

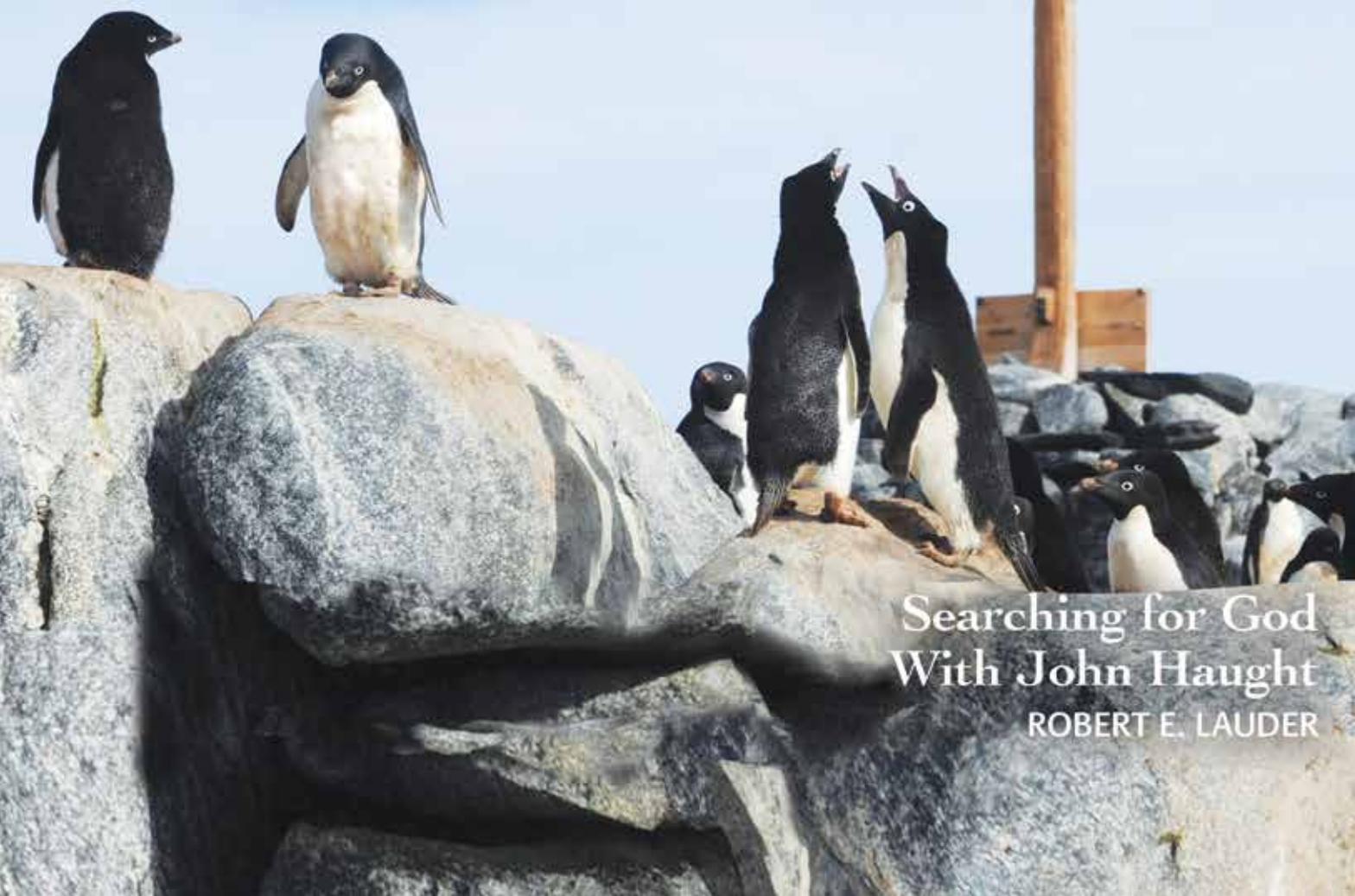
America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

MAY 25–JUNE 1, 2015 \$4.99

A Planetary Pope

WHEN FRANCIS SPEAKS
ON THE ENVIRONMENT
CHRISTIANA Z. PEPPARD



Searching for God
With John Haught
ROBERT E. LAUDER

If you search for 417 Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, Calif., in Google Street View, you'll get a picture of the spot where a U.S. presidential election was decided. Today this place is a modest semi-urban intersection, the sort of unremarkable confluence of concrete and steel you'd find in Anytown, U.S.A. In the summer of 1916, though, the Virginia Hotel stood there and was playing host to the Republican presidential nominee, Charles Evans Hughes.

Mr. Hughes was the 36th governor of New York from 1907 to 1910 and had also served as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Later in life, he would serve as U.S. secretary of state, chief justice of the United States and as a judge of the International Court of Justice. His was a truly amazing career, though in all likelihood you have never heard of Charles Evans Hughes or you may only vaguely remember hearing his name in some high school history class. That is because of what happened at the Virginia Hotel.

Then, as now, California was a big player in presidential politics, and Mr. Hughes had gone to Long Beach in the hopes of uniting the fractious California Republican Party and securing the state's electoral votes. When Hughes checked into the Virginia Hotel, it just so happened that the sitting governor of California, Hiram Johnson, was already there, taking a break from his own campaign swing through the region. According to *The Los Angeles Times*, when Governor Johnson learned that his party's presidential nominee was staying at the same hotel, he expected that Mr. Hughes would pay him a courtesy call. But Hughes, for reasons that are still unclear, checked out without even saying hello. Governor Johnson was furious, and the incident transformed his lukewarm support for Mr. Hughes into quiet but ultimately effective opposition.

When the votes were counted in November, Woodrow Wilson had

beaten Hughes by only three percentage points in the popular vote, one of the narrowest margins in presidential history. As it turns out, it was Californians who had decided the election. Mr. Wilson had carried the Golden State by a little over 3,800 votes out of nearly one million cast. We can reasonably presume that an enthusiastic sitting governor could have changed the outcome by swinging those relatively few votes to Hughes.

Those 3,800 votes were the difference between historical immortality and relative obscurity for Mr. Hughes. That is painfully evident at his grave in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. During a recent visit, it took me 25 minutes to find the grave marker; it is literally obscured by brush and dust, passed by hundreds of unaware visitors daily.

A lot of people are making much of the "inevitability factor" in the present presidential contest, and quite a few very smart people think they have it figured out, especially folks who make a living through their political analyses and prognostications. But it's a reasonable bet that not one of those talking heads is as smart as Charles Evans Hughes was, so we'd be well advised to take their predictions with a grain of salt.

A day is a long time in politics; so we can easily imagine how long a month or a year is. And if Mr. Hughes's misfortune is not sufficiently instructive in this regard, then we might also consider the fate of the Virginia Hotel itself. When it opened in 1908, it was the most popular and most opulent resort in southern California. The Great Depression closed its doors in 1932, and the Long Beach earthquake reduced it to rubble in 1933. Thus an echo of Job's lament can still be heard there by those who listen carefully enough: "Naked I came from my mother's womb. And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

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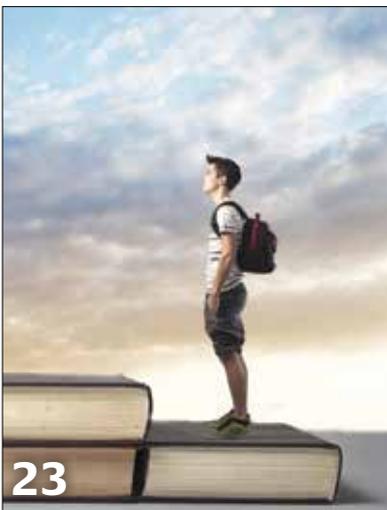
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ON THE WEB

An introduction to the **average American Catholic** from **America Films**. Plus, **Daniel T. Dobrygowski** on the Catholic case for **campaign finance reform**. Full digital highlights on page 18 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



Camera Van

The state's attorney for Baltimore City, Marilyn J. Mosby, wasted no time in bringing charges against the six police officers involved in the arrest and death of Freddie Gray. The most serious charge, second-degree murder, was brought against the driver of the van that took Mr. Gray to the station. In the back of that vehicle, as *The Baltimore Sun* aptly put it, "the 45-minute mystery of Freddie Gray's death" occurred, referring to what and who caused Mr. Gray's deadly spinal cord injury. The case has renewed calls to equip law enforcement officers with body cameras to bring transparency to such encounters.

On May 1 the Obama administration announced it would provide \$20 million in grants to local police departments to help purchase body cameras as part of a \$75 million, three-year program requested last December by the president and approved by Congress. In 2012 a study that looked at the effects of the use of body cameras by law enforcement in Rialto, Calif., found a 60 percent decrease in the use of force by police and an 88 percent reduction in complaints against officers. These findings augur well for more widespread use. Groups like the American Civil Liberties Union, however, raise important concerns about protecting the privacy of citizens being filmed that police departments must take into account.

It would be less controversial, though equally important in light of Mr. Gray's case, to install cameras in transport vehicles as well. If there had been a camera in the van transporting Mr. Gray, we might not have a "45-minute mystery." A brief recording could have provided essential information.

The Buck Stops Here

President Andrew Jackson's portrait has been a familiar sight on the U.S. \$20 bill since 1928. It remains unclear why his visage replaced that of Grover Cleveland, but a growing movement is making it clear that many think it is time for him to retire. A group called Women on 20s is pushing to produce a new \$20 bill featuring the face of a prominent American woman, rather than Jackson. Many have wondered whether a man who forced Native Americans from their lands, offered them unfair treaties and famously battled against the central banking system remains a good choice to appear on American money.

The group hopes to change the 20 by 2020, in time for the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote. An online ballot has narrowed the field of potential candidates

to four: Harriet Tubman, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosa Parks and Wilma Mankiller, the first female chief of the Cherokee Nation. All are worthy candidates.

President Obama has called the effort to feature more women on our currency a "pretty good idea." We agree. More than a few Catholic women have also made significant contributions to U.S. history, including St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, who established the first Catholic school in the nation, and St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, who devoted her life to assisting Italian immigrants arriving in New York. We know that as saints they are honored in heaven, but they are worthy as well of honor by the country they served. If our nation hopes to move closer to being a place of equality for all people, we should try putting our money where our mouth is.

Paying Attention in Syria

Even as momentum appears to be shifting in favor of opposition forces in Syria's grinding civil war, the horrors endured by the country's besieged civilians continue to pile up. On May 6 Caritas staff issued a plea from the divided city of Aleppo, reporting that residents have been "living the war for four years, without water, without electricity, without heating in winter" and in daily fear of aerial bombardment and indiscriminate rocket fire.

Amnesty International reports the atrocities in detail in a new report, "Death Everywhere: War Crimes and Human Rights Abuses in Aleppo," published on May 4. According to the report, 3,000 civilians in Aleppo were killed last year in barrel bomb attacks by government forces, and barrel bombs have killed 11,000 people across Syria since 2012. Opposition groups are charged with killing at least 600 civilians with indiscriminate rocket fire in 2014, and both sides stand accused of torture, arbitrary detention and abduction.

Only a negotiated settlement will bring an end to this wanton suffering and death. Recent battlefield victories by an increasingly cohesive rebel coalition, and signs of dissension and fatigue among supporters of President Bashar al-Assad, give both sides an incentive to return to the negotiating table. In early May the United Nations envoy to Syria launched a series of one-on-one consultations with opposition and government representatives, as well as victims, women, and community and religious leaders. The United States should make every effort to get these actors together in one room once again. As unpalatable as negotiating with President Assad is, worse by far is the prospect of yet another year of displacement, devastation and death for innocent people in Syria.

Coping With Polarity

At a conference at Notre Dame in late April, speakers explored the issue of polarization in today's church under the heading "Naming the Wounds, Beginning to Heal." From a variety of backgrounds, they drew a picture of today's Catholic Church in the United States with its polarities, tensions and different ways of thinking.

Polarization is not new in the church. The Acts of the Apostles (Chapter 15) tell of an early conflict in the church. Some were teaching, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved." Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to consult about this issue. When they arrived, the text says, "They were welcomed by the church, as well as by the apostles and the presbyters.... But some from the party of the Pharisees who had become believers stood up and said, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and direct them to observe the Mosaic law.'" Paul said no, they do not have to observe all Jewish laws to be Christians. Very early in its history, the church experienced polarization.

That was just the beginning. Sadly, differences of opinion, bitter fights, heresies and schisms have occasionally wounded the church. In the late 1800s in the United States, the Catholic Church included some who wanted to strengthen the international dimension, favoring a worldwide church with a leader in Rome from whom authority flowed. Others sought to find distinctive American features in the church, like freedom, representation and a voice in how things worked. Isaac Hecker, the founder of the Paulists, reaching out to Protestants, found favor with French liberals but disfavor from Pope Leo XIII. Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul had to be very cautious expressing his beliefs about church life in the United States. Leo did not like some American fundamental principles, like separation of church and state. French journalists described a new heresy, calling it Americanism.

Today, statistics present a troubling picture to those who knew a church that was once unified and growing stronger. Older Catholics, who went through the social changes of the 1960s, reflect the polarization of society that took place afterward, from those who let go of many conventions and formalities to those who applauded President Ronald Reagan's economics. The findings of Mark M. Gray reported in a recent issue of *America* ("Your Average American Catholic," 5/18) draw a full statistical picture of how things are, and he finds encouraging signs among otherwise dark numbers.

In South Bend, Ind., John Jenkins, C.S.C., president

of the University of Notre Dame, citing Robert Putnam and David Campbell's *American Grace*, described two aftershocks of the cultural revolution of the 1960s. One was the Reagan movement that contributed energy to political divisiveness

or polarity. The other was the movement of young people fed up with the controversies that divided religious people, leading to the explosion of the so-called nones—those who mark "none" on surveys that ask about religious affiliation. The sociologist Christian Smith told the conference that the millennials are not polarized; they are unconnected.

Catholics of different political stripes do agree on important things and can transcend polarities. The church's strong tradition on social issues has much to contribute to the larger American society. Catholics of conflicting political stances still face issues of immigration together, perhaps because the face of Catholicism has long been that of immigrants. They still care for the poor and the outsiders, even if they have different views on how the political realm should address them. On life issues, from abortion to the death penalty, bishops of otherwise varying political views have been leaders in efforts to get together to work for what they believe.

Opportunities for addressing major issues do occur. The next meeting of the Synod of Bishops to consider the challenges of the family could introduce a new appreciation and attention to family issues. Perhaps Pope Francis' promised encyclical will prompt serious reflection rather than reflexive dismissal of environmental issues. Later in the year, Pope Francis' visit to the United States and in particular his address to Congress will put Catholic values and principles into public discourse in a powerful, personal way. And given the pope's willingness to let people speak their minds without the need for everyone to agree on everything before we can all get along, perhaps when the bishops meet after the pope's visit, they could express their varying opinions without danger of offending the faithful.

At the level of personal response, after naming the wounds, we can begin to heal by toning down fiery words and divisive stances, by admitting differences with our friends and colleagues without alienating them or blaming them. And we could, as Father Jenkins suggests, each do an examination of conscience that focuses on our rhetoric. That would start the healing in earnest.



REPLY ALL

An Archbishop Responds

I write to express my strong disagreement with the article “Confirmation Bias,” by Michael A. Marchal (4/27). I believe that the best time for confirmation in our time and in our country is in the high school years. I understand that some want the traditional sequence of the sacraments to be baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. However, I believe pastorally that it is insensitive to teenagers when they are deprived of the important sacrament of confirmation in a time in their life when they really need a boost in their Catholic faith formation.

