to live a life of radical simplicity, solidarity and accompaniment with those who are oppressed. Many young sisters share eagerness for this type of Gospel living; we want to be where few others are willing to go.


At times I am stunned by the beauty of the historical and ecclesial connectedness I experience as a Catholic sister. Amazingly, I am part of a sacred tradition and family tree with roots as deep as the desert mothers. My community's charism is rooted in an 800-year-old Franciscan tradition. These connections and traditions are good for me. The structure, discipline, expectations and accountability of communal living provide the right container for my free spirit to thrive. I know of no other lifestyle that would enrich me with so much health and happiness.

Forward Together

Being a sister has warped my perception of age. Even though I am 32, I feel as if anyone under 60 is my peer. That said, my experience of intergenerational communal living is energizing. I gain wisdom from my elder sisters; I am enriched by what they have lived through. I am humbled to know we young sis-

ters are receiving their legacy. I realize I enjoy my vocation, womanhood and freedom because of the hard work of earlier generations. At times my elder sisters say that I am able to do something—like serve, travel or study according to my passions—"because we worked for it in the past." Responding to those reminders with "thank you" never seems to be quite enough. The prayerful support and mentorship of elder sisters enlivens me to respond zealously to God's call as I move into the future that young sisters are so hopeful about.

At the Giving Voice gathering, Sister Tarango reminded us that we have a strange thing in common with our elder sisters: we all entered a community that will not stay the same as what we first came to know and love. Our elders entered religious life, and then it changed drastically because of the Second Vatican Council. Likewise the young sisters will experience changes as religious life continues to evolve. My elder sisters had the companionship of each other as they moved into a mysterious future. Young sisters also have this companionship, and we understand one another as we face the future. We joined our communities because we desire to counter-culturally live the Gospel. Young sisters bring strong faith, deep spirituality and broad experiences. We are open to new forms of religious life. We dream about intercongregational ministries and living communities. We know we need each other.

I am not worried about changes in religious life; I am excited. I trust that God is up to something amazingly good. I believe that God is helping religious life evolve to meet the changing needs of society. I pray that we will have the courage and freedom to let go of anything that slows us from moving into God's hope-filled future. I am glad I will be with sisters, strengthened by the legacies, traditions and prayers of our elders. Thank God, by grace, we are in this together. 

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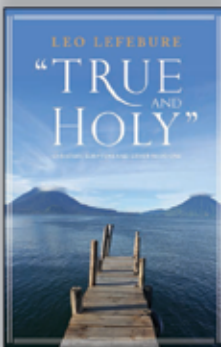
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THEATER | ROB WEINERT-KENDT

STATE OF SHAKESPEARE

The Bard's many incarnations

New York found itself awash in Shakespeare this season, and the best of it, it is only fair to report, has traversed the Atlantic from the playwright's homeland: a shuddering, immersive "Julius Caesar" set in a women's prison, imported from London's Donmar Warehouse to St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn in late October, and a pair of Broadway hits still running in repertory, "Richard III" and "Twelfth Night," that come to us from Shakespeare's Globe, also in London. All three appear to illustrate

the facility for verse that seems inbred in the British—though I would argue that this national advantage is largely a myth, and that what makes these shows work above all is their ensemble ethic and inspired directorial concepts.

But more on those anon. Also worth noting are the more middling American-born efforts of this unofficial Shakespeare season. There was a Broadway "Romeo and Juliet" most notable for starring a single Brit, Orlando Bloom, as Romeo, amid a diverse American cast that, by most

accounts, was not shown to best advantage (I sat this one out, I must confess). More creditable is Julie Taymor's ravishing, if lopsided "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which christens the brand-sparkling-new Brooklyn home of a longtime New York-based classics company, Theatre for a New Audience. Last and certainly least is a muddled, misbegotten "Macbeth" at Lincoln Center, with the easygoing Ethan Hawke stranded and straining in a stark, silly staging.

By popular reputation, New York has something of a Shakespeare deficit; apart from the offerings each summer by the Public Theater's Shakespeare in the Park, which have held to a high and playful standard in the past few years, and the aforementioned T.F.A.N.A., Gotham largely gets its Bard from

OLDE SCHOOL. Samuel Barnett as Viola and Mark Rylance as Olivia in the Shakespeare's Globe production of "Twelfth Night."



PHOTO: MELISSA MOSELEY/HBO

PHOTOS: JOAN MARCUS

abroad. To see world-class North American Shakespeare, you'd do better to head north, to Stratford, Ontario, or way west, to the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Ore.—both places, among others in the United States, where neither the cohesion of the acting company nor the verse speaking are given short shrift. Economics are partly to blame here: The large casts and long running times required for Shakespeare are anathema to commercial producers and nonprofit theaters alike. The city's East Coast berth, so convenient for regular incursions by top-flight British troupes, may be another reason for our slight Shakespearean inferiority complex.