I tried the approach presented in the article when I was bishop of Lubbock, Tex., in the late 1980s. The rector of the cathedral wanted to have

the confirmation at the same time as the children were making their first holy Communion. He promised me that he had trained the children very well to understand both sacraments. But when I celebrated Mass and was talking to the children about holy Communion and confirmation, they didn’t seem very interested. In fact, they were more interested in the roach that was racing down the center aisle of the cathedral than in the sacraments of our church! I decided then that I would never be in favor of putting confirmation and holy Communion in the same liturgy for young children.

Mr. Marchal says that we need to create an alternative, nonsacramental rite for personal reaffirmation of baptismal vows later in life. Well, good luck with that! I confirm over 3,000 teenagers every year during the weeks

between Easter and Pentecost. I doubt that this new nonsacramental rite that is referred to would draw more than a few teenagers. I believe that it is important for high school students to have an opportunity to recommit themselves to their faith. They go through a one- or two-year program of formation, depending on the parish. They go through a retreat with confession. They write the archbishop a letter asking to be confirmed and why. They attend the confirmation practice. They personally meet the archbishop or his delegate just before the confirmation.

These are experiences that they would be deprived of if they were receiving confirmation as children when they were making their first Communion. It is difficult enough for the children to understand the basic teachings about holy Communion, but to toss in confirmation and the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit is asking too much of 7-year-old children! If the children have already been confirmed at age 7, you certainly aren’t going to have a large number of them coming back for religious studies when they have already received those sacraments.

The point is made that some teenagers will choose to not be confirmed. Certainly that is their choice. In the Archdiocese of Santa Fe we always offer two adult confirmations in the fall for those who missed it for any reason earlier in their lives. We get about 300 adults between the two confirmations.

I believe it is pastorally important in our age, when there are so many distractions in a very secular world, to have a significant sacramental event for Catholics as they are becoming young adults. I certainly hope that the majority of our dioceses will continue to celebrate confirmation when the young people can appreciate what it is all about—in their high school years!

(MOST REV.) MICHAEL J. SHEEHAN
Archdiocese of Santa Fe, N.M.

STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to “In Defense of Altar Girls,” by Kerry Weber (5/4).

Wonderful article! Being an altar server has been one of the most formative experiences of my life. Through it my love for Christ and for the Eucharist grew to the point that I have now given my life totally to Christ and to the service of our church as a Carmelite nun. In my opinion, the most important quality an altar server must possess is that he or she must feel called to serve in that way. In this Year of Consecrated Life, we need to wake up the world to the many ways we can all serve at the table of our Lord.

CELIA ASHTON

Being an altar girl in the 1970s and early ’80s had a huge effect on me. I was a little girl with divorced parents and was not only allowed but often asked to serve. It was a very important message to me and to the church at the time.

EMILY BARR

Is this still really an issue within the church? I wrote a letter to our parish priest when I was 12 in 1982 asking to be an altar girl and then to the archbishop, and I was told it wasn’t appropriate for girls to be on the altar. It was the beginning of the end for my relationship with the church.

KELLY O’KEEFE

I guess I’ll pretty much end up being the lone dissenter. I’ve read in recent articles that 80 percent of newly ordained priests said they felt the call to the priesthood while serving Mass. With the crisis of vocations, we should be doing all we can to encourage religious life as a viable vocational option. Many parishes that have gone back to all boy altar servers have seen an increase of servers. One local parish made the change a few months ago and has also provided ways for girls to participate and serve the church through a sacristan society. Because, yes, women are important to the church, and we have an extraordinary voice.

LUCINDA ALLEN

People, Not Process

The fact that Robert Ellsberg worked alongside Dorothy Day for a couple of years, experiencing her humanity and her brokenness, gives his piece, "Called to Be Saints" (5/4), an authentic perspective. It was a delight to read about this hero of mine who had to fend off attacks from the right and the left while she sought justice for those to whom she administered charity. Nonetheless, Dorothy Day is already a saint for a lot of us, and John XXIII has been one for about a half century.

I would add some others who are Lutheran and Jewish, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Simone Weil. There are many more in all of our lives whose good deeds and transgressions have sunk into oblivion and who are remembered only in the memory of people in the small circle of their lives. Bottom line, Dorothy Day does not need a burnish from the Curia, and the whole process of canonization should be put in the storage locker where we keep Limbo.

ERNEST C. RASKAUSKAS SR.
Potomac, Md.

RFRA Reactions

"Bridging Our Divisions" (Editorial, 4/27) is a very good statement. It stands in contrast to the earlier blog post, "Indiana Gets Unwanted Attention From its Kick to the Shins of Gay Marriage," by Robert David Sullivan (4/3), which on my reading comes very close to questioning the good faith of many supporters of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. For example, he uses scare quotes around the words religious freedom. It would be nice to have seen a greater diversity of views on this issue, in keeping with *America's* editorial position.

JOSHUA DECUIR
Online Comment

Preserving Hope

Thank you for Gerard O'Connell's column "The Quality of Mercy" (4/13), with his quotes of Pope Francis calling for the abolition of the death penalty and life imprisonment, "the hidden death penalty." Inspired by several articles by the "lifer" Jens Søring in *America* (2004-5), I have argued for years that we can no longer see life imprisonment as more humane than execution—"We're still killed, just over a longer time." Limited sentences (like 30 years, as in Mexico and elsewhere) preserve hope, which we are now seeing as basic to the human dignity so stressed in all of Pope Francis' messages.

(REV.) JOHN W. KOELSCH
Jerome, Idaho

Going Further

Re "A Space for Women" (Editorial, 3/30): I think the editors can do better than this to open the discussion of the future of women in the church. I would suggest a few topics.

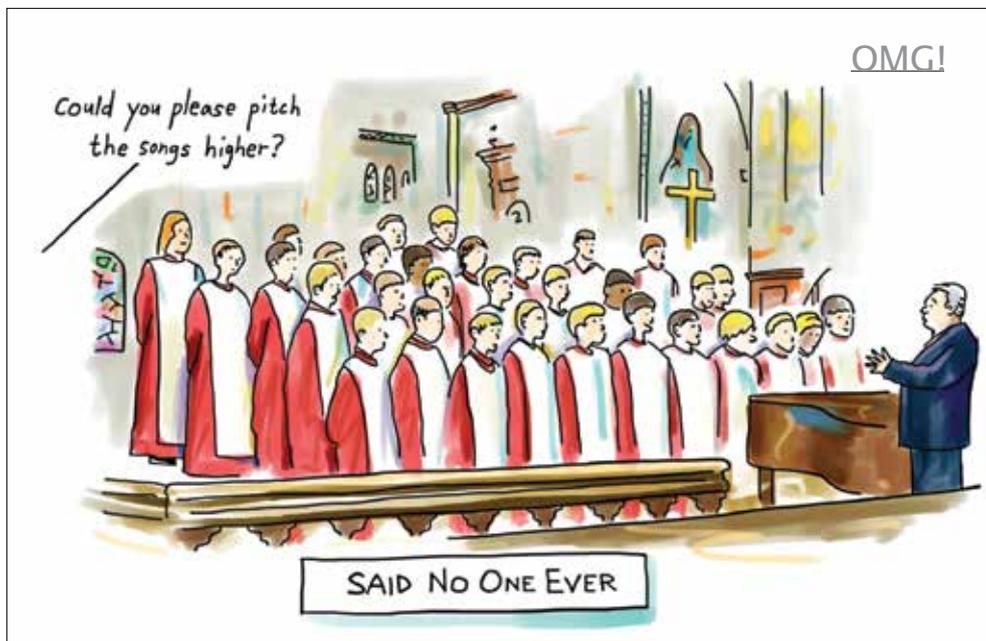
1) Ministry and the sacrament of ordination. John O'Malley, S.J., has

argued that each new form of religious life brought with it new forms of ministry and that ordained religious today function quite differently than the vision of the diocesan priesthood. Since St. Ignatius and St. Francis of Assisi developed their charisms before ordination, there seems to be a powerful historical argument for grounding ministry in baptism rather than in ordination.

2) An apology by the bishops for their history of mistreatment of women religious. Cardinal Seán O'Malley, O.F.M.Cap., had the courage to say the recent investigation of women religious was a "disaster." It would be great if a bishop would have the boldness to issue such a call in these pages.

3) Lay preaching by both men and women. Francis has sparked great interest with his daily homilies and set a high standard. From my three decades of participating in small faith-sharing groups, I know almost everyone has a story to tell or an insight that is much better than the average weekend homily.

JACK RAKOSKY
Online Comment



Letters to the editor may be sent to *America's* editorial office (address on page 2) or letters@americamagazine.org. *America* will also consider the following for print publication: comments posted below articles on *America's* Web site (americamagazine.org) and posts on Twitter and public Facebook pages. All correspondence may be edited for length.

NEPAL EARTHQUAKE

Relief Agencies Race Monsoons To Shelter Homeless Thousands

Catholic Relief Services and its partners within the Caritas Internationalis network of relief and development agencies have begun looking to what lies ahead for Nepal as the poverty-stricken nation recovers from a devastating earthquake.

America got a frontline report on May 6 from Jennifer Hardy, a C.R.S. regional information officer. Hardy reached Nepal soon after the 7.8-magnitude earthquake hit on April 25. The disaster has left more than 8,400 dead, thousands more injured and hundreds of thousands without homes. C.R.S., like other humanitarian groups that have responded, are now in a race with the coming monsoon season, according to Hardy, attempting to get relief supplies, emergency shelters and building materials into rural districts before the rains will turn Nepal's roads into muddy quagmires.

Some media reports have focused on a slow government response to the disaster, which left important historical structures and thousands of homes in the capital Katmandu in ruins, but Hardy says C.R.S./Caritas coordination with Nepalese officials has been good. "The real problem is the scale of this disaster, the vast geography it covers and the difficult access into small mountain towns," she says. "Supplies are moving, but of course we are doing everything we can to move them faster. We know families are in great need and we only have a small window to distribute goods before the rains begin.

"During these months of intense daily rains [June through September], moving construction materials and relief goods anywhere except for along the main paved roads will be very difficult or impossible," she reports. "That's why we are working so fast to give families the materials they need right away—we know they need to make their emergency shelters as strong as possible as quickly as possible to make the rains more bearable."

Homelessness will remain a formidable challenge as the recovery continues. "Some houses are fully collapsed," Hardy says, "others have walls blown out and still others that look intact on the outside are actually full of rubble and debris on the inside.

"I've walked up to homes that look O.K. on the outside, only to peek in the door and see the floor more than halfway covered with brick or stones from collapsed interior walls. These homes

are totally uninhabitable and must be rebuilt from the ground up."

Many of the families she meets have been living in improvised tents outside their ruined homes. "And now they worry constantly about the coming monsoon," Hardy says. "They know they won't be able to rebuild before the big rains start in a few weeks, so they worry how they will wash clothes and have them dry in the rain; how they will keep their food and animals dry; what will begin to mold; and other worries. Of course, for families that lost a loved one, all of those worries about the future are compounded by grief and loss."

Hardy describes the C.R.S./Caritas staff and volunteers she has met as "inspiring."

"They are working incredibly long days in very difficult conditions, yet they still cheer and clap when we get updated numbers on families we've reached or word that new supplies have crossed the

CONTAINING A CRISIS. Catholic Relief Services' staff distribute shelter and hygiene kits in a village in Nepal's Gorkha District.



border from India."

She adds, "The people we are helping are experiencing trauma in different ways. Those who have lost a loved one are struggling the most, but everyone is coping with grief of lost homes and possessions and worry about the future."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has launched a special appeal for donations to assist Nepal through this crisis and the months of rebuilding and restoration ahead.

KEVIN CLARKE

U.K. ELECTIONS

Cameron Returned

British pundits, pollsters and commentators all got it comprehensively wrong. Even senior politicians could not believe what they were seeing, and not one of them dared



to claim they had predicted this. As the particularly British ritual of vote-counts in drafty sports halls amid solemn victory confirmations unfolded on the night of May 7, exit polls that had seemed incredible were proved right. The Tories were securing a shock majority, confounding every single pre-election survey.

The British public on May 7 gave the Labour Party a stunning collapse and produced a disaster for the Liberal Democrats, delivering the government unexpectedly to a Conservative majority. Prime Minister David Cameron may now call 10 Downing Street home for another five years. The election produced a minor gain for the hard-right U.K. Independence Party, but besides the Tories the other big winner of the day was the Scottish Nationalist Party, reviving from a failed independence effort to a stunning rout of the Labour Party in Scotland.

David Cameron may now form a government unhindered by the need to negotiate a coalition. In the days after the election, vanquished political leaders everywhere were falling on their swords. Ed Miliband's Labour Party took just 232 seats, down from 258 in 2010. He resigned as party leader the morning after the vote. Former coalition partners in the previous administration, the Liberal Democrats, suffered a similar catastrophe, leading to the resignation of their leader, Nick Clegg. Just a few weeks ago the U.K.I.P. leader, Nigel Farage, believed that he might hold the balance of power in a new coalition government. Instead he tendered his resignation as leader, which was rejected.

In Scotland—in a historic obliteration of Labour—the S.N.P. won a breathtaking 56 seats out of 59 seats in the House of Commons. They had previously held only six seats. The Labour rout was complete. Even the senior Westminster politician Douglas Alexander, Labour campaign chief, was crushed by Mhairi Black, a 20-year-old S.N.P. candidate who has still to complete the final exams for her politics degree.

In the aftermath of the vote, the sense that the Union is fracturing cannot be ignored. England has voted Tory; Scotland has voted S.N.P.; Wales has voted Labour; and Northern Ireland has voted for the Democratic Unionist Party (D.U.P.). A pattern emerges of the U.K. nations taking very different directions and trajectories. Nowhere is that bifurcation more obvious than in Scotland, where Nicola Sturgeon's National Party has displaced the Scottish

Labour leader Jim Murphy.

For Labour, there will be an apportioning of blame for their massive disappointment, although Miliband in resigning took the liability “absolutely and totally” on himself. Their catastrophic collapse in Scotland will surely draw particular scrutiny.

And the vote suggests that it may not just be the United Kingdom on a path to fracturing.

The triumphant Tories will likely now press ahead with a referendum on the United Kingdom's continued membership in the European Union. Meanwhile the Scottish Nationalists, providing the opposition to Tory rule that Labour used to assume, now need to think carefully about how they will use their dramatically improved numbers in the House of Commons.

Because of the Conservatives' strong showing, the Scottish Nationalists will not now be able to derail Prime Minister Cameron's plans, making their campaign pledges to oppose austerity and to resist the renewal of Trident nuclear missile deployment suddenly sound rather toothless. Cameron, unexpectedly buoyant, would nonetheless do well to talk to Sturgeon lest he look too triumphant and risk deepening what is bound to be a worsening sense of disenfranchisement in Scotland.



That Scotland is now on an entirely different political trajectory from England is beyond doubt. This election result has not only astonished everyone but has raised many more questions than it answered.

DAVID STEWART, S.J.

Defending Marriage

The U.S. Supreme Court on April 28 heard oral arguments on the constitutionality of states' restricting the definition and recognition of marriage to the union of one man and one woman. Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, commented, "Marriage is and always will be the union between one man and one woman. This truth is inseparable from the duty to honor the God-given dignity of every human person." Archbishop Kurtz added, "We pray that the justices will uphold the responsibility of states to protect the beautiful truth of marriage, which concerns the essential well-being of the nation, especially children. Children have a basic right, wherever possible, to know and be loved by their mother and father together. The church will always defend this right and looks to people of good will to continue this debate with charity and civility." The Supreme Court is expected to issue a ruling by the end of June.

Protecting Children

The Vatican has published the Statutes for the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, another important step in the wide-ranging effort by Pope Francis to ensure protection for children and minors in church institutions worldwide. The new statutes give this papal body a formal juridical structure and authority to carry out the pope's mandate to protect children

NEWS BRIEFS

After a meeting at the Vatican on May 10 with Pope Francis, Cuba's **President Raúl Castro** told reporters that he studies all of the pope's commentaries and told him, "If you continue speaking like this, sooner or later, I will return to prayer and I will return again to the Catholic Church."

• The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit on May 8 reversed the convictions for sabotage of three Plowshares protesters, including 84-year-old **Sister Megan Rice**. • Pope Francis' visit to Latin America on July 5-12 will put him in direct contact with the poor, the sick and those striving to bring the Gospel to bear on social inequalities in **Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay**. • A French court told authorities in Ploermel, France, on April 30 to remove the small town's **29-foot-tall statue** of St. John Paul II, because its public placement violated the separation of church and state. • In a statement on May 6 calling for **the end of the death penalty**, Virginia's bishops said it was time to shift the conversation from who should be executed and how to why the death penalty continues to be applied.



The Francis Effect?

from sexual abuse. Among other stipulations, they state that the commission is "an autonomous institution attached to the Holy See" and "an advisory body at the service of the Holy Father." That is of crucial importance for the commission's independence and effectiveness. It means that the commission does not report to the Roman Curia, nor does it deal with individual cases of abuse. Significantly, the first article gives the commission power to "require an account of the effectiveness of the work" carried out by those other competent bodies in the church.

Romero's Relics

When Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated on March 24, 1980, the vestments he wore were bathed in blood. After the attack, Carmelite

nuns who managed Divine Providence Hospital in El Salvador kept them and other belongings with the greatest possible care. For 35 years, the congregation and the sisters running the hospital have taken care of the relics. Now Archbishop Romero is scheduled to be beatified in San Salvador on May 23 and the government may declare the chapel a National Cultural Heritage site. Sister María Julia García, the Carmelite superior and director of the hospital, worries that this would put the sisters in a very awkward situation because they would have no say in the care of the relics. "We, as the moral owners of these relics, fear that they will be taken away from us and relocated to another place, where they would not be treated with respect," she said.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

DISPATCH | CHICAGO

Seeking ‘Wholiness’

In the basement of St. Peter’s Church in downtown Chicago, the psychologist Jerry Hiller asks a group of professionals at a lunch-time seminar to stand. He directs them to wave their hands over their heads and shout three times, “I’m so depressed!” Soon the lawyers, financial analysts, secretaries and stockbrokers gathered there convulse with laughter.

“They’re saying one thing, but the body is taking them in another direction,” Hiller explains. “Sometimes just by getting the body moving, we can change our thinking.”

This somewhat unconventional exercise is but one of the coping techniques workers learn from Hiller. For the past 25 years, he and his wife, Marilyn Rochon, also a therapist, have offered free noon-hour seminars at St. Peter’s. Their programs are an institution for Chicago Catholics seeking concrete advice for reducing negativity at work, coping with job loss, finding balance and lowering stress.

Hiller and Rochon call their series “Repair My House: Mind-Body-Soul Skills for the Journey.” The title is a nod to Hiller’s hero, St. Francis of Assisi, who heard a voice telling him to “Go, repair my house, for it is in ruins.” The house Hiller tries to restore is a broken spirit. He believes the way we work today—the long hours, insecurity and lack of community—is also in ruins. Too many working people, he says, suffer from “vital exhaustion,” a

physical and emotional fatigue.

A favorite word of Hiller’s is *eudaimonia*, a Greek word for a sense of well-being. His overarching message is that we can change the negative attitudes, self-images and behaviors that hold us back.

Chicago is a hard-working city. People stream out of downtown train stations at 6 a.m. headed for offices

We can change the negative attitudes, self-images and behaviors that hold us back.

they often don’t leave until 12 hours later. It’s also a city where many Catholics seek to live out their spiritual values in the workplace, as I quickly learned when I moved there in 1987 to report from the Chicago bureau of The Wall Street Journal. Like St. Peter’s, Old St. Patrick’s in the West Loop also offers a variety of speakers and programs on the working life. Business Executives for Economic Justice and the National Center for the Laity were two other groups I found where Catholics could meet regularly to discuss work and faith and speak out publicly on issues like the just wage, universal health care and balancing family and work.

The idea for “Repair My House” came to Hiller when he was a doctoral student. Walking through the city’s financial district, he stared up at the three-story crucifix that adorns the facade of St. Peter’s, a Franciscan parish. “The Franciscans have put Jesus in the street, literally, as someone to

look up to,” Hiller says. He enumerated the reasons why he couldn’t start a work-faith ministry. “Then I heard a little voice inside me say, ‘Shut up!’” He began planning his first program that week.

Hiller and Rochon offer four simple practices for achieving *eudaimonia*. Take care of your mind, body and spirit. Establish good habits, routines and use of time. Change useless personality patterns to more life-affirming ones. (“From our earliest experiences we draw beliefs about ourselves, others and the world,” Hiller explains. “Some of those beliefs are not helpful and we need to change them.”) Look for what gives your life purpose and meaning. (“Ask yourself, what is it we would give up everything for and get everything from?” Hiller says.)

He and Rochon form an effective team. She is soft-spoken and serious. Hiller is more emotional and gregarious. “Once in a while, someone will say, ‘You’re not married, are you? You work so well together. How can you be married?’” Rochon says.

Making the seminars fun is part of their appeal. Ending a talk on depression, they have the group sing a song that begins, “Are we stressed out, yes we are...” to the tune of “Frère Jacques.” They display a “negativity jump suit,” which participants can imagine wearing when encountering negative situations at work, or they can try on their “Cape of Good Hope.”

Hiller and Rochon have given 836 seminars attended by an estimated 35,000 workers. His work has taught him, Hiller says, that holiness is closely aligned with “wholiness.” And with “wholiness” comes joy. That is what he and Rochon have tried to nurture in harried Chicago professionals for a quarter century.

JUDITH VALENTE

JUDITH VALENTE, *America’s Chicago correspondent*, is a regular contributor to NPR and “Religion & Ethics Newsweekly.” Twitter: @JudithValente.



The Proxy Wars of Arabia

For anyone just waking from a 12-year coma, the United States has not been doing well in the Middle East. This might make you wonder why, after sowing chaos in Iraq and Libya and waging an intractable war in Afghanistan, our government is now supporting Saudi air attacks in Yemen and our Congress is hedging on whether to approve a U.S.-Iran nuclear deal.

A great deal of ink has been spilled on the details of the latter. Soon we will all be able to rattle off the number of centrifuges Iran has and discuss knowledgeably uranium enrichment capacities. Meanwhile, the sturm und drang over the agreement continues in Congress. Even as it avoids declaring war on the Islamic State with which we are already at war, Congress is keen to weigh in on the U.S.-Iran deal and some members appears ready to torpedo it. Yet is there any viable alternative to the deal? Are those arguing for a tougher agreement being realistic? Is a military strike or a war against Iran preferable? The answers are no, no and no.

Israeli hostility to the nuclear agreement is driving much of the Congressional opposition. Convinced that Iran is doing what Israel itself did—develop a nuclear weapon in secret—Israel is opposing the agreement and urging supporters in Congress that they should too. But the agreement is good for both Israel and the United States. It walks back many of the advances Iran has made in its nuclear

program in recent years and secures Iranian consent to the most intrusive inspections of nuclear facilities in history. “It’s remarkable how much Iran has conceded,” notes David Cortright of the University of Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.

If a deal is scotched, Iran may decide to pursue weaponization of its nuclear program, but Congressional disapproval would almost certainly put an end to international support for the economic sanctions against Iran and their effectiveness. A few in Congress are lobbying for a military strike on Iran’s nuclear sites, but this would set back Iran’s nuclear program only a few years and could incur consequences that would make the Iraq debacle look minor in comparison.

One Mideast expert, Juan Cole of the University of Michigan, estimates the direct cost of a war against Iran as \$5.1 trillion, with 15,000 U.S. soldiers killed and 360,000 U.S. soldiers wounded. Iranian deaths he calculates would be between 300,000 and 1 million, with 12 million displaced.

Does an Iranian-U.S. nuclear agreement portend a greater rapprochement between the two countries? Not only some foes in Congress but Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies are worried it might. Alarmed by Iran’s bid for leadership of the Muslim world following its revolution, for years the Saudis have funded Sunni extremism, which has come back to bite them and the United States, first in the form of Al Qaeda and now in the form of the Islamic State. The hostility

between Saudi Arabia and Iran has aggravated the civil war in Syria, turning it into a proxy war between them, and now threatens to do the same in Yemen. The International Committee of the Red Cross is calling Yemen a “humanitarian catastrophe,” with hundreds of civilian casualties in the first weeks of the Saudi-led bombing campaign and Yemen’s human rights minister saying damage to infrastructure has put Yemen back 100 years.

Saudi Arabia and Iran need to settle their differences through diplomacy.

The Saudis are blaming Iran for supplying Houthi rebels in Yemen, but some say Iran’s role is exaggerated, that air strikes alone are unlikely to stop the rebels and that their chief effect will be to shift Yemen from a failing state into a failed one. U.S. support for the Saudi attacks may be a

way of maintaining leverage over the Saudis, but a war in which the United States is on the same side as its enemy Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is an obvious paradox, and so far there is little sign that any leverage is being applied. The bombing is inflaming hostilities in Yemen and widening a war that should be settled by the people of Yemen, not by outside powers.

Old enmities die hard. Saudi Arabia and Iran, like Iran and the United States, need to settle their differences through diplomacy rather than through war. A resolution of the region’s conflicts, especially the civil war in Syria, will require all parties to the conflict to be involved. How many deaths will it take before the countries at war in the region pursue peace instead?

MARGOT PATTERSON is a writer who lives in Kansas City, Mo.

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Animals 2.0

A veterinarian and a theologian survey a brave new world of biotechnology.

BY SUSAN KOPP AND CHARLES C. CAMOSY

Animal abuse? I don't look at it that way. It's not testing cosmetics. It's trying to save my life."

So says Eileen Youtie, a breast cancer patient who, according to a Dec. 14 report from the Associated Press, is paying more than \$30,000 to test various chemotherapy drugs on mice before they are used on her. One reason for the huge expense? The mice must be bred to rapidly develop her very specific kind of cancer.

Patients like Eileen must often choose between several different kinds of cancer drug regimens. If the first one does not work, patients may often be too weak or sick to try a second. Enter the concept of the "mouse avatar."

Now available through private laboratories for personal drug testing, it is just one of many rapidly developing animal-based biomedical techniques used today. The mice that Youtie paid to be bred with cancer are just a few of the more than 25 million animals used in U.S. laboratories each year.

From drug safety studies on guinea pigs, pet food trials on dogs and chemotherapy testing on mice, biomedical research has relied on the use of animals for many decades. But despite the efforts in recent years by dedicated veterinary and laboratory animal care professionals to find alternatives to animal research, the number of animals being used in research is actually increasing in the developed West.

If earnest attempts are being made to cut animal use—including a landmark decision by the National Institutes of Health in 2012 to halt most research with chimpanzees (see sidebar, pg. 16)—to what can we attribute the increase? And what are the moral guidelines for the discussion of this complicated issue?

New Horizons

Increased use of small animals in research, in particular mice and rats, has coincided with game-changing advances in biotechnology. Both inbreeding and direct manipulation of genes at the nuclear level now allow for the creation of new animal "lines" never seen before.

SUSAN KOPP, a veterinarian, is a professor of health sciences at the City University of New York and a scholar at the Yale Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics. **CHARLES C. CAMOSY** is an associate professor of theology at Fordham University and the author of *Beyond the Abortion Wars and For Love of Animals*. A longer version of this article originally appeared in *The Journal of Moral Theology*.

By targeting individual genes along an animal's chromosome, scientists are now able to produce animals that will be born with or develop diseases, such as diabetes, neuromuscular dystrophy and breast cancer. With these new advances have come remarkable gains in understanding and treatment of illnesses that otherwise might not have been possible. Scott A. Armstrong, head of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Leukemia Center, was recently honored with the Paul Marks Prize for Cancer Research based in part on special lines of mice he engineered to develop leukemia. Similarly, rat lines engineered for a multiple sclerosis-like illness have been fundamental in the advancement of promising human therapies.

The developments needed for creation of genetically altered animals in research have come rapidly over the past two decades—not only because of the promising horizons for medical advancement but also because of the enormous potential for profit. Biotech companies using these animals play a key role in the portfolios of top-shelf private and public investors. While there has been a sincere effort to continuously strive for decreased use of animals, the promise of medical progress using genetically engineered, animal-based techniques is now pulling demand for laboratory animals in new and sometimes troubling directions.

Of all the cogs in the global biomedical research wheel, none is more directly affected by these new techniques than the animals themselves. Researchers, for example, are now able to modify pig embryos in the womb so that their pancreas never develops, in the hopes that these animals will be useful for future organ transplantation. Similarly, scientists studying dementia can purchase rat "Alzheimer models" from commercial laboratories. Prior to shipment, a slow release pump system is inserted into the rat's brain, injecting toxic compounds over four weeks. The resulting brain damage is said to mimic Alzheimer symptoms.

One cannot help but note that these animals have become a pure commodity: designed, assembled, modified and sold.

Difficult Questions

Fortunately, concerns over animal suffering and distress have led to significant changes in research settings over recent decades. A strong culture of care for animals often surpasses the minimum standards set by current government regulations. Hard-won animal welfare changes have come not only as a result of animal protection groups but also through the efforts

A MOUSE'S LIFE. A pharmacologist checks the reaction on a hairless mouse after applying drugs for anti-tumor cancer at Natco Research Center in the Indian city of Hyderabad.

REUTERS/KRISHNENDU HALDER

of people who work in these research sectors. Yet despite these positive steps, many people still have a viscerally negative response to these highly invasive, life-altering interventions.

Until now, much of the public debate around animal research was rooted in a utilitarian approach, one that weighs the negative effects on the animals against the potential gains for science and medicine. If researchers have a growing commitment to reduce pain and suffering in laboratory animals and to improve the quality of their life in the laboratory, then it may seem there are no more big questions to ask. From the utilitarian perspective, especially given the great gains for medicine, should we perhaps simply follow this same trajectory?

We do not agree. Even if we allow that non-human animals may be used in some medical research, and even if we make reasonable attempts to control their pain and suffering, what we have seen above simply cries out for us to correct course.

The radical new capability to “reengineer” the DNA of animals is something that Emory University bioethicist Paul Root Wolpe describes as the “third wave” of planetary evolution. Though some would see this shift as consistent with the “dominion” given to humanity over creation, the Catholic moral tradition suggests otherwise. The encyclical “On Social Concerns” (1987) insists that “dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to ‘use and misuse,’ or to dispose of things as one pleases” (No. 34). “Charity in Truth” (2009) adds that we must avoid aiming “at total technical dominion over nature, because the natural environment is more than raw material

to be manipulated at our pleasure; it is a wondrous work of the Creator containing a ‘grammar’ which sets forth ends and criteria for its wise use, not its reckless exploitation” (No. 48).