Of course, the greatest distance this Elizabethan canon has traveled is not the journey across the Atlantic but its passage through the oceans of time—from a rowdy, robust theater tradition embattled by Puritans to a more fragile, rarefied theater culture now threatened, or so it would seem, by the attention-span-narrowing charms of populist entertainment. What the best current Shakespeare productions show, though, is that these old plays have nothing to prove; they survive handily because they're not in competition with our popular culture—they're more like the wellspring of it, the ur-text of every police procedural, political thriller, domestic tragedy, rom-com and mistaken-identity farce we now consume on-demand on whatever screen is near at hand.

Not that these texts are easy or self-evident. They remain contemporary only insofar as contemporary actors, directors and designers find ways to speak through them, to make them their own (and in turn ours, as well). The Donmar Warehouse "Julius Caesar" did so with a vengeance, and was rife with what may sound like gimmicks: 14 female actors entered the prison space as detainees and guards, then played all the roles as

well as some loud onstage rock instruments.

Indeed, some of the innovations by the director, Phyllida Lloyd, skirted the edge of excess, and the women-in-prison notion didn't bear close scrutiny. But somehow the athletic severity of the frame only made the picture inside it that much sharper and brighter. I have never seen or heard Shakespeare's anguished tragedy about the alternating temptations of power and principle more clearly or searingly, or felt actual suspense about an outcome foreordained by history.

On their surface, the Globe productions on Broadway could not be more different from this pungent "Caesar" salad. Both "Richard III" and "Twelfth Night" are performed and staged in a meticulous recreation of Elizabethan stage practice, right down to the starched ruffs, tooting recorders and all-male cast; audience members who arrive 20 minutes before curtain can watch the actors get into their authentic costumes and makeup on the stage of the Belasco Theatre. But in following to the hilt a trend so diametrically opposite from contemporary interpretations like Donmar's, these original-practices stagings end up making a similar point about the plays: that strong, unfamiliar concepts can make them shine in a new light.

This is most true of "Twelfth Night," played here with a revelatory luxuriance and musicality; not a moment of comedy

or pathos seems forced, which naturally allows them to gather all the more force, until the plot's absurdities finally boil over into both riots of laughter and a heartening swell of melancholy. The production's utter trust in the play—which is another way to say its trust in the audience—is enormously flattering to both.

ON THE WEB
Michael V. Tueth, S.J.,
reviews "Black Nativity."
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Mark Rylance as King Richard III

This confidence wavers a bit with "Richard III," admittedly a thornier play but here rendered somewhat toothless. I would lay some of the blame at the feet of Mark Rylance, the sneaky acting powerhouse who improbably turns the lust-addled widow Olivia in "Twelfth Night" into another of his inimitable star turns. He plays the scheming Richard as a pathetic, preoccupied clown, a diverting but ultimately defusing choice.

There's no lack of confidence in Julie Taymor's sumptuous, if bloated "Midsummer." Largely redeeming herself after the high-profile train wreck of the Spider-Man musical, she has conceived this romp as a literal dream, heavy on suspended bodies, billowing sheets of fabric and plays of shadows, light and projected images that constitute a visual language all Taymor's own. You are unlikely to see the play's forest fairy world rendered more beautifully, from a jet-black Oberon festooned with sharp gold quills to a glowing,

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diaphanous Titania; from a Puck who's like an Edwardian marionette with a rasping, ageless voice—a sort of crone/imp—to a seemingly endless chorus of small children who at one point inexplicably march through the theater blowing on didgeridoos. But there's a lot more to "Midsummer" than fairyland, and the rest of the play—the young lovers who tangle in the woods, the theatrical efforts of a troupe of clueless working men—does not seem to have engaged Taymor's full attention; her boredom, alas, is contagious.

It's hard to stay bored for long at the new "Macbeth," but not for the right reasons. This witch-heavy, would-be scary mess manages precisely two relatively effective scenes in which its stage gadgetry and monochrome design pay off: The banquet at which Banquo's ghost haunts Macbeth has a convincingly antic pitch, and Macbeth's cauldron-side consultation with the prophesying witches has a well-wrought bad-trip swirl as he takes a puff from their long pipe and shares their unsettling visions.

Almost nothing else in this over-produced yet undernourished rendition comes off well, least of all the two leads. Anne-Marie Duff's icy Lady Macbeth generates few sparks of electricity, positive or negative, off of Ethan Hawke's listless Macbeth. It's not the verse that stumps Hawke so much as the bloody-minded intention behind it; he can be a fine actor in the right material, but his quintessential pose is the slouch, not the crouch. His lumbering battle scenes here are among the more ludicrous in memory.

In this fall's battle of the Bards, then, the Brits may have the unmistakable edge. But these plays transcend national boundaries as surely as they've lived past their own age, and doubtless old Will will be contested again ere long.

ROB WEINERT-KENDT, an arts journalist and associate editor of *American Theater* magazine, has written for *The New York Times* and *Time Out New York*. He writes a blog called *The Wicked Stage*.

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POST-CLERICAL CATHOLICS

When my fellow columnist Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M., stirred up a hornet's nest with his column on clericalism a few months back, I followed the conversation with great interest. To be fair, my curiosity had little to do with Father Horan's assertion that there is a cultivated sense of separateness among some young clergy (an observation I agree with). Nor was I particularly focused on the many comments criticizing or defending clerical wardrobe choices, issues of Catholic identity and so on.

What struck me was how disconnected I felt from the entire conversation surrounding clericalism. It felt as if an intramural discussion was taking place in an arena whose attendance numbers continue to dwindle. Who were these people with such passionate, high expectations or bitter disappointments regarding their parish priests? The sad reality for me and countless others I know who remain connected to Catholicism is that, for better or worse, our expectations of the clergy are much more modest. The bar is set pretty low.

In my experience, the issues many Catholics face at the parish level have little to do with whether the preaching is inspired or the liturgies are beautifully executed. They aren't particularly exercised over clerical attire either. "For my family and friends who want to raise their kids Catholic," a woman who works in church circles told me, "clericalism isn't even on their radar. Gen-Xers and millennials don't have the deference for clergy—or the expectations—our parents did." She told me

her own expectations were low. People feel it's a nice bonus to have simply a reasonably healthy and balanced priest with some pastoral gifts.

It's a sad state of affairs that I've heard echoed over and over even among young clergy. "It continues to surprise me," a recently ordained Carmelite told me. "If you are real, relatable and make an effort to be relevant to parishioners' lives, you are a rock star." Another priest who has filled in at numerous parishes for 10 years told me, "People seem to be so hungry for something more. If you can offer them anything that connects their personal lives to the Gospel, they are incredibly appreciative."

To be sure, this is not an ideal situation. Those of us who hope that Pope Francis' popularity will inspire a younger generation to enter our doors or lapsed Catholics to return would do well to ask ourselves difficult questions: What are we inviting them to? Are we simply welcoming them back to a church that reminds them why they left in the first place?

Given the circumstances, it might appear to church outsiders that those of us still inside are suffering from some form of ecclesiastical Stockholm syndrome. I would argue that we are a sign of hope.

We are still here because we know, at some fundamental level, that we long for something sacred beyond ourselves and our lives. We might not entirely understand that sacredness, but we be-

lieve that approaching it in community and participating in it sacramentally is important. We are "remnant Catholics" of a different sort. When, at times, we are faced with clergy who fall short of our expectations, we are forced to be—in a twisted nod to Hazel Motes in "Wise Blood"—a Holy Church in Spite of the Church.

Of course, we need good priests as leaders and pastors. Make no mistake; there are still plenty of priests who are real, relatable and relevant, and our love for them is familial and fierce. In fact, a growing number of us are part of a nascent "pilgrim church" that journeys far outside our local parish boundaries to attend Mass and find spiritual nourishment with them and the communities they lead.

As the pope said regarding clericalism, we need more "shepherds living with the smell of the sheep." For those who are waiting for these shepherds to arrive, it will be important to remind ourselves that the sheep, ultimately, don't exist for the sake of the shepherd.

It also helps to remember that this challenge isn't new. Back in 1959, Flannery O'Connor described an exchange with a relative's non-Catholic husband, who entered the church after years of attending Mass with his wife. When asked what finally changed his mind, he said, "The sermons were so horrible, [I] knew there must be something else there to make the people come."

Our expectations of the clergy are much more modest. The bar is set pretty low.



BILL MCGARVEY, author of *The Freshman Survival Guide*, owner of *CathNewsUSA.com* and former editor in chief of *Busted Halo* (2004-10), is a musician and writer.

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

WHAT WENT WRONG How the 1% Hijacked the American Middle Class...and What Other Countries Got Right

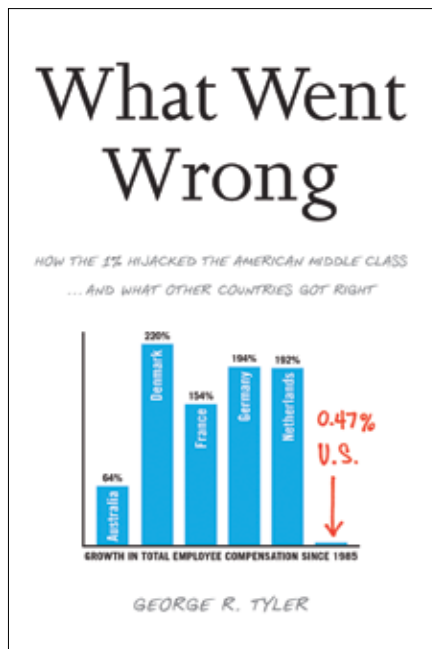
By George R. Tyler
BenBella Books. 576p \$26.95

George R. Tyler draws on his long public and private sector experience, both domestic and international, to fashion a wide-ranging indictment of late 20th and early 21st century American capitalism. *What Went Wrong?* is a “J’accuse” aimed at policies favoring corporate elites but hurting most Americans, policies that seized the U.S. economy starting with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and have not let go. The result has been stagnating wages, declining living standards, growing inequality, deindustrialization, increasing poverty, a disappearing middle class, redistribution of wealth toward the top, bursting bubbles and other outcomes recalling 1920s Gilded Age phenomena.