The idea that creation has a grammar suggests one of the beautiful and important concepts of Catholic moral theology, namely teleology. Teleology speaks to the understanding that each living creature has an intrinsic nature, the pursuit of which results in the creature’s flourishing. An animal is different from a hammer, for instance, because a hammer has been created for one purpose: to be a tool for human beings. It has no intrinsic goodness apart from this instrumental value. By contrast, God created animals “good,” period, to flourish in their own right as the kinds of things they are. Each animal has her own nature, or *telos*, which God intends her to achieve in its fullness. Indeed, Scripture explains that ultimate salvation will result in a new heaven and a new earth in which all creatures will be redeemed and live out their most flourishing selves. This is an essential insight as we enter into the era of biotechnology that lies before us.

A purely utilitarian framework is inadequate to address an era in which we can fundamentally alter the capacity of creatures to be the kinds of things that they are. The British Christian ethicist David Clough makes this point with the following example [from his essay in John Perry, ed, *God, the Good and Utilitarianism*, 2014]:

Last week I found a young bird dead at our doorstep. My response was one of sadness, not because the bird at the moment of its death had a preference for its life

to continue, nor because its parents would currently be grieving its loss, neither of which may be true, but because I had a sense of the life ahead of this poor creature, of its growth to maturity and the particular contribution it should have made to the universe of creaturely life.... The death of that young bird is sad not because preferences went unmet, or the sum of happiness was infinitesimally diminished, but because this one life did not reach the end to which it was ordered.

EXPERIMENTING ON CHIMPS

After decades of chimpanzee use in research, the National Institutes of Health commissioned a study to look at ongoing needs for chimpanzees in biomedical research labs. The 2011 report, "Chimpanzees in Biomedical and Behavioral Research: Assessing the Necessity," urged major restrictions on the use of chimpanzees, which are resulting in the retirement from active research of a vast majority of government-owned chimps.

The report argues that chimpanzees, because of their close proximity to humans, require much higher standards to justify their use in research. Chimps demonstrate self-awareness, anticipation of the future, deep and rich social lives, and even a vocabulary of hundreds of American Sign Language words—words that mothers can also teach their children.

Now, to use chimpanzees, researchers must be able to show not only a strong need for such testing, with no other viable alternative, but also that the research cannot be ethically carried out on human beings as well. This major shift, commented the Johns Hopkins University bioethicist Jeffrey Kahn, "turns the traditional presumption regarding the use of research animals on its head."



consideration. Animals are not mere tools or commodities, and respect for their goodness goes far beyond not causing them to suffer. It means at least not hampering—and perhaps even aiding—their ability to be the kinds of creatures God intended them to be.

Some animal rights activists argue that halting some, or all, animal research would not hinder our ability to treat human disease. This is empirically false. Aside from examples mentioned above, there are countless others that demonstrate the immense contributions that animal research has made in the quest to treat and cure human disease.

But the landscape has changed. We are now capable of animal procedures and cell manipulation that even two decades ago were unimaginable to most of us. As we develop new biotechnological capabilities, moral concern for the flourishing of nonhuman animals invites us to reflect more deeply on what "respect for the integrity of creation" means. This will not be easy in the field of biomedical science; nor will the line be clear between acceptable use of animals and unacceptable misuse.

Ultimately, we must face the uncomfortable fact that some promising medical research will likely be slowed, or perhaps even halted altogether, until we engage in a process of thoughtful moral and ethical consideration. This will be true especially for Catholic universities and other research institutions, which must do some hard thinking about their ultimate concerns. Are they governed by their stated mission and goals—or do other concerns take precedence?

And here we need to be careful to resist a primordial form of idolatry: the temptation to extend life at all costs. The examples of the martyrs and, naturally, of Jesus himself demonstrate that there are some concerns that ought

to trump a desire to have longer human lives. Concern about the wholesale commodification of animals, particularly when it involves biotechnology—which can fundamentally alter an animal's entire being and life experience—is one of those concerns.

There is an urgent need for a diverse, interdisciplinary exploration of what it means to value laboratory animals as the kinds of beings they are. Happily, more and more secular biologists and ethicists are promoting the concept of animal teleology, emphasizing respect for the unique behaviors and nature of every species. Here is an important opportunity, therefore, to engage in collaborative reflection, which may light the way for engaging in biomedical research along a different path. ▲

Respecting Animals, Curing Disease

In "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis speaks of "creation as a whole" when he lifts up "weak and defenseless beings" who are "frequently at the mercy" of "indiscriminate exploitation." But how should we balance concern for laboratory animals with concern for sick human beings? When does legitimate research cross the line into exploitation? When might respect for the flourishing of an animal trump concern for human health? With his upcoming encyclical on ecology, the pope will have an excellent opportunity to set up a framework to consider some of these questions.

In the meantime, we propose some principles that could govern such a discussion. First and foremost, the basic and independent goodness of animals must be taken into deeper

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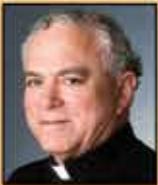
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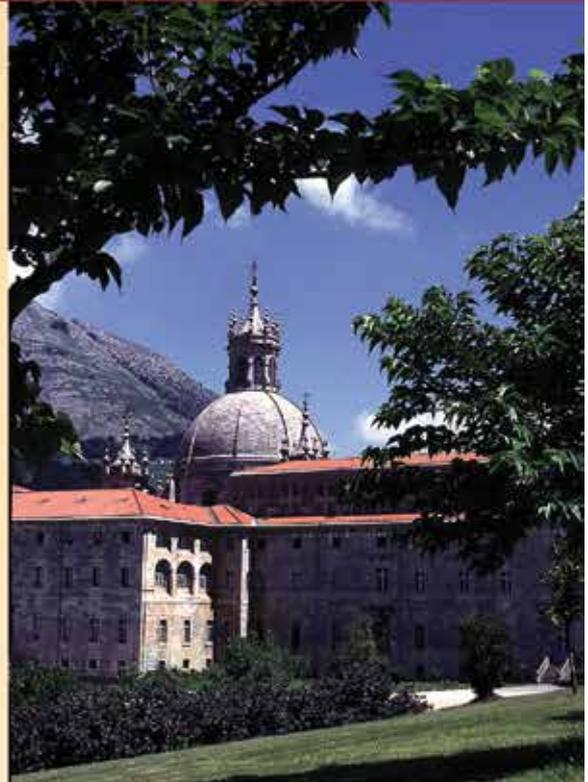
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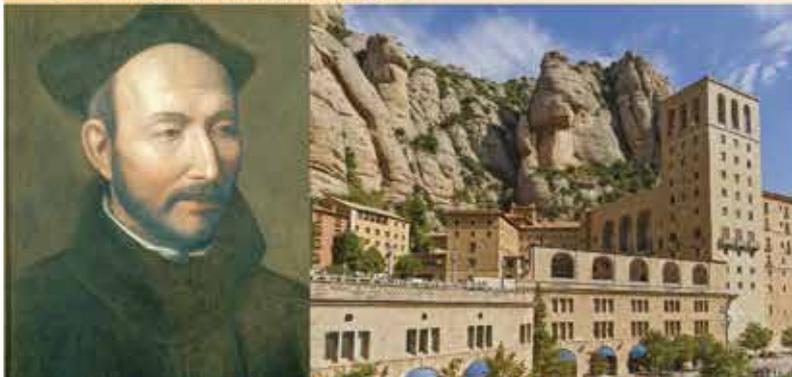


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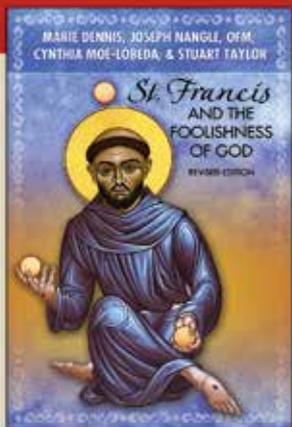
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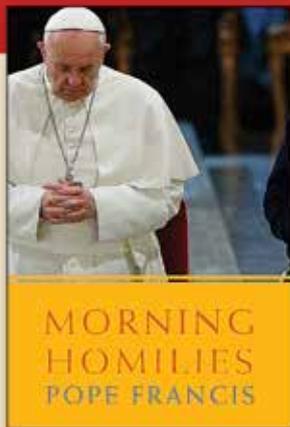


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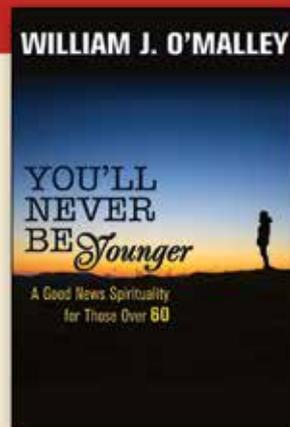
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When Francis speaks on the environment

BY CHRISTIANA Z. PEPPARD

Squabbles over Catholic teachings are not unusual, yet this summer brings a twist: Pope Francis' encyclical on ecology has garnered anticipatory praise as well as skepticism. The fervent speculation about a papal document before its publication seems to be something new under the sun. "These days, we do not have a very good relationship with Creation, do we?" mused Pope Francis during his first day on the job. It is no accident that the pontiff adopted the name of St. Francis, who became patron saint of ecologists in 1979.

The upcoming ecology encyclical is already of great interest, but it will not be uniformly easy to receive. Partly this is due to the genre. An encyclical is an authoritative form of magisterial communication that has been used consistently by pontiffs over the past 125 years to diagnose, evaluate and adjudicate matters pertaining to faith and life in the contemporary world. Laced with theological and philosophical references from the New Testament to Nietzsche, informed by consultation with a range of experts and most often addressed to "all people of good will," encyclicals have a distinctly Catholic voice and status. They almost always refer back to other encyclicals; they are footnoted.

Difficulties of genre notwithstanding, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are among the publications that have depicted the shape of a document that has not yet been released. Opinions have been launched by interested millennials, *First Things* columnists, *The Atlantic* and websites funded by the fossil-fuel industry. Academic forums have speculated on the "historic" dimensions of this forthcoming Vatican document. Why the fervor?

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Ezo owl chicks on Hokkaido Island, Japan.

As a professor of theology, science and ethics, I see several interrelated factors at play: the encyclical's potential planetary impact, its likely ecological-economic content and the question of papal prowess.

Climate Conjectures

The Catholic Church has always claimed universality, but the era of the Planetary Pope is something new—and not just because of his focus on ecology. Pope Francis (a k a @Pontifex)

maintains a digital presence in ways that his predecessors did (or could) not. Through 140-character tweets, spontaneous selfies with teens or offhanded remarks on the papal jet, Pope Francis is felt to be accessible to the public.

The distributive implications of Francis' pastoral digital persona are huge: lightning-fast multiple retweets, not to mention cable news media coverage and other forms of information sharing. The Internet's borderless, instantaneous qualities mean that @Pontifex's renderings of the church universal can reach readers and interpreters across the planet with unprecedented rapidity. Global onlookers are no longer just passive recipients; they are distributors and commentators upon papal teachings.

Given the Internet's participatory nature, the buzz around the encyclical indicates its timeliness. People want to hear what Francis has to say on the environment, in a distinctly Catholic voice. This too is something new under the sun, for never before has an encyclical taken the environment and ecological relationships as its primary focus.

Ecology is the study of how living things and their environments—physical, chemical, biological—interact. It is in this sense fundamentally about relationships. Ecology, conservation biology and environmental science have drawn on evolutionary and biological data about flora and fauna, as well as geology and environmental chemistry, to depict the shape and rates of global environmental degradation. Ecology is now a crucial perspective for understanding the shifting conditions of earth and its many inhabitants, including our own ingenious and efficacious species. Grounded in science, the facts present quandaries for human moral values.

While Pope Francis has a special charisma for poverty and the environment, he is not inventing it *ex nihilo*: he is amplifying the unified message of his papal predecessors. The Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" exhorted Catholics and their leaders to "read the signs of the times"—including matters that affected the day-to-day lives of Catholics worldwide. As economic globalization accelerated specific models of development, Pope Paul VI coined the term "integral development" in his encyclical, "The Progress of Peoples" (1967). This term signifies that economic development alone is not a sufficient measure of well-being. The needs of the whole person, in the person's context and society, matter too. Pope Emeritus Benedict's encyclical "Truth in Charity" (2009) affirmed that claim—adding a full section on rights, duties and the environment.

Pope Francis' encyclical will build upon this edifice, but what will be its precise architecture? Two recent addresses by Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, offer the most suggestive content. He said that "the earth *needs* to be protected; humanity *needs* to be dignified." The solutions include

"course correction" from industrial excess, stratified development and fossil fuel consumption. Even more explicitly: "the current economic-developmental model is out of balance.... We need to shift away from an unthinking infatuation with GDP and a single-minded zeal for accumulation. We need to learn to work together toward sustainable development, in a framework that links economic prosperity with both social inclusion and protection of the natural world."

Predictable Partisans

Some critics balk at such claims, cleaving to the assumption that the church's domain is the esoteric over the earthly or that the pope, a religious figure, is necessarily a "complete disaster" on policy and economic relationships. Several such commentators have notoriously depicted the pope himself as leftist, liberal, ideological and untrustworthy, with his logic usurped by a dangerous "religion" of environmentalism. These are attention-grabbing rhetorical moves. They are also silly, uncharitable and false claims.

Other conjecturers seem to hope that church teachings on ecology will signal a sexual revolution in Rome. But the promulgation of this encyclical will not involve reconsidering reproductive regulations. There are two reasons for this. First, Catholic teachings on contraception are deeply held; second, environmental decline is not merely an issue of population (sheer numbers of people). It is also significantly about rates and types of resource consumption, which vary considerably among nations.

For conjecture on what is truly likely to be in the encyclical, Cardinal Turkson's two speeches are good sources, as is the vast body of Catholic social teaching on the nexus of development, poverty and environment. (One could start with the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Chapter 10; or Benedict XVI's encyclical "Truth in Charity," Chapter 4.) Or consult reliable expositors of Catholic environmental doctrine, like William Patenaude—a theological writer and environmental regulator in Rhode Island—who can demonstrate how Catholic environmental concern is part of the consistent ethic of life that percolates through the last three papacies. As Cardinal Turkson remarked in late April: "From conception to the moment of death, the life of every person is integrated with and sustained by the awesome panoply of natural processes. This calls for a reciprocal response on the part of humanity—to nourish and sustain the earth, the garden, that in turn nourishes and sustains us."

Francis' encyclical seems poised to offer what the theologian Stephen Pope of Boston College has called a "chastened anthropocentrism," a stance that upholds human dignity and moral worth while also recognizing fundamental human dependency upon earth processes, and making normative claims based upon science, Scripture and tradition. Pope Francis is not tilling new ground; he is honoring the

well-planted conceptual harvest and sharing it widely.

Ecology signals attention to scientific developments, as well as to forms of human relationships. Might the pope decry the very political and economic structures that have made global wealth possible or the high-consuming ways of life held so dear by U.S.-based political lobbies?

The likely answer is yes. Pope Francis made waves with his apostolic exhortation in 2014, which criticized “unfettered market capitalism” and global inequities. But, as usual, his words were aligned with teachings from Benedict XVI and St. John Paul II—both of whom warned about the excesses of market capitalism disconnected from “integral development.”