Tyler pins much of the blame on the free-market ideology that took hold in the 1980s under President Reagan, promoted by the ultra-individualist philosophy of Ayn Rand, the ultra-free market economic theories of Milton Friedman and their translation into public policy by administration officials and Alan Greenspan, longtime chair of the Federal Reserve Bank. This ideology enshrined selfishness as a virtue, turning the United States away from a longstanding “we’re all in this together” spirit to a new “you’re on your own” approach.

Tyler argues that Reaganomics led us straight to the financial crisis in 2008 and a new era of economic pain. Alongside the indictment, he offers examples of alternative approaches that several foreign countries have adopted

during the same period to achieve better results for their people. His bill of particulars is familiar to policy wonks who know something about U.S.-style corporate governance and German-style co-determination, to mention



just two of his many contrasting American problems and foreign solutions. By itemizing the many problems and describing how other countries have tackled them, all in plain English and with reader-friendly charts and graphs in one volume, Tyler provides a valuable resource for the nonspecialist general public.

Tyler’s method is to alternate negative aspects of Reaganomics or “shareholder capitalism” in the United States with positive examples of family-friendly “stakeholder capitalism” in other developed countries. He draws the latter from his experience living and working in these countries, namely Australia and major nations of northern Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland

and Sweden). In those countries, Tyler says, the overarching public policy goal is “family prosperity” and a “family-focused market economy,” in contrast to policies emphasizing shareholder prosperity and further enrichment of the already wealthy.

U.S. corporations emphasize quarterly earnings reports and tout job elimination as the best means of cost cutting to hit quarterly profit goals, Tyler says. In addition to its effects on employees and their families, this “short-termism” slows investment in research and development, promotes wasteful stock buybacks and destroys employee loyalty. The result undercuts any strategy for building a business over a long term with steady growth instead of boom-and-bust quarterly results.

As an alternative to American-style short-termism, Tyler offers the German co-determination model. Here, employee representatives hold seats on company boards of directors and join management in fashioning plans for long-term business success joined with employment security. German firms’ spending for in-house apprenticeship programs may be a net loss in any given quarter, but in the long run employees’ loyalty, motivation, skills and productivity more than make up the losses. Tyler adds that in the United States, successful family-owned firms tend to take a long-term approach to their business, since they are not pressured by shareholders and stock analysts to pump up quarterly earnings.

In another instance, Tyler contrasts U.S. tax-cutting mania in the Reagan and post-Reagan eras with continued high tax rates—and high delivery of services—in his comparator countries. He also compares growing wealth and wage inequality in the winner-take-all American economy with more egalitarian outcomes in the family-friendly systems.

Tyler suggests that inequality in the

United States derives from two sources with multiplier effects. On the labor side, the lack of an adequate minimum wage, wage-cutting without regard for workers' increasing productivity and anti-union practices that undermine collective bargaining—an engine of middle class growth in the 20th century—drove down workers' real earnings and living standards. On the capital side, self-serving executive elites and their enabling boards of directors, an outsized, greed-driven financial sector that showered itself with astronomical salaries and bonuses and tax loopholes for companies and rich individuals pushed wealth to the top of the income pyramid.

Counterposed to these policies and outcomes, Tyler offers examples of countries in which social cohesion trumps social fragmentation. In northern European countries, collectively-bargained wage scales are applied throughout various sectors, putting most employees well above the national minimum wage. Companies have maintained the link between wages and productivity, so that real wages have kept pace with the steady rise in productivity. The result is much less distance between the top and bottom of the income scale and more wealth flowing to the middle.

The book continues in this vein, taking up issues of deindustrialization, poverty, the demise of decent retirement security and other social and economic ills. For each problem, Tyler points to countervailing policies in his chosen examples from Europe and Australia.


Tyler takes special aim at a mantra repeated ad nauseam in the United States: that European countries like France, Germany and Sweden have rigid labor laws that hamper growth and innovation. (American journalists cannot write about Europe's economy without using the term rigid; it must be required by their style books. Enter "Europe" and "rigid labor laws"

in a search engine and see the results). The main complaint is that employers cannot just summarily fire employees and close plants but have to meet "just cause" standards and provide severance pay based on years of employment with the firm. The result of these modest social protections, according to conventional U.S. economic wisdom, is "Eurosclerosis," a condition that leaves Europe uncompetitive in the global economy.

This stereotyping is belied by the facts. For one thing, as Tyler points out, most of the countries he compares with the United States have changed labor laws to give employers relatively more flexibility while maintaining core social

protections. The result is called "flexicurity," a term widely used in European social discourse but unheard of in the United States. For another, northern European countries and companies continued to perform well as global economic actors. Think of Airbus and German companies like Volkswagen, Mercedes, Siemens and SAP; Renault, Saint-Gobain and Sodexo in France; IKEA and Volvo in Sweden, and many other world-leading firms.

Beyond economics, Tyler suggests taking into account the way of living in his stakeholder capitalist countries. People work hard, but they work to live, not the other way around. Leisure time for family, vacation and cultur-



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Overtime work is limited and vacations are mandatory by law. In the shareholder capitalist United States, employers can demand unlimited overtime from workers (except those with union representation) and there is no right to a paid vacation. As a result, Americans are working longer hours for relatively lower pay than at any point in the past 60 years.

Tyler concludes his book with a call for wide-ranging political and economic reforms. He wants to reduce the influence of money in the U.S. political system and restore a progressive tax structure. He further proposes raising wages for lower-paid workers, enhancing workers' organizing and bargaining rights, relinking wage increases to productivity gains, managing trade to restore well-paying manufacturing jobs and other steps to address income inequality. For corporate management and the financial sector, he wants to go beyond the post-crash Dodd-Frank reforms to further-reaching changes like breaking up the too-big-to-fail financial institutions and limiting executive paychecks and bonuses.

In the end Tyler returns, as he often does throughout the book, to his preferred model of German-style co-determination in corporate governance. In this stakeholder capitalism scenario, workers have a voice in running the business. Management accepts and respects employees' participation, and workers and trade unions use their voice responsibly to advance firms' commercial success in the global marketplace.

The daunting political obstacles to Tyler's program are self-evident. Extremist Republicans have effectively seized control of their party. Potential moderates have largely capitulated, fearing primary election challenges from the right. Most U.S. management seems intent on killing unions, not

working with them. Some of Tyler's ideas were reflected in early financial reform proposals after the crisis in 2008, but they were eliminated or scaled back in the process that ended with Dodd-Frank. President Obama's cautious centrism appears to be at the edge of the possible in the current context.

We do not know if political dynamics will change in coming months and years to make Tyler's agenda more feasible. This review is written as the rabid right faction in the House of Representatives has shut down the U.S. government. In Australia, one of Tyler's favored alternative systems, voters just elected a hard-right government intent

on dismantling policies he lauds.

At the same time, Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and other left-of-center Democrats are posing ideas similar to those developed at length by Tyler. In what direction will American politics turn? If read as widely as it deserves to be, *What Went Wrong?* could help swing public attitudes toward a repudiation of the hard right and a swing to the more family-friendly policies that George Tyler espouses in this enlightening and informative book.

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THOMAS P. RAUSCH

AFTER LIFE

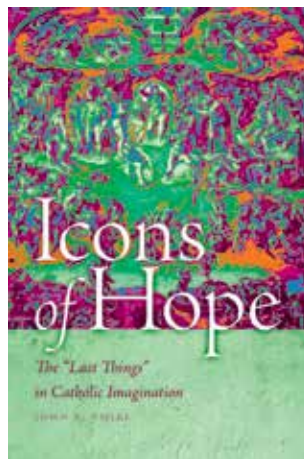
ICONS OF HOPE The "Last Things" in Catholic Imagination

By John E. Thiel
University of Notre Dame Press. 256p
\$35

Icons of Hope, John Thiel's creative effort to explore Christian belief in eternal life, is clearly the work of a major theological thinker. Focusing on the *eschatota*, the classical four last things—heaven, hell, death and judgment—Thiel rejects Kant's position on the limitations of knowledge and wants to move beyond Rahner's "hermeneutical modesty" in limiting what we might suggest about the life enjoyed by the blessed dead to a silence respectful of the divine mystery. Instead he takes the doctrine of the bodily resurrection as an interpretative guideline and uses

several other Catholic doctrines to develop a much more imaginative, "thicker" eschatology, while acknowledging that it remains a work of meaningful speculation.

Departing from the traditional view that beatitude consists in the eternal contemplation of God in the beatific vision, Thiel develops an idea of the 18th-century American theologian Jonathan Edwards to suggest that the blessed dead are indeed active, even busy, though he refines it to imagine them involved in the ongoing work of forgiveness, healing rifts that exist in the communion of saints, that network of relationships in Catholic theology that binds the living and the dead together in the one body of Christ. Just as the risen Jesus continues his work of reconciliation in the resurrection appearances, so the



blessed dead continue to engage in virtuous action, overcoming the effects of sin lingering in themselves and others; they fill up, so to speak, what was revealed in the particular judgment when they were unresponsive to grace. In this way the Last Judgment, rather than being redundant or anticlimactic, completes their participation in the divine plan of salvation. Emphasizing the distinction between the particular and general judgment also leads Thiel, like Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict, to reject the idea of resurrection at the time of death. This rethinking of the difference between the particular and general judgments that shows the faithful departed themselves contributing to the final realization of God's kingdom may be the greatest strength of the book.