Of course, recent months have demonstrated that upholding prior papal teachings will not protect Pope Francis from partisan critique. In January, the chief economist of the Heritage Foundation tried to argue that attempted adjustments to the global economic status quo would make humanity poorer and less free. In April, the Cornwall Alliance (funded significantly by fossil fuel interests) claimed that fossil fuels are not a problem, that climate science is inconclusive and that carbon dioxide is good for plants.

Doleful, partisan pronouncements like these serve only to entrench, not to challenge, U.S. partisan politics. Such punditry misses the carbon-sequestering forest for the trees.

A Timely Intervention

There is good reason for conjecture that climate change will stand as a “sign of the times,” complete with strong ethical imperatives, in the forthcoming encyclical. This likelihood has been met with great hope and enthusiasm in some corners, and great anxiety and fear in others. In the United States the most vociferous advance rebuttals of Pope Francis’ ecology encyclical have been about climate change and fossil fuel consumption.

Yet again, the longitudinal evidence clearly demonstrates the longstanding concern of popes over climate change and industrial societies’ consumption of fossil fuels. St. John Paul II, for example, remarked in 1990 that widespread damage related to industrial processes requires that “the entire human community—individuals, states, and international bodies—take seriously the responsibility that is theirs.” Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI claimed that people cannot ignore “the energy problem,” and he asked rhetorically: “Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change?” It is a small step for Pope Francis—but a major event for global political economy—to articulate such claims in an encyclical.

And there is a willing audience. Groups like the Global Catholic Climate Movement, a globally-distributed consortium, and the Catholic Climate Covenant, which has a formal working relationship with the U.S. Conference of Catholic

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Bishops, take papal teachings as guides to moral discernment and collective action on matters of climate change. (As noted above, other advocacy groups proclaim precisely the opposite and even recommend political action, pleading with Pope Francis to “advise the world’s leaders to reject” any “policies requiring reduced use of fossil fuels for energy.”)

One interesting upshot is that people who are convinced that climate change presents moral responsibilities—as well as those who would like to say it does not exist—all seem to think that Pope Francis’ encyclical and his visit to the United States in the fall could have real impact on international diplomacy and national energy policies. What will happen when Pope Francis addresses Congress, meets with the president of the United States and speaks before the United Nations? Will he appear in these venues as head of the church or as a head of state or in his own unique combination of both? Will his address be characterized by exhortation, presentation, deliberation, condemnation? No one knows, but the flow of widespread speculation continues.

Here again, Cardinal Turkson’s remarks at the Vatican in April provide the most reliable preview of how Pope Francis may interpret moral responsibility in the context of climate change: “The wealthiest countries, the ones who have benefited most from fossil fuels, are morally obligated to push forward and find solutions to climate-related change and so

protect the environment and human life. They are obliged both to reduce their own carbon emissions and to help protect poorer countries from the disasters caused or exacerbated by the excesses of industrialization.”

Science, Religion and the Pope

Ecology and environmental ethics are contemporary installments of the Catholic Church’s engagement with science. We have moved past the Copernican revolution, when church officials condemned heliocentrism and put Galileo under house arrest. The church’s worry is no longer about the rotation of the planets but rather the planetary impacts of humanity’s consumptive excesses. It is a new version of the ancient question: Around whom does the earth revolve?

Francis’ anticipated encyclical, with all its unknowns and speculative attractions and ruffling of partisan feathers, is also an opportunity to advance global conversations about how scientific facts relate to moral values. But does the pope have any special competency to judge the validity of various forms of environmental data?

Some pundits remark that the pope’s teaching authority does not make him an expert on science: Robert P. George wrote in *First Things* that “all he will have to go on is what everybody else has to go on, namely, the analyses offered by scientific specialists who have studied the matter.” (Indeed, though one hopes that, as a trained chemist, Pope Francis does have at least a passing familiarity with the scientific method.)

Having learned some lessons after the Copernican revolution, the Vatican agrees: “The church is not an expert on science, technology, or economics.” This is why it convenes advisory bodies, like the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. (As St. John Paul II remarked to that august body: “In order to mark out the limits of their own proper fields, theologians...need to be well informed regarding the results of the latest scientific research.”)

Industrialized humanity is faced with an opportunity for discernment and solidarity regarding the relationship between scientific facts and moral values. There are strong implications for public policy, as well as for structures of political economy. Presumably Francis will articulate some specific examples, but the encyclical will also likely invite its diverse readers to join in the project of reading the “signs of the times.”

It would be a profound shame—indeed, an epic failure of goodwill and humility—if the moral message proffered by the pope were to be squandered on the weary terrain of U.S. political infighting. Partisanship on these planetary matters is for the birds.

What is really at stake in the collective response to the pope’s encyclical is not, ultimately, whether our treasured notions of theology, science, reality or development can accommodate moral imperatives. The real question is whether we are brave enough and willing to try. **A**



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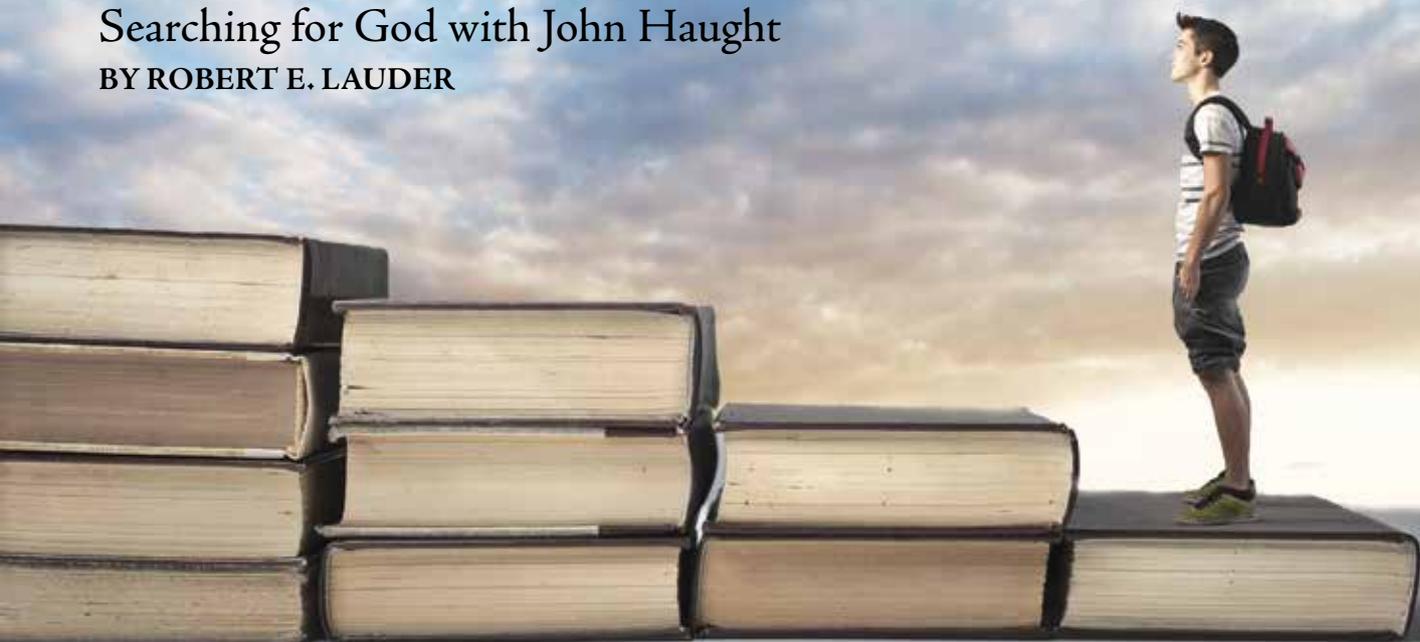
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A Voyage of Belief

Searching for God with John Haught

BY ROBERT E. LAUDER



Over 50 years as a priest I have read many profound books of theology and philosophy, from Jean Mouroux's *The Meaning of Man* to Jacques Maritain's *True Humanism* to Romano Guardini's *The Church and the Catholic* and *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. These books deeply affected me because they were invitations not only to what Bernard Lonergan, S.J., identified as an intellectual conversion, a radical change in worldview, but also to what he called a moral conversion, a change in lifestyle, and to a religious conversion, a deepening of relationship with God. The books were challenging me not only to think differently but to be differently.

Yet I do not know whether any of these books influenced me as profoundly as John Haught's *What Is God? How to Think About the Divine* (1986).

I came upon Haught's book while preparing to teach a course at Saint John's University with the unfortunate title "The Problem of God." My plan was to construct the course around three books: one a selection of readings from influential theists and atheists, a secondary source on religion and atheism and a third book presenting a contemporary view of God. Having chosen the first two books, I did what a professor should never do: I selected the third book even

though I had not read it, relying on an advertisement in a Catholic journal. It was *What Is God?* The book, a philosophy text, not a theology text, not only changed my view of God but my view of self, of neighbor and of religion.

Haught, whom I met in 2008 when he held a visitor's chair at St. John's University, does not demand of the reader any previous religious commitment. He identifies five experiences that everyone has and wishes to have more of: depth, future, freedom, beauty and truth. He argues that Rudolf Otto's classic description of the holy as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*—a mystery that is awesome and frightening but also fascinating and seductive—can be used to describe each of these five experiences. Each chapter follows the same pattern: first an analysis of the experience; second an explanation of why this very experience can seem to suggest that there is no God; and third, if it is true that the experience is of the divine, what are the implications for religion?

The Depth of God

The first chapter on depth may be the easiest to illustrate Haught's method and some of his insights. My life may have been more introspective than most. During my six years as a major seminarian I spent countless hours reflecting on my experience, attending Mass, going to confession and regularly meeting with a spiritual director. During my decades as a priest, introspection and self-reflection have also been important regular activities. Yet I still do not understand

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myself completely; and I never will, because there is depth to me that is inexhaustible. I have a close friend for over 60 years, but I will never understand him completely either, nor he me.

This is also the reason why no human community or society will ever be completely intelligible. New scientific theories appear regularly; but no theory will completely grasp nature's depth, because the depth at the root of persons and nature is God.

If this depth is so present, why do some people doubt the existence of God? The elusive nature of depth, that it is not a being but the horizon of all beings, can lead some thinkers to atheism or agnosticism. The experience of depth, which is simultaneously an experience of abyss and ground, seduces and invites us. Haught writes:

The reality of God is no less capable of immediate validation than is the dominion of depth that underlies all the impressions that the world makes upon us. Therefore that God is not easily accessible to our senses or to our whims and wishes should be no more of a scandal than that the dimension of depth is incapable of being brought under our comprehending control.... The realm of objects that we are able to objectify or focus on is too narrow to contain the reality of the transcendental horizon of our experience.

If depth is an experience of the divine, Haught argues, then the role of religion is to help people search for this depth, to name it when it is recognized and to celebrate it. This is what we should be doing when we celebrate the Sunday Eucharist.

Haught presents the same three-step treatment to future, freedom, beauty and truth. He employs insights of thinkers like Paul Tillich for depth, Ernst Bloch and Karl Rahner, S.J., for future, Jean Paul Sartre for freedom, Alfred North Whitehead for beauty and Bernard Lonergan, S.J., for truth. His treatment is clear and succinct as he arranges the insights of these thinkers so that they interact and build on one other.

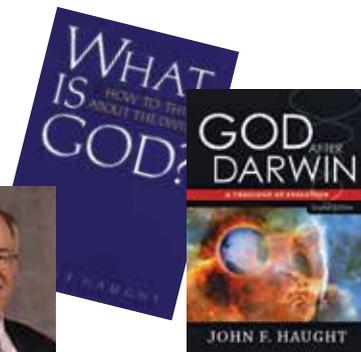
Haught's treatment of beauty has a special importance because of the use he makes of it in other books on science and theology. He stresses that we need to surrender to beauty in order to experience the beauty of nature, of another person, of an artistic masterpiece or of some extraordinary event. He writes:

This experience of being grasped by the beautiful is one of the clearest models we have for expressing what is involved in the intuition of the divine. In fact it is more than a model. We may even say that our ordi-

nary experience of the beautiful is already an encounter with ultimacy....

We are implicitly aware of the chasm that lies between the beauty embodied in any particular object of aesthetic delight and the unlimited beauty for which we long in the depths of our desire. This abysmal distance is a *mysterium tremendum* from which we shrink back.

Haught's daring and provocative insight is to interpret evolution in light of God's living self-communication.



We long for unlimited beauty, but sometimes we fixate on aesthetic objects and by doing so we anesthetize our profound need for a fuller and wider beauty.

Theology and Scientism

In later books Haught has explored the relationship between science and theology. Having taught philosophy for over 45 years, I have become accustomed to the widespread view among college students that empirical science is the best way of knowing. Though they may not be able to name it, they have embraced the philosophical position known as scientism. Scientism holds that only statements of empirical science are meaningful and true. Haught rejects any reduction of human knowing to only empirical science. Yet he is equally strong on refusing to equate, even indirectly, theology with empirical science.

He defended the distinction in a national setting during the so-called Dover trial in Harrisburg, Pa. (Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District), where he testified on the teaching of intelligent design in public schools. As Haught reports in *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, there was a demand that I.D., which had strong support from evangelical Christians and Muslims, become part of scientific explanations of the cosmos. Haught pinpoints the problem:

What is so controversial about I.D. is not that some people find it essential to invoke the idea of divine intelligence as the ultimate explanation of life.... Rather it is the demand that "intelligent design" should become part of scientific explanation as such, and furthermore, that it should be material for science classes and biology

textbooks.

Haught testified that to require the teaching of intelligent design would “compel public school science teachers to present to their students in biology class information that is inherently religious, not scientific, in nature.” Many college students have told me that their high school science teachers embraced the philosophy of secular humanism. Haught is equally opposed to teachers in biology class teaching religion. Science should be taught in science classes, religion in religion classes.

No doubt Haught’s testimony disappointed many conservative Christians, but it should not be interpreted as a surrender to materialist biologists. His writings attempt to convince theologians, both Catholics and others, that science’s discoveries over the last 50 years should be looked at as a challenge to adjust and re-interpret our view of God.

Points of Contact

In *Science and Religion* Haught suggests there are four principal ways to think about the relationship of religion to science. The first he identifies as the *conflict* position, which is held by those who think religion is opposed to science. The second he calls the *contrast* approach, which holds that while science and religion are both valid, they are so different they should be rigorously separated. The third he identifies as the *contact* approach, which sees points of interaction between

science and religion. The fourth is the *confirmation* approach, which stresses the positive way that religion, without interfering with science, supports science in its adventure of discovery. Haught writes:

The *confirmation* approach may be stated as follows: religion’s claim that the universe is a finite, coherent, relational, ordered totality, grounded in an ultimate love and promise, provides a general vision of things that constantly nurtures the scientific quest for knowledge and liberates science from association with imprisoning ideologies.

Haught clearly states his preference:

I think that the “contact” approach, supplemented by that of “confirmation” provides the most fruitful and reasonable response to the unfortunate tension that has held so many scientists away from an appreciation of religion, and an even larger number of religious people from enjoying discoveries of science.

Haught views the universe as fundamentally a cosmic story of restless searching for new forms of order. He argues that we do not have to separate this story from the history of salvation and the realm of freedom. He sees religion as an exciting adventure as theologians, indeed all of us, embrace

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the truth that our own stories are part of the cosmic story. Christian revelation sheds an illuminating and beautiful light on evolution. Haught's daring and provocative insight is to interpret evolution in light of God's living self-communication. He believes that cosmic evolution is a sacramental revelation of God's personality, that it is the narrative representation of God's self-gift to the cosmos. We live in an unfinished universe.