While highly speculative, Thiel's vision is both imaginative and deeply Catholic. His fascinating analysis of Catholic and Protestant artistic representations of the Last Judgment—by artists like Federico Zuccari, Giotto di Bondone, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Lucas Cranach the Younger and Albrecht Dürer—enriches his narrative. Against the Protestant “strong” doctrine of grace, leading to the doctrine of predestination in Luther and Calvin, Thiel stresses the Catholic insistence on cooperating with grace, even if our cooperation is itself a work of grace.

He addresses head-on the diminished sense of personal sin today, and with it the doctrine of purgatory, which he attributes at least in part to the post-conciliar emphasis on the wide availability of God's grace. He shows how our identities are constituted by the social dimensions of both sin and grace, as the sins of our earthly lives, even our complicity in social or structural sin, continue to play out through history. And the last judgment shows how our lives are bound together, for better or for worse, even in the resurrection, reflecting the close linking of

“forgiveness of sins” and “resurrection of the body” in the ancient creeds. Finally his analysis of how forgiveness works on both sides of death leaves at least open the possibility that God's efficacious grace might yet save all.

Some of his points I find more problematic. The distinction he draws between what he calls a Pauline style of faith, a confidence that Christ's resurrection annuls God's judgment on sin, bringing believers into heavenly bliss in spite of their sinfulness, and a Matthean style of faith (though he finds it common to the Synoptics) which emphasizes judgment and personal response, expecting proof of discipleship and an ethical life, seems overdrawn. Paul also demands conversion of life and moral living, as witness his First Letter to the Corinthians or his exclamation in Rom 6:1, to which Thiel admittedly gives a Catholic reading: “Should we persist in sin that grace may abound? Of course not!” And Thiel avoids the prior question of whether Jesus himself spoke of judgment.

Some will find controversial his characterization of pre-Second Vatican Council Catholic faith and spirituality as competitive. He argues that the example of the martyrs and

later the ascetics led Christians to worry about their own spiritual lives. The eschatological anxiety their examples and the Matthean style of faith engendered, he says, played an important role in the development of the doctrine of purgatory as a way of mitigating the resulting “competitive style of religion” by extending a quasi-monastic vocation into the afterlife, thus allowing the laity more time for a satisfactory judgment on their lives. But Thiel has a point in calling attention to the “hierarchy of discipleship” that prized the clerical or consecrated life over that of the laity, a contrast that lasted in Catholic language until Vatican II.

Thiel's “thick” eschatology, with the blessed dead still working for reconciliation, challenges the imagination but leaves me wondering what remains of the self prior to the resurrection of the body, the author's citations from two medieval popes notwithstanding. This is not an easy book to read, but because it opens up a new vision of the life to come, it is well worth the effort.

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TIMOTHY O'BRIEN

CALL TO THE WILD

JACK LONDON An American Life

By Earle Labor
Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. 480p \$30

There is a common assumption that the more familiar a person is with a given subject, the less objective he or she becomes in assessing it. Earle Labor's new biography of Jack London represents a notable departure from this conventional wisdom. After over 50 years of studying Jack London and teaching his works, Labor knows the famed

American author of *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* (just two of his 50-plus books) as well as anyone else now living. For all this familiarity, and though this book is clearly rooted in a lifelong love for London and his writing, the end result is a masterful account that is balanced and meticulously researched.

From the outset, Labor makes clear his desire to avoid the usual pitfalls of those who have profiled London. These biographers have tended, he argues, to emphasize or even exaggerate London's many faults, result-

ing in mere caricatures of a figure who deserves a more nuanced portrait. Labor's aim is to enter and inhabit London's world, instead of going for the easy victory of postmortem character assessment or, for that matter, assassination. Following this method, he still gives the reader ample information with which to either condemn or pardon Jack London.

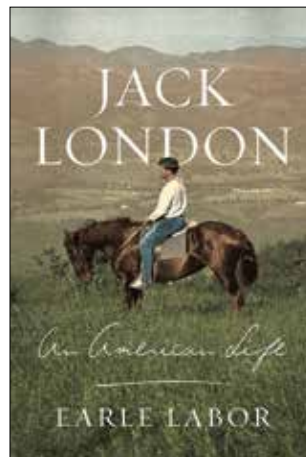
In addition to offering a corrective to defective interpretations, Labor brings new historical materials to light, unavailable even in his own earlier critical biography of London (1974, revised 1994). Among these are recently acquired letters that passed between London and his second wife, Charmian Kittredge. These letters allow a richly textured account of their relationship to emerge. More broadly, Labor painstakingly combs London's correspondence and journals, as one might expect, but he also reads these accounts together with a host of other sources. This mechanism corroborates or corrects London's own autobiographical accounts, which often turn out to be embellished.