Haught points out that in its finitude the cosmos cannot receive God's self-gift in any single moment; even though the universe may seem unfathomable, it is not expansive enough to contain an infinite love. The cosmos is therefore invited to evolve. He writes in *Mystery and Promise*:

Christians...may understand the decisiveness of Christ as the moment in evolution when God's promise and self-gift, which has been continually and creatively present to the cosmos from its birth, are embraced by a human being without reservation. In Christ, the vision of God for the universe is accepted fully, and the significance of cosmic process eternally guaranteed.

Haught stresses that it is especially in the crucifixion of Jesus that Christians recognize God's humility. Through Jesus' death faith discovers the complete outpouring of God's selfhood into the world. Haught suggests that creation might be understood not so much as God's self-expression but rather as God's "self-limitation" allowing the world to exist distinct from its creator. Haught writes: "The cross reveals to faith the self-sacrificing of God out of whose limitless generosity the world is called, but never forced, into being."

Haught believes, as he writes in *God After Darwin*, that an evolutionary theology can help "us to feel with Saint Paul the Spirit of God sharing in nature's own longing for the consummation of creation." Recognizing the courage and adventure of classical spirituality, he writes:

I am convinced with Teilhard de Chardin that by conceiving the world's sacred Alpha as also an Omega beckoning all things toward a transcendent future up ahead, we shall forfeit none of the tension, courage, and passionate longing of the classical spiritual ways. If anything, a sense of life and the entire cosmos evolving through immense depths of time toward what is radically new and utterly surprising only intensifies the religious drama. Religion here becomes more an ongoing voyage of discovery rather than recovery.

For 30 years John Haught has been engaged in his own voyage of discovery, one that builds upon the Catholic tradition and ventures forth in new and unexpected directions. ■



Climate Check

Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment has not yet been published, but it is already being criticized, even attacked by forces within and outside the Catholic Church.

That fact alone bears testimony to its relevance and importance. It also reveals the concern—even fear—among powerful and influential sectors that it could strongly affect the U.N. Conference on Climate Change in Paris, with consequences in the social, political and economic fields.

The point was forcefully brought home to me on April 28, when the Vatican hosted a conference titled “The Moral Dimensions of Climate Change and Sustainable Development.” The previous day, a delegation from the Heartland Institute arrived in Rome with the declared aim of publicly rebutting the thesis that climate change is largely due to human activity, a conclusion strongly supported by science, shared by Pope Francis and likely to feature in the encyclical.

Observing the Heartland Institute's initiative and reading articles by some American Catholic lay intellectuals who seek to downplay the encyclical's magisterial impact, I felt as if I were watching a replay of what happened in 2003, on the eve of the Iraq war.

Then too, powerful forces in the United States, including leading Catholic lay intellectuals, publicly challenged or opposed the Holy See's effort, under St. John Paul II, to prevent the Iraq war. Some came to Rome to convince Vatican officials and the public of the fallacy of the Holy See's strategy.

History has confirmed that the Holy See's position was not only right but also prophetic.

The forces in the United States that are criticizing the probable content or downplaying the morally binding import of the encyclical may be divided into two blocs: the first is tied to economic interests; the second consists of Catholic thinkers linked to conservative American political thought.

One can identify three groups in the first bloc: individuals and corporations tied to the oil, gas and coal industries who perceive a threat to their profits; economic libertarians who believe that government intervention in the economy is destructive to economic growth and human freedom; and those who fear that the United States and Europe will be penalized by any international agreements on the environment, while China and other developing nations will not.

These three groups—and the media associated with them—argue that the Argentine pope, though a good man, is naïve about economic issues. Furthermore, they use pseudoscience to deny that climate change is mainly man-made and to inject confusion into the discussion.

The second bloc consists of Catholic thinkers and writers who argue that while Catholics are bound by the moral principles of any encyclical, they are not bound by the contingent findings of fact in the text that rely upon scientific data or analysis. Thus they effectively relativize any encyclical so that it will not have substantial binding power on any of the central questions that face

humanity regarding the environment.

The encyclical is expected in June. Though its contents are not yet known, the pope's many public statements over the past two years indicate that it is likely to highlight the moral imperative to care for all creation and call for courageous political decisions to address climate change, eliminate poverty and hunger, and build an economy that puts the human person and the common good, not profit, at the center. It is also

The church speaks out on the great challenge of our time: sustainable development.

likely to call for the “globalization of solidarity,” innovative, sustainable technological and economic solutions and, of course, moral conversion.

“The church is not an expert on science, technology, or economics,” but it “is an expert on humanity—on the true calling of the human person to act with justice and charity,” Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, stated at the Vatican conference, in a talk that offered insight into the encyclical, which he helped draft.

“For this reason, she reads ‘the signs of the times’ at key moments in history,” he said. The church did so in the 19th and 20th centuries regarding the injustices arising from industrialization, the challenge of global development and the threat from nuclear arms during the Cold War.

So too today, he said, “The church must speak out on the great challenge of our time—the challenge of sustainable development” and the need for all of us “to make the right choices, the moral choices.” That is what Pope Francis' encyclical will do. **GERARD O'CONNELL**

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

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

FROM GREAT HEIGHTS

'Aloft' and 'Sunshine Superman' adopt a bird's eye view.

The very unwelcoming wasteland of wind, ice and snow we see at the beginning of Claudia Llosa's enigmatic *Aloft* speaks eloquently about silence. Nature is frightening because it is mute. It offers no mitigating explanations for its ferocity. And such apparent disinterest can seem awful, especially to a human race that tends to take things personally.

Silence can also be bred out of profound experience. Soldiers who have been in war often decline to speak of it, because to do so would diminish the things they saw. To try to reconcile language to the losses of battle would show disrespect for the experience, as well as for the dead. And the soldier's silence disturbs the rest of us, precisely because what lies behind it is unspeakable.

It is a slightly different kind of quietude we find in "Aloft," a spiritually elevated, visually thrilling movie not about war but about love, albeit love that sometimes feels like combat. It involves a woman, Nana (Jennifer Connelly), who seems blessed with a gift of healing; her son, Ivan (Cillian Murphy), who lives with tremendous guilt as well as resentment over his mother's having left him; and a journalist (Mélanie Laurant), who manipulates Ivan to find his mother, who has become over the years a reclusive, saint-like celebrity. It is a movie of mysteries and moods, sweeping, soaring imagery and—despite having a Peruvian director, a principally American cast and Canadian locations (the film was shot in Manitoba)—a European sensibility. Why European?

Because it feels no need to hold the viewer's hand and/or explain itself too much. To do so would show disrespect for its audience.

The shall-we-say penurious policy regarding detail exercised by Ms. Llosa—who was nominated for an Oscar in 2010 for "The Milk of Sorrows"—extends to the world surrounding the story. It is not entirely clear where we are when the story settles in, though it feels a bit like a post-apocalyptic sci-fi setting, with a mob of citizens awaiting. But awaiting what? Food? Delousing? No, they are assembled to see someone called the Architect (William Shimell), a shamanesque character who has erected a temple out of old tree branches and dried shrubbery, shaped like a Quonset hut, into which the faithful and desperate await entry and where they, maybe, find healing. They include the woman who will later be known as Nana; her elder son, Ivan (Zen McGrath); and his younger brother, Gully (Winta McGrath), who has what seems to be an inoperable brain tumor. (Like much in the film, the illness is never quite spelled out.) There is a lottery involved, which is won by another child, Timothy, and a moment of havoc caused by Ivan's trained falcon, which flies into the hut and then out through the roof, leaving brush and chaos in its wake.

That Ivan will grow up to keep and train raptors adds to the savagery of the universe Llosa is creating. But Nana's touching of the half-blind Timothy, and his subsequent improvement, implies something else is going on in that universe, something divine or at least divinely inspired. No one wants to talk about it directly, because to do so—as Nana (Connelly operating under some rather unconvincing old-age makeup) articulates late in the film—would be both egotistical and a betrayal.



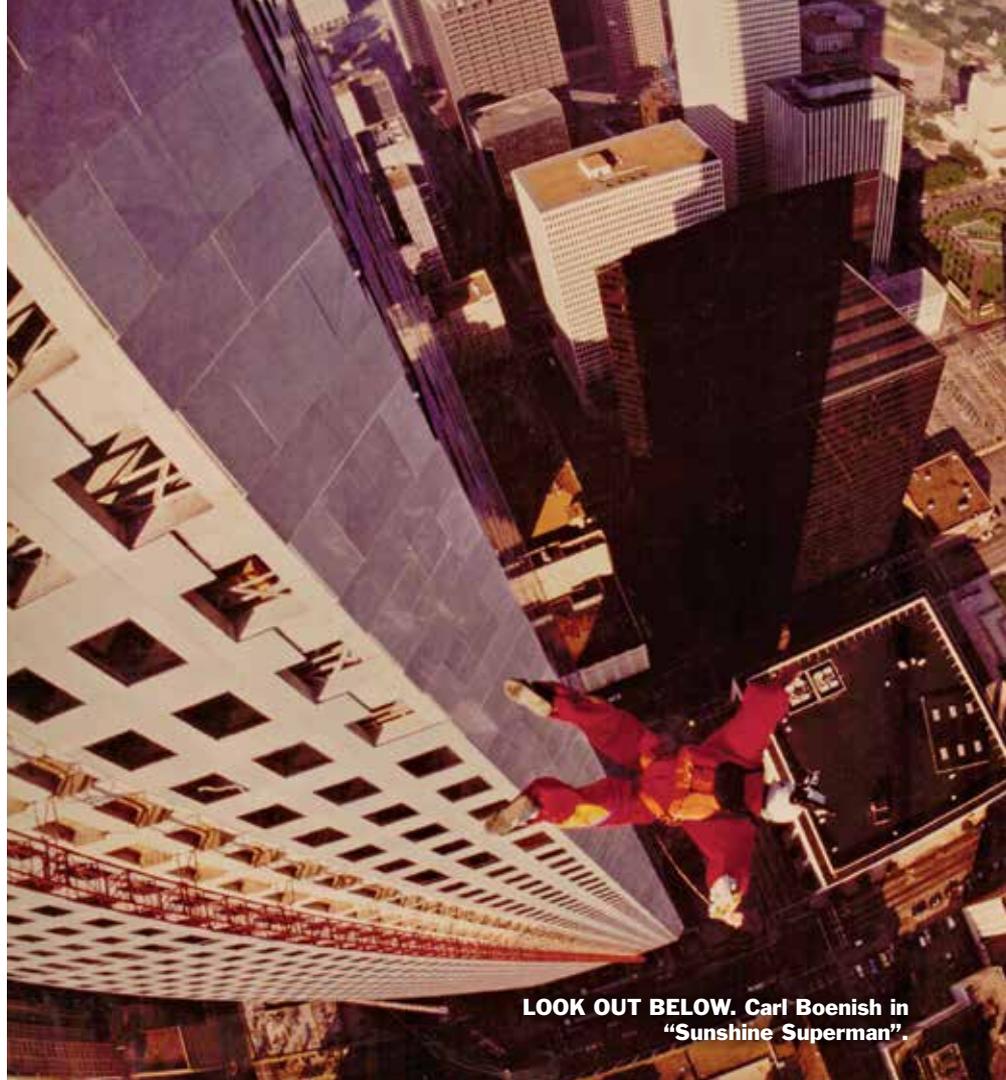
PHOTO BY ALLEN FRASER, COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

Llosa moves very gracefully back and forth between the life of Nana and her children in their youth, and Ivan, his wife and child and their intruder, Jannia (Laurant), who dupes Ivan into traveling across a frozen north to find his reclusive mother. There are no easy answers to the cosmic question the director poses, but among the lingering pictures she creates is one of that silent falcon, taking his intellectually unencumbered flight through the sky and over a sometimes envious race, tied to its spiritual lodestones.

“Aloft” isn’t quite how one would describe the characters in **Sunshine Superman**, a generally splendid documentary by Marah Strauch about people throwing themselves off cliffs. Literally. It employs its own brand of selective silence about the life of its subject, Carl Boenish, who in the late 1970s invented BASE jumping and was a man one would assume had a death wish until he convinces you he does not. Still, he is a bit like the guy who ate the first oyster: Who knew it wouldn’t kill you? Who knew that parachuting off BASE places (Buildings, Antennae, Spans and Earth, a k a cliffs), was not going to kill you, too?

What Strauch has at her disposal, and which she uses expertly, is Boenish’s own film archive. Like “Senna,” another great sports documentary, “Sunshine Superman” is defined by its wealth of intimate footage, although in this case it is also largely first-person. Boenish was besotted by cinema. If a jump was worth doing, it was worth filming, and if it wasn’t on film, it may as well not have happened.

With his wife, Jean Boenish, his partner in crime—much of what they did was, in fact, above the law (pun intended)—Boenish created a sport, and a new film aesthetic. He had worked as both an electrical engineer and a cinematographer before he started leaping, and he was an Edison-like innovator who conjured up ways to make impossible shots. For a plunge at El Capitan in



LOOK OUT BELOW. Carl Boenish in “Sunshine Superman”

Yosemite National Park, Boenish welded together a ladder-like camera mount that was hung from the cliff shelf, over the abyss, with a bicycle seat on its end. From that perch, Boenish takes shots of his friends jumping straight down. During an illicit jump from the Crocker Bank building in downtown Los Angeles, Boenish’s camera follows two jumpers all the way to the street and into a cab, where they make their escape from police.

If things went wrong, Boenish believed, it was because the BASE jumper had misread the laws of nature, which were always secondary to the laws of man. And far less communicative.

There’s a spiritual element throughout “Sunshine Superman” and the exploits of Carl Boenish, who had a bout of polio as a child and recovered to become a man obsessed with action. It would take 20 seconds for anyone with

access to Google to find out the ultimate fate of Carl Boenish, and Strauch is wise not to belabor it, partly because it would have betrayed the Boenish on whom she spends so much effort.

An air of religiosity hangs over much of what Boenish is saying during the early going of “Sunshine Superman.” But unexplained mystery surrounds his last two jumps (the first of which was staged for a Guinness World Records television special with David Frost and Kathie Lee). They took place in different spots on Norway’s so-called Troll Wall, which provides an eerie, gothic backdrop to a story wrapped in an existential mist—one that ends up obliterating the sunshine that always seemed to surround the movie’s superman.

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ART OR AGITATION?

The New York Post headline read “Art Attack” over a detailed report about the deadly assault—for the gunmen at least—at a convention center in Garland, Tex. The two men had attempted to storm an exhibit put together by the professional provocateur Pamela Geller through her American Freedom Defense Initiative. I haven’t seen any of the depictions of Muhammad that comprised the “Draw the Prophet” exhibit, but I am willing to speculate that there was more agitation than art hanging from its walls.

This unpleasant escapade ended with the deaths of only the attackers—apparently homegrown Islamic terror-wannabes—and only one security guard was wounded. But much like other attempts to ridicule hard cultural positions in the Islamic world, the intended mockery of “Draw the Prophet” put uninvolved people at risk and ended in a violent display that organizers on some level must have wished to provoke. In similar spectacles in the past, the outcome has been far more deadly, both for Islamic protesters and scores of innocent bystanders or blameless members of minority communities, typically Christians living within predominately Muslim societies. Many have suffered the wrath of mobs inflamed by the actions of others: Quran-burning in the United States, low-fi video auteurs, even unfortunately one pope (Benedict XVI), whose indelicate reference at the University of Regensburg in Germany in 2006 became something of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

After years of renewed tension between Islamic societies and the West, it has become clear that there are many individuals within Islamic societies who are willing to turn to violence in re-

sponse to incitements (defended as free speech) that most people in the West would deem trivial. There is little need to retest that particular sociological hypothesis. So why do some in the West persist? Asked that question, folks like Geller will indignantly suggest that this is like challenging the victim of a sexual assault for wearing a short skirt. (I kid you not; check your twitter feed.) Or they will ignore the intent of the query and merely assert an inalienable and apparently limitless right to free speech guaranteed by the Constitution, with the insinuation that they are doing something wonderfully heroic—and a great service to the rest of civilized society—by insulting Islamic sensibilities. Thanks?

The First Amendment prevents government from curtailing free speech. It does not prevent members of civil society from expressing displeasure with and seeking to restrain speech that they deem unwholesome or an unnecessary threat to communal harmony. In some societies where intercommunal tensions between different religions or within sects of the same religion are easily aroused, many governments indeed resort to laws aimed at preserving communal peace by outlawing specific kinds of speech, especially speech denigrating other faith traditions. Why? Because many people hold specific things to be sacred, and attacking sacred things can trigger responses that are emotional, frankly, not rational and can lead to acts that are not rational—like storming an art

exposition that is surrounded by armed guards and local police who have prepared for precisely that possibility.

Geller and her ilk will insist that they are patriots seeking to exercise fully rights guaranteed by the Constitution. But no society issues rights *carte blanche*, they come with some obligation for reasonable, responsible use (perhaps they should come

with written disclaimers), especially when the exercise of said rights can put others, either here or abroad, in harm’s way.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the United States has strained unhappily to balance security and liberty with individual privacy. Islamic communities living in a free society must adapt to the occasional personal outrage that someone else’s free expression may inspire. Doing so, they

can become exemplars of the same in the Islamic world, where religious and civic liberties struggle against religious authoritarianism that can often take a brutal turn. But pointless exercises in provocation like the exposition in Garland deserve to be deplored. They serve only to inflame the egos and media profiles of the provocateurs and the indignation, to the point of violence, of the targeted community. For the rest of us they unleash a host of unpleasant outcomes. Among them are calls to government authority in the name of public safety to step in and restrain free expression or to dig even deeper holes in the privacy rights already at risk in the age of terror we inhabit.

Pointless
exercises in
provocation
deserve
to be
deplored.



KEVIN CLARKE is chief correspondent and senior editor of *America*.

KINDRED SPIRITS

THE FRANCISCAN HEART OF THOMAS MERTON

A New Look at the Spiritual Inspiration of His Life, Thought, and Writing

By Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M.
Ave Maria Press. 260p \$16.95

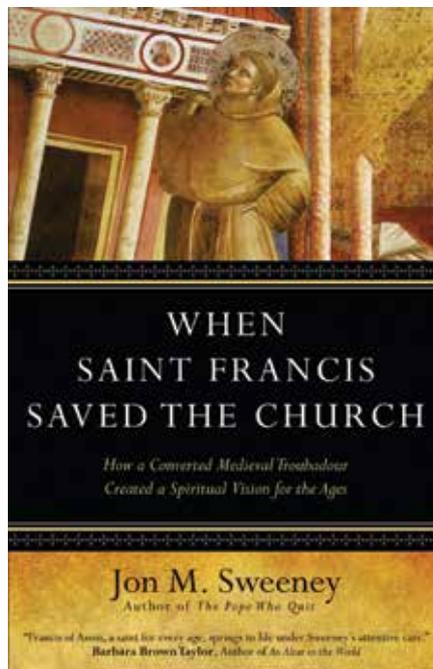
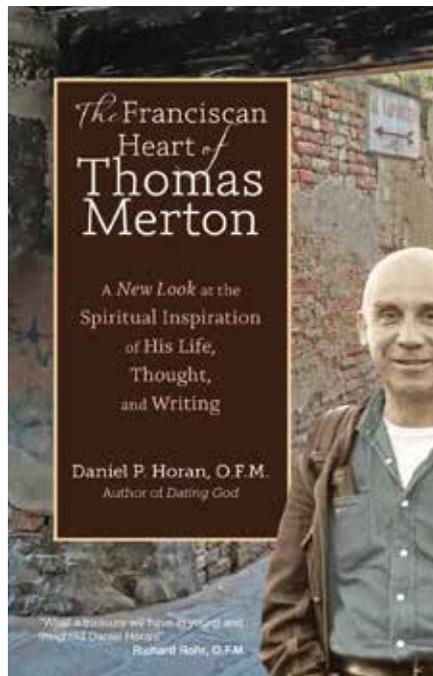
WHEN SAINT FRANCIS SAVED THE CHURCH

How A Converted Medieval Troubadour Created a Spiritual Vision for the Ages

By Jon M. Sweeney
Ave Maria Press. 175p \$22

Enter Pope Francis, unburdened by the richly threaded horse collar-like stole in which newly elected popes had traditionally planted the staff of their authority on St. Peter's loggia, as monarchs once did their flags on the beaches of newly conquered lands or the fallen cities of conquered ones. The crowds that stretched around the electronically girded world witnessed something very different on that March evening two years ago. They welcomed the first pope who called himself Francis, clad in a white cassock, pewter cross and a skullcap that did not quite fit, who unregally bade the people a good evening and asked only for their prayers. A new age of Franciscan simplicity had been opened by a Jesuit pope, who quickly astonished the world by shedding the modern day equivalent of the riches and vesture Francis put aside to preach the Gospel with a freshened purity of spirit and heart.

Francis of Assisi started a great movement that, as Jon Sweeney notes, was eventually to suffer all the problems with which humans brand even their noblest achievements. Nonetheless, it brought a glowing vision of the earth and all living things to mankind and endowed the church



anew with the calling of servant rather than master. It is no accident that brown, with its welcome and warmth, is the dominant color of the followers, almost beyond numbering, in various ways of St. Francis. It is not improbable that Francis was present in G. K. Chesterton's imagination as he named

his fictional priest detective Father Brown, who is at home in the world without being wordly.

These two new books take very different pathways in telling the story of St. Francis. Sweeney follows a more traditional form, reconstructing with modern but weight-bearing materials the tale of Francis' life that remains moving no matter how often it is told. Sweeney writes very well and recreates critical scenes with admirable clarity. His skill is stunningly exemplified in his sensible but sensitive treatment of Francis' reception of the stigmata, the wounds of Christ in his own body. Sweeney writes that "the problem...is knowing what to make of it." Reviewing its possible divine origin, he quotes a Hasidic rabbi who, a century and more ago, wrote of the miracles related to the founder of Hasidism, "Whoever believes all of the Baal Shem Tov is a fool, but whoever denies them is an unbeliever." Sweeney concludes, in a sentiment that might be pondered in every religious house, "There are reasons why traditions define certain elements of a saintly life as legends: most of all because they are not meant to be scientifically defined. That's what makes them mysteries."

Furthermore, Sweeney notes that "the suffering of the wounds doesn't have to be more important than other aspects of Francis's life.... In fact, Francis and his first followers may have found whatever happened to him upon the mountain to be less important than many of the other miraculous moments he was privileged to be a part of. Perhaps that is why he never spoke of it.

Sweeney notes that Francis "never praised Sacred Wounds like he praised Brother Wind and Sister Moon," leaving, as the book makes clear, a heritage for all people of a creation-loving spirituality that, under Pope Francis, stirs the church and world anew in our day.

Horan's book, while equally the

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**Sister Christine Vladimiroff,
Former Prioress
Benedictine Sisters of Erie**

work of a master of St. Francis, approaches him through searching the often anguished life of a monk and spiritual writer, Thomas Merton, who was greatly influenced by Francis and by the friars he came to know at the Franciscan-run St. Bonaventure's College, at which Merton taught English for a significant period in his early life. It was here that he came to know and be strongly influenced by the Rev. Thomas Plassman, O.F.M., the president who had hired the young man whose spiritual and literary potential he understood and encouraged as a good father would.

Horan, a writer of great strength and depth, is not afraid to let his own experience as a man and a Franciscan express itself as he explores the aspects of Merton's life that are as challenging as a mountain climb along a jagged and beclouded trail. And it is a challenge to us who, observing from the green meadowed valley below, do not appreciate the price in blood and breath paid by the climber. Merton's last climb, exploring the mysticism of a far culture, was as arduous and challenging as any he made on his restless journey into the depths of life and self-identity.

Little known, for example, is his life in Europe with his artist parents or the decades of suffering and self-exploration to which they would lead. The reader will not quickly forget Merton the child sitting against a backyard tree learning from a postcard given to him by his father that his mother is dying. Merton's life will be led with highly dramatic, and often traumatic, events being acted out against placid and traditional backgrounds, like Cambridge and Columbia University, which symbolize the systematic and well-ordered side of scholarship rather than the torment of a highly sensitive genius of the word and the spirit seeking a calling that would integrate his life.

Merton's life at Cambridge, more bohemian than Dvorak's symphonies, led to his learning little and his being

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advised by the man his father selected, before his own premature death from a brain tumor, to mentor and manage the affairs of his son. Horan tells this story in a rich but disciplined style so that, as in his prefatory synthesis of Francis' life, the reader gets the feel not only of the subject but of the world he passed through.

More mysterious, and no less so for Horan's compassion, is his thesis that Merton possessed and was possessed by a Franciscan heart and spirituality. As little known to most readers as the fact that Merton fathered a daughter in the tumultuous early period of his life is his strong attraction to the Franciscans and his early application and acceptance as a candidate. This acceptance was reversed, however, for, as the New York superior said, Merton mishandled, so to speak, certain information on his initial application.

Horan sustains his point with many examples, including the influential Sam Walsh at Columbia, who identified Merton's "Franciscan spirit" to his own intellectual affinity with the Franciscan philosopher Blessed Jon Duns Scotus.

Horan makes the case that Merton brought this Franciscan sensibility into Gethsemani Monastery with him and tracks how it is expressed in the many books and articles he wrote there after resolving the seeming conflict of rejecting the world while remaining an engaged critic of it. His Franciscan embrace of creation and his growth into a voice for peace mirror this influence distinctly. Merton's struggle, any reader will note, is with being a monk and being a monk/celebrity who gradually resolves conflicts with a succession of abbots by moving into a structure of his own and acquiring an assistant to help with his writing and mail.

Horan does not deal with one of the last great challenges of Merton's life, his falling passionately in love, as described in detail by his official biographer, Michael Mott, with the

nurse in the office of his doctor. That was part of the voyage into mystery that Thomas Merton made famous early in his life by his *Seven-Storey Mountain*, and he became a prominent figure in American civic and religious dialogue. One can readily believe this long journey was inspired by Francis of Assisi.

All these were live dynamics in that final journey into deepening his knowledge of another form of prayer and contemplation. He had finished a morning lecture, said that he had to disappear until evening and suggest-

ed that everyone have a Coca-Cola. A simple yet profoundly human goodbye, one that would have suited Francis fine. A few moments later he passed immediately, by accidental electrocution, into the eternity he knew so well.

Anybody who wants to understand Francis, the Franciscan-motivated Merton, or perhaps the new pope who is bringing the spirit of Francis to the world again, can only profit from reading these books.

EUGENE C. KENNEDY is a psychologist and writer for several Catholic publications.

TIMOTHY WATKINS

IN THE CLOUDS

CYBERTHEOLOGY

Thinking Christianity in the Era of the Internet

By Antonio Spadaro
Fordham University Press. 160p \$24

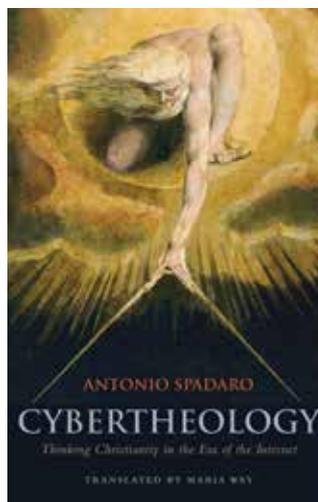
For all its popularity, the Internet is raising very important social, cultural and political questions. Headlines remind us that texting while driving can have lethal results. University professors find themselves competing unsuccessfully with student smart-phone use in class. Parents find it necessary to place filters on computers to protect their children from exposure to pornography and violence. Hackers invade nations and corporations, leaking secret information, stealing identities, even halting movie distribution.

Novels like David Eggers's *The Circle* frighten us with the possibility that in the not too distant future web technology will be used to control every aspect of our lives.

Antonio Spadaro's newest book, *Cybertheology*, does not deal with these issues. Instead, this short meditation, which, at times, seems to suffer from a translation-based lack of clarity, turns its attention to the theological implications of the Internet. He asks, since the Internet is rapidly altering our experience of reality, how is it also shaping "the way we form a discourse on God

and the faith, especially if this discourse is specifically Catholic?" Spadaro, who edits the popular Jesuit review *La Civiltà Cattolica*, published in Rome, and recently received distinction for his interview with Pope Francis (*America*, 9/30/13), does not demonize the Internet. In fact, he is active on Facebook and Twitter, and for many years has maintained a successful

blog. He applauds the Internet's "extension of our desire for communal life and knowledge," its horizontal, connective logic, its ability to bring people together in new ways, its effectiveness in the



communication of the faith and even its potential eschatological implications.

In a final chapter Spadaro even provides an imaginative application of the Internet to Teilhard De Chardin's evolutionary theology, suggesting that the capillary diffusion of information and ideas provided by computer technology might very well be leading to the realization of an evolving collective consciousness, which Chardin famously called the noosphere. Spadaro suggests that this progressive consciousness might ultimately fulfill Chardin's vision about the cosmic Christ who saves and animates the world, completing the transubstantiation of the bread on the altar, leading the world back to God and ultimate salvation.

But this book is mostly a cautionary exploration of the theological applications of the Internet in the information-saturated present, especially with reference to such things as evangelism, the nature of the church, authority and liturgy. In what follows I will briefly

highlight each of these.

1. *The new evangelism.* In the fluid and flexible age characterized by the image of the iPod shuffle, information is randomized, truth claims are relativized and flattened out, and information becomes hardly more than background noise that does not demand our attention. Spadaro suggests that when what is true or real can be absorbed and disappear into the mass of virtual, equivalent data, which is what happens on massive religion sites like Belief.net, evangelism becomes a challenge. The Gospel becomes difficult to "hear" because it is just one more source of wisdom. Or else it can be "discarded, in favor of other, more important messages."

2. *The church.* Apart from the fact that purely virtual relationships tend to promote what Spadaro refers to as "egoistical isolation," the web does bring people into personal relationships. Yet when it is employed to sort through profiles of potential social contacts, or when programs like Foursquare or

Gowalla enable an individual to choose when, where and with whom to connect, the notion of neighbor is reduced to selective affinity. I can include or exclude at the push of a contact button. Problems appear when this connective logic is applied to church. With a critical eye on emerging church movements, Spadaro says that while such technology and the social values it promotes might be a useful tool for community building in the church, it fails as a model for the church. In fact it gets things backwards because it runs the risk of defining the church entirely from below, as a process of selective networking of likeminded believers, and misses the fundamental function of the church as the mediator of grace that creates the community.