Known for action-packed writing that teems with adventure, London's own life story is truly as interesting as any possible fiction. Indeed, he is perhaps the only American writer who can make Ernest Hemingway look effete by comparison. London not only wrote about the "call," but clearly felt his own: to adventure in all its forms. In addition to being a novelist, husband and father, he was a factory worker, oyster pirate, seal hunter, Klondike prospector, hobo, sailor attempting to circumnavigate the globe, farmer, surfer, journalist and socialist politician. These many "lives" transpired in the 40 short years of his actual life and undoubtedly contributed to its brevity.

Labor's portrait of this man is compelling, presenting a remarkably shaded account of the many paradoxes that marked London's life. A world-renowned author, he claimed to write only for income ("I am writing for money...

if I can procure fame, that means more money"). An avowed socialist for most of his life, he enjoyed rather aristocratic amenities like a personal valet ("Why tie my own shoes when I can have it done by someone whose business it is, while I am improving my mind or entertaining the fellow who drops in?"). A man of considerable intellectual powers, he never graduated from high school. Nevertheless, he passed college entrance exams—only to withdraw from the University of California at Berkeley without a degree.

If the temptation to be severe in assessing London is hard to avoid, it is perhaps even harder to cast him in a sympathetic light. It is challenging indeed to discover why so many people loved this man who, literary greatness aside, was resolutely impulsive (and hence always short on money), a philanderer and an alcoholic. These traits emerge clearly in his family life. After his sweetheart, Anna Strunsky, rebuffed his advances (she was playing coy, it turned out), London proposed days later to Elizabeth (Bessie) Maddern. He did not love her (nor she him), though together they had two daughters, Joan and Becky. The marriage was unhappy, and after Jack's recurrent infidelity—including an affair with his old flame, Strunsky—the pair divorced. His marriage to Charmian was happier, but London's relationship with his daughter Joan deteriorated to the point where, when she was 13, he wrote to her "If you should be dying... I should surely come; on the other hand, if I were dying I should not care to have you at my bedside." For all this, Labor also captures the dynamism, expansive spirit and zest for living that made Jack London—for all his weaknesses, great and small—a singularly attractive figure to his friends, lovers and readers.



For his part, Labor does not vanish entirely into the story he tells. He inveighs against the canard that London's death was a suicide. Rather, he emphasizes that London's passing—met with international shock and outpourings of grief—was almost certainly caused by his chronic bad health, especially cardiovascular and renal disease. Our biographer views London as a "seeker" and is up front about his hope that readers will share this opinion. His repeated use of this label throughout the book is one of the weakest aspects of an otherwise stellar volume. To call someone a "seeker"—apart from the quasi-religious connotations the term bears today—is to invite the question of what one seeks. This goes unanswered. At the very least we can say it was not God London sought: according to Charmian, he "prayed to no God but humanity." And given the remarkable breadth of the novelist's adventures, the reader (at least this one) comes away with the impression that he sought everything—and so perhaps nothing—all at once.

The biography is subtitled "An American Life." This is not accidental, nor is anything else that appears in this finely crafted work. The author is convinced that London pursued the "American Dream of Success," and one would struggle to find a better embodiment of that dream than Jack London.

Labor's own success is twofold. He clearly demonstrates that London not only dreamt this dream, but actually lived it. Perhaps more important, Labor brilliantly shows that for himself and those he loved, London's dream was a nightmare as often as it was an idyll.

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‘Baptized by You’

BAPTISM OF THE LORD (A), JAN. 12, 2014

Readings: Is 42:1-7; Ps 29:1-10; Acts 10:34-38; Mt 3:3-17

“This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17)

Why did Jesus need to be baptized? It was a delicate issue for the earliest Christians, as one can see in Matthew’s baptism account, in which “John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’” One of the sensitivities was that long after Jesus’ death and resurrection, there were still followers of John the Baptist. The Acts of the Apostles (18:25) tells us that Apollos, when he met the Apostle Paul, “knew only the baptism of John.” In the next chapter of Acts, Paul comes across some more disciples of John the Baptist. Paul asked whether they had received the Holy Spirit and they answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit” (19:2). Paul asked, “‘Into what then were you baptized?’ They answered, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (19:3-5).

It is strange that the New Testament itself tells us that there were disciples of John, unaware of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, years after Jesus’ baptism, even though John himself thought of Jesus as the one who was to come, the Messiah, “one who is more powerful than I.” It also points to the historical reality of Jesus’ baptism by John, a potential source of embarrassment for

the followers of the Messiah and Lord, but an account that was maintained because it was true. But this still brings us back to the initial question: Why did Jesus need to be baptized? To put it another way, why was it true that Jesus was baptized by John?

Matthew’s Gospel offers an answer from Jesus himself in reply to John the Baptist’s reluctance: “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” How to understand this righteousness is the difficult issue. John’s baptism was intended for the forgiveness of sins and the repentance of Israel. Since Jesus is sinless, what need would he have of repentance?

There are several ways to interpret Jesus’ baptism. One is that though fully divine, Jesus as fully human needs to recognize the call, the starting point, of his ministry just as any person must listen for the voice of God in determining one’s vocation. God’s identification of Jesus as the divine son of God inaugurates the divine mission for Jesus in a public manner.