3. *Authority.* The web is driven by what Spadaro describes as a hacker ethic, which amounts to the creative force of free informational exchange. This ethic is fundamentally individualistic, and as such it resists control, competition, ownership and ultimately any

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authority from the outside. In theological circles this has led most recently to concepts such as “open source theology,” which is inherently dialogical, exploratory, incomplete and open to different conclusions. While this kind of theological enterprise has a place, Spadaro believes that it also “might be on a collision course with the Catholic mind and its vision of authority and tradition.” This kind of Internet theology prioritizes the “word,” and the physicality of the persons in dialogue becomes just another accessory that can be ignored. Spadaro insists that the logic of grace that comes to us from the outside is incarnated and is therefore not reducible to informational consensus. The church is neither purely collaborative nor purely cognitive. It is built upon a deposit of faith that has visible, tangible and apostolic origins, and has been transmitted through the ages by the magisterium to the present time.

4. *Liturgy and sacraments.* Spadaro asks whether it is possible “to imagine a form of liturgy and the sacraments that could take place on the web.” This question is not just speculative, since, as he points out, there have been many different attempts to create cyber-liturgies and eucharistic services on line. His response reminds Catholics that in the same way that it is impossible and anthropologically erroneous to consider virtual reality as a substitute for the real, tangible and concrete experience of the Christian community, the same applies visibly and historically to liturgical celebrations and sacraments. Therefore any liturgical or sacramental practices must be grounded in the real presence, which cannot be mediated at a distance through a computer screen.

Among the more illuminating ideas presented in this book is Spadaro’s insistence that while the web is a revolutionary tool, it runs the risk of creating a virtual reality that is individualistic and grounded in the communication of disembodied information. Though he does not say it, his analysis seems to be

set against the more radical Protestant inclination to put on a pedestal the priesthood of all believers, establish the authority of the text alone and denigrate the “real” presence in the sacraments. In contrast, Catholicism has always insisted that God’s revelation, incarnate in the person of Christ, embodied historically in the authority of the apostles and their successors and made present in and through and by the sacraments, mediates what is true

and real and creates the communal body of Christ, which is the church. For Spadaro, the principal theological danger posed by the Internet is the classic docetic tendency to sever mind from body, word from flesh, and in its modern form, to substitute virtual for actual reality. This book will provoke much discussion.

TIMOTHY WATKINS is a theology professor at Canisius College in Buffalo, N.Y.

DENNIS VELLUCCI

DIARY OF AN IRISH PRIEST

A HISTORY OF LONELINESS

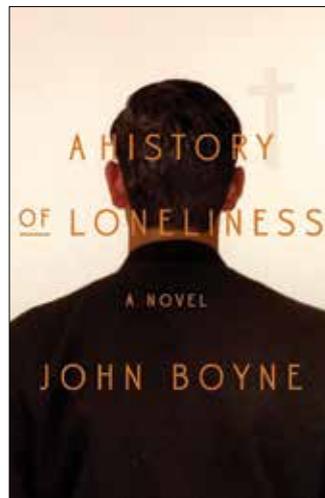
By John Boyne
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 352p \$26

The word “shame” appears twice on the first page of John Boyne’s novel of Irish priesthood, *A History of Loneliness*. The Rev. Odran Yates’s shame is both personal and institutional. As he tells his story in a scrambled chronology that covers his life from 1964 to 2013, he confronts the sources of the failure that marks his 35 years as a priest.

His is a sad tale, because Odran is an essentially good man whose vague but earnest ambition in becoming a priest was “to help people somehow.” He is guilty of no crime; his intentions are generous and sincere. His faults, however—naïve trust, willful blindness and a spectacular lack of imagination—keep him from recognizing the scandals that have rocked the church, especially in Ireland, until long after everyone else has acknowledged them. Though he is an appealing narrator and an engaging story teller, Odran’s capacity for self-re-

flection and self-criticism comes too late and pales in comparison with his capacity for self-deception. Admittedly nostalgic, he revels in “the comfort of [his] childhood.” But when his childhood is revealed, it is dominated by an alcoholic father, an embittered mother, a younger sibling who suffers a grotesque death and a lascivious priest whom Odran’s mother summons when she finds her 16-year-old son entertaining an English girl of dubious reputation. The priest unscrupulously persuades Odran that he has a vocation.

This manner of reconstructing reality, of obfuscating whatever does not fit comfortably into his ordered world view (it’s no coincidence that Odran spends 27 years as librarian at Terenure College), perdures through Odran’s adulthood. His family changes; the church changes; the priesthood changes; and Odran can hardly keep up. He feels as if he has “gone to sleep in one country and woken up in another.” In the early days of his priesthood, priests are so revered that a pregnant woman offers him a seat on



a crowded train and a pensioner buys him a sandwich he doesn't want. Even his mother addresses him as "Father." Thirty years later, anyone in clerical garb is suspect. Walking through St. Stephen's Green, Odran hears whisperers of "pedophile"; salesgirls exchange "a look and a smirk" when he passes. Odran's innocent attempt to help a lost, panicked 5-year-old lands him in a police station, where he is insulted and maltreated. In his own parish, he cannot even let into the church a group of altar boys shivering in the rain until a chaperone arrives and Odran's presence among the boys is "safe."

Most painful for Odran is his estrangement from a beloved nephew,

the sources of which come fully to light only late in the novel, and his friendship with his seminary roommate, Thomas Cardle, forced into the priesthood at the insistence of a brutal father. Cardle's frequent parish reassignments raise no red flags for Odran, perhaps because he cannot think ill of a friend or because his own inexperience has rendered him oblivious. When a parishioner approaches Odran for advice about a son who may be gay, Odran's response is compassionate and wise, but he wonders why people come to him, who, he admits, "knew nothing of life." Is his ignorance genuine? Is it innocence? Or is it a defense against unsettling suspicions that he will admit

neither publicly nor privately?

Boyne treats Odran with admirable sensitivity and understanding even as the unintentional damage that Odran clumsily precipitates becomes clear—finally!—to Odran himself. Boyne's real contempt is directed at the church hierarchy, bishops who bristle with indignation at the media's lack of deference and see themselves as victims of an organized effort to undermine their authority. An easy target, perhaps, but by telling the story through the perspective of this troubled, struggling, not-very-bright but in no way malevolent cleric, Boyne avoids melodramatic excesses and overwrought clichés.

Boyne's narrative does get sidetracked briefly by an underdeveloped and unconvincing subplot in which Odran's infatuation with a Roman waitress is linked to the death of Pope John Paul I. That story belongs in another novel. But scene for scene, Boyne is so compelling a writer in his fluid use of language and in his efficient characterization that the misstep causes the book no lasting harm.

Though the nonchronological structure initially demands some patience, it effectively teases out a degree of mystery and suspense. When, in the last three chapters, Boyne abandons the irregular time frame and returns to chronology, the effect is powerful, as a series of long-delayed confrontations explores the possibilities of grace, forgiveness and redemption—and their limits. These emotionally resonant scenes resist the sentimental resolutions that in the hands of a lesser writer they might invite. For both this flawed but decent fictional character and for the real, imperfect Catholic Church he represents, Boyle's novel considers, poignantly but unequivocally, important questions of complicity, of responsibility and, ultimately, of salvation.

DENNIS VELLUCCI is an administrator at Archbishop Molloy High School in New York City.

CLASSIFIED

Positions

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO seeks candidates for the position of SUPERINTENDENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS. Reporting to the Archbishop and the Board of Catholic Schools, the Superintendent is responsible for overseeing the operation of the largest diocesan school system in the country, ensuring the implementation of the Catholic educational mission of the church and the formation of the Christian person, as well as the academic excellence and financial stability of all schools. The Archdiocese of Chicago currently serves over 60,000 students through 204 elementary schools and 6 diocesan high schools. The superintendent also represents the diocese on educational matters to the civic community and other groups that support the diocesan schools. For additional information, contact Carlos González Peña at carlos@penasearch.com or (214) 736-8891.

SACRED HEART SEMINARY AND SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY seeks candidates for a full-time graduate-level seminary appointment as DIRECTOR OF LITURGICAL MUSIC AND ORGANIST starting August 2015. Applicant must be a Roman Catholic possessing at least a master's degree, though preference will be given to those with a canonical degree or doctor of sacred music degree. Candidate will provide evidence of outstanding service-playing skills, choral-conducting skills, cantor formation and exhibit faithfulness to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* and *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*. Applicants will also demonstrate competence with a wide range of musical styles for the liturgy, from Gregorian chant to contemporary

expressions of sung prayer, as well as experience in multicultural liturgical music. As a talented and proficient organist, the successful candidate will play the seminary chapel's 1994 Berghaus II/35 rank mechanical action pipe organ. Position may also include teaching responsibilities. The submission deadline is June 30, 2015, although applications will continue to be reviewed until the position is filled. Send letter of interest and curriculum vitae by email to tillingworth@shsst.edu or The Very Rev. Ross Shecterle, President-Rector, Sacred Heart School of Theology, P.O. Box 429, Hales Corners, WI 53130-0429. Located in a suburb of Milwaukee, Sacred Heart School of Theology (www.shsst.edu) is a Roman Catholic seminary specializing in priestly formation for men of all ages, with a specific emphasis on seminarians over 30 years of age.

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Adopted Into the Family of God

TRINITY SUNDAY (B), MAY 31, 2015

Readings: Dt 4:32–40; Ps 33: 4–22; Rom 8:14–17; Mt 28:16–20

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God” (Rom 8:14)

God chose the Israelites to be his people, his nation, his children. And so they are his children, a family established through the covenant God ratified with Abraham. At the heart of the covenant was the understanding that Israel “would acknowledge that the Lord is God” and that they would “keep his statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-being and that of your descendants after you.”

The descendants of Abraham who had heard God’s call of election and embraced it were God’s chosen people. Yet the world was full of other people, also created by God, also beloved by God. From the beginning of the covenantal relationship, Abraham was told “no one but your very own issue shall be your heir” (Gen 15:4). But there was an additional promise: “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3). How would God be revealed to the other families of the earth? How would the other families of the earth enter the covenant and become heirs to the promises of God?

The language of families here is significant, for it is through the revelation of God as Trinity, the divine family, that all other families of the earth would be invited into the covenant family. For the reality of the Trinity did not emerge for the earliest Christians in the context of complex philosophical discussions but in the experience of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As Pope Benedict XVI

stated in 2006, “The intimacy of God himself, discovering that he is not infinite solitude but communion of light and love, life given and received in an eternal dialogue between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit—lover, beloved and love,” revealed the relational nature of God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and by the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

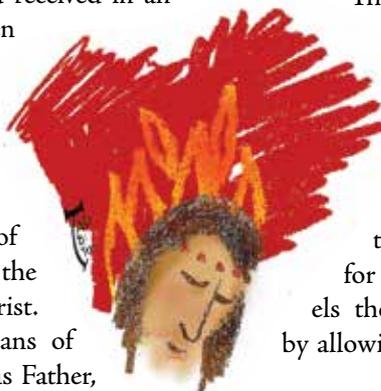
And it was by means of the revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit that the early Christians came to know themselves as children of God, adopted into the family and covenant of God. The Spirit, Paul tells us, empowers us to understand that we too are children of God, for through the Spirit we are able to cry “Abba! Father!” This Spirit-infused call to God as Abba is an explicit recognition of our lineage: we belong in this family, for “it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

But the pathway to entering the family as heirs—children destined to share in the gifts and promises of the Father in the kingdom of God—was blazed for us by the obedience of the Son. As Paul says in Gal 3:39, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.” Christ, through his suffering and death for us, has made us “joint heirs with Christ,” worthy of adoption into God’s family. The Greek for “heir,” *klêronomos*, is combined with the Greek for “with” to make *syn-*

klêronomos, “joint heirs.” We belong to the family of God because we belong to the Son, who has made us “joint heirs.”

Through the true “heir” we are simply joined with our covenantal and divine family.

We are welcomed into God’s family as joint heirs because of the love of the Trinity for us. The Trinity models the nature of the family by allowing us to experience the



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How does the Trinity help you understand the nature of your family and the family of God?

source of all love. It is because of the Trinitarian model of love for us and our experience of that love that Jesus instructs us to go out and make the family bigger. We belong in the family of God, but so do those who have not yet come home.

When Jesus instructs the apostles to go out, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you,” it is only an expansion of the covenant call to Abraham and the people of Israel to “acknowledge that the Lord is God” and to “keep his statutes and his commandments.” True, we have learned something new about the nature of God and the extent of God’s family, but the call is the same: Come home and be loved.

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Bread of Heaven

BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (B), JUNE 7, 2015

Readings: Ex 24:3–8; Ps 116: 12–18; Heb 9:11–15; Mk 14:12–16, 22–26

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven” (Jn 6:51)

Sometimes I find myself in a line-up with a bunch of strangers, shuffling down the aisle in church, and I forget that I am standing with my family on the pathway to heaven about to partake of the body and blood of Christ offered once for all time for the salvation of the world. Perhaps you have walked down that aisle with me?

The sacrificial nature of the Eucharist is clear from Jesus’ words and actions at the Last Supper, but hearing the words of institution over and over can become a part of a rote behavior that obscures their live-giving meaning. In the words of Mark’s Gospel, “While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.’”

The primary sacrificial context for the Last Supper comes from the Passover feast in which the meal is situated, but the offering of Jesus’ body and blood on behalf of the “many”—that is, for all people—takes on and reinterprets much more of the sacrificial imagery of the Old Testament. The bread that he broke is a sign of his body, which he will offer in death, the true bread of the presence. The “blood of the covenant” shares in the imagery of the ceremony in Exodus in which

Moses sprinkled blood on the people of Israel as a sign of their obedience to the covenant. The phrase “poured out for many” draws us inexorably to the Suffering Servant of Is 53:12, who pours himself out as an expiation for the sins of the people.

These sacrificial realities are not alien to the Last Supper. They are an inherent part of Jesus’ actions, which he interprets for his apostles prior to the crucifixion. But for these understandings to come to the fore, the first Christians had to meditate and reflect on what Jesus had done and what this meant for the continuing life of the church.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews makes it his mission to explicate and explain what took place on Calvary in light of the Jewish sacrificial system. First, Hebrews explains that Jesus is not only the sacrifice for the sins of the world but also the perfect high priest. Second, the perfect high priest “entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.” Third, through the offering of himself as the perfect sacrifice, Jesus “is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.”

Joachim Jeremias wrote in *Eucharistic Words*, “If, immediately following his words on the bread and immediately following his words on the wine, Jesus gives the same bread

and the same wine to his disciples, this act signifies his giving them a share, by their eating and drinking, in the atoning power of his death.” And that atoning power has as its goal eternal life with Jesus. But it was not just those who sat at the table with Jesus and ate bread and drank wine with him who are able to share in the atoning power of Jesus’ sacrifice; Jesus opened the way for all to share in the eternal inheritance.

The Eucharist fulfills the sacrificial system and gives us the ability to share in the power of Christ’s atoning death

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How does your participation in the body and blood of Christ shape your Christian life?

here and now, but it also prepares us for our eternal inheritance. With the rest of God’s family, we will share in the Messianic banquet. Jesus tells us “many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 8:11). Only the true bread of heaven, the perfect high priest, could offer himself once for all and so pave the way for our entry into the Temple made not with hands. So walk with joy toward the Temple prepared for us for eternity, as you are about to share a foretaste of the unending banquet.

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