Another way to understand the baptism is to see Jesus aligning himself with sinful humanity, even though he is free from sin, through his willingness to associate fully with the human condition. In his baptism Jesus begins the process of rescuing humanity from sin.

Still another way to consider Jesus’ baptism is to see in it the model for

the nascent church. Jesus models for his followers the need for repentance from sins and establishes the form of baptism that will be established in the church.

Still others have focused not simply on Jesus’ baptism, but on the revelation following the baptism, when “a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” Note that the voice does not speak to Jesus in Matthew’s account, but identifies Jesus for John and others who might be present—as well as later readers—as “my son,” the divine son known from Ps 2:7 and, among Greeks and Romans, from the Roman imperial ideology that classified the emperor as *divi Filius*, the son of God. Here, in fact, was the true son of God made



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Place yourself at the Jordan River for Jesus’ baptism. What is revealed to you through his baptism?

manifest. Even more, however, the son of God is revealed in the context of the Father and the Holy Spirit—what would later be defined as the Trinity.

It is not that Jesus became God through his baptism or that an unaware Jesus suddenly realized his mission upon his baptism or that Jesus abruptly knew his true identity by his baptism.

Why did Jesus need to be baptized? It’s the wrong question. Why did we need Jesus to be baptized? Because we needed to know these things. As so often in the life of Jesus, the divine condescension, the profound humility is for us. It is another way of Jesus saying, “Follow me!”

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The ‘Lamb’ of God

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), JAN. 19, 2014

Readings: Is 49:3-6; Ps 40:2-10; 1 Cor 1:1-3; Jn 1:29-34

“Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29)

John the Baptist has not just one of the greatest roles in salvation history, but one of the great lines in the Bible. The day after John baptized Jesus, “he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, ‘Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” The sacrificial image draws on rich symbols from the Old Testament, but since the phrase “lamb of God” appears only in the Gospel of John, does it reflect John’s creation of this descriptive metaphor for Jesus? Possibly. Or it might be that John the Baptist’s contribution of the “lamb of God” is attributable to the translation by the Gospel of John of an early Christian phrase found elsewhere in the New Testament. This does not mean that John the Baptist did not say it, but that its unique form in John’s Gospel draws on one facet of the original phrase.

We know from the baptism narratives and elsewhere that Jesus is the “child of God” and “son of God,” but he is also called the “servant of God” in Mt 12:48, Acts 4:27 and Acts 4:30. The word translated “servant” in these passages is the Greek *pais*, which in its primary sense means “child.” The word evokes this range of meanings, identifying Jesus as both a “child” and a “servant” of God. The reason for translating *pais* as “servant” and not “child” is that this identification of Jesus is based on some of the Servant Songs in Isaiah, like Isaiah 42, which is cited in

Mt 12:48, Isaiah 49 and Isaiah 52-53.

In the Hebrew versions of these Servant Songs, though, the word used to indicate “servant” is the Hebrew *ebed*. Early Christians identified Jesus with the “servant” in the Isaian songs, though in the original historical context, the servant might have been seen as Israel, the prophet or some other unidentified historical figure. Why do these words matter? They matter because although “servant of God” or “son of God” seem distant in meaning from “lamb of God,” they might be connected in the original context of John the Baptist and Jesus.

What seems like a Johannine innovation might go back to the earliest strata of the church. The 20th-century biblical scholar Joachim Jeremias claimed that the clue to understanding John’s use of “lamb,” which seems so distant from “child” and “servant,” is the Aramaic word *talya*. Jeremias said that the “lamb” (*amnos*) of God who takes away the sin of the world in John 1:29 was a translation of the Aramaic *talya*, which could be translated “boy,” “child” or “servant,” but also as “lamb.” When Jesus was described as the *talya* of God, Aramaic speakers of the earliest church would have heard “child” of God, or “son” of God, or “servant” of God or “lamb” of God.

As the Gospel was translated into Greek, however, choices had to be made about how to explain who Jesus

was and his mission for the world. Greek used two words to describe Jesus, *pais* for “child” and “servant” and *amnos* for “lamb.” Hebrew itself needed more than one word to make all of these identifications, as *ebed* could stand for “child” or “servant” but not for “lamb.” Aramaic, however, only needed one word to supply the whole range of meaning. John chose to focus on presenting Jesus as the “lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” but in so doing John just draws out another aspect of Jesus’ identity, one which is inherent in his

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on Jesus as *talya* of God. To what aspect of Jesus’ identity do you relate most fully?

call as “servant” (*ebed*) in Is 49:6.

In that passage God says of the servant, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” As the servant of God, Jesus, too, is sent on a universal mission, as is the son of God, the child of God, the lamb of God, who atones for the sins of the world. All of these metaphors describe the one person of the Messiah. They point to aspects of Jesus’ complete identity: the unique one who gathered up into himself and fulfilled all the hopes and images of the prophets.

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

—Pope Francis



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