

America

A photograph of a religious procession. In the foreground, a man with a mustache and a red string around his wrist holds a large, weathered wooden cross. Behind him, other people are also carrying similar crosses. A light blue banner with a dark blue stripe is visible in the middle ground. The background shows a street scene with buildings and trees under a clear sky.

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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The Cross They Bear

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
AROUND THE WORLD

DREW CHRISTIANSEN
MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE
ELIAS D. MALLON
MARY ANN GLENDON
THOMAS J. REESE
THE EDITORS

I have often said that if Justice Antonin Scalia and I were both legislators, we would likely sit on opposite sides of the aisle; but if we were both justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, we would more often than not concur in our opinions. That always strikes people as a little odd, but there's no reason why it should. After all, what the law should be and what the law actually is are different questions, whose answers require different methodologies. I just happen to think that Mr. Scalia's method of modified originalism is the most democratic and intellectually coherent approach to constitutional interpretation.

I'm not alone in that view. In the course of his 30 years as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Mr. Scalia, who died suddenly last week at the age of 79, convinced thousands of us that the trajectory of our federal jurisprudence was seriously endangering the balance of powers enshrined in our constitutional system.

Justice Scalia called his method "original meaning." Put simply, the idea is that the Constitution should be interpreted to mean what reasonable people would have understood it to mean at the time when its various bits and pieces were adopted. Note that "original meaning" is different from "original intent," which Mr. Scalia thought was not really knowable. In other words, "original meaning" is not an attempt to get inside James Madison's head. Justice Scalia was simply saying that in a democracy, the standard of constitutional interpretation should center on the voter: What would the voters who voted for a particular constitutional provision have understood it to mean when they voted? And if we no longer want a given provision to mean that, then we should change it at the ballot box rather than from the bench; we should not delegate our tough public policy choices to nine unelected, unrepresentative members of an Eastern elite who all went to Harvard or Yale.

Mr. Scalia argued the case for his method of constitutional interpretation in almost any forum that would have him. By no means did he effect a consensus; but the fact that his method is now considered credible and is required reading in most constitutional law classes is a testament to Mr. Scalia's intellectual prowess, ensuring that he now joins the likes of Oliver Wendell Holmes in the pantheon of the court's intellectual titans.

More important, however, Mr. Scalia should be remembered for his capacity for friendship. While he was not a perfect man and often employed a style of provocative hyperbole that could be condescending, if not disrespectful, he also happened to be one of the few remaining major Washington figures who cultivated private friendships with people he routinely opposed in public. His storied friendship with the liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg actually inspired an opera: "We were best buddies," she said last week. "We disagreed now and then, but when I wrote for the Court and received a Scalia dissent, the opinion ultimately released was notably better than my initial circulation." For his part, Mr. Scalia once remarked: "Call us the odd couple. She likes opera, and she's a very nice person. What's not to like? Except her views on the law."

If it's hard to imagine Paul Ryan and Barack Obama having a similar friendship, then you see the problem with our national politics.

R.I.P. Mr. Justice Scalia.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Catholic Communications Campaign, which provided the funding for this issue of America focused on international religious freedom. Please note that the opinions of the authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the campaign.

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Cover: Pakistani Christians carry wooden crosses and a casket during a demonstration over the killing of a Christian couple in a village in Punjab Province in November 2014 for allegedly desecrating a Koran. Reuters/Mohsin Raza

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ON THE WEB

Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., discusses his role as superior general of the Jesuits and offers **advice on prayer**. Full digital highlights on page 17 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



‘When I Was in Prison...’

Martin Acosta, a Salvadoran imprisoned at a private contract prison in Reeves, Tex., for his illegal re-entry into the United States, complained of abdominal pain in the summer of 2010. In 20 visits to the infirmary he had seen a doctor only once. By the time he saw one in December, he could no longer eat. In the hospital they found a massive tumor in his abdomen. He died in January.

Jesus Enrique Zavala Montes, 28, serving five months for illegal entry, arrived at Taft prison in California with a record of attempted suicide. He was sent to solitary confinement for “protective custody,” awaiting a psychiatrist, who did not come. He hanged himself. These stories, recounted in Seth Freed Wessler’s “Separate, Unequal, and Deadly” (*The Nation*, 2/15), are about only two of the 137 immigrants who died in 11 for-profit prisons between 1998 and 2014. These prisons, which are distinct from immigration detention centers, were built as more undocumented immigrants were charged with serious crimes, mostly drug-related. They now house approximately 23,000 people.

Federal rules for government-run prisons require educational programs, addiction treatment, health care and rehabilitative services. When a retired doctor volunteered at a contract prison, he discovered that to raise profits they skimmed on services, kept sloppy records, failed to provide doctors or well-trained nurses and refused his requests to transfer patients to hospitals that might save them.

The problems with for-profit prisons are well documented—a lack of oversight, a commitment to shareholders rather than the public good. In “Wardens From Wall Street: Prison Privatization” (2000), the Catholic Bishops of the South called for “the end of all for-profit prisons.” How many deaths will it take for us to see the wisdom of their recommendation?

Abuse Commission Shake-up

Whatever the merits of the decision, the optics of removing one of the two survivors of clerical sexual abuse serving on the Holy See’s Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors were not good. Peter Saunders, the founder of the U.K.-based National Association for People Abused in Childhood, was given a leave of absence following a 15-to-0 vote of no confidence by the 17-member commission (with one abstention) at a meeting in Rome on Feb. 6.

Mr. Saunders had been an outspoken critic of the church’s ongoing efforts to prevent and respond to the abuse crisis; he claimed in the press that Pope Francis had

gone back on a promise to attend the commission meetings and criticized the pope’s controversial decision to appoint Bishop Juan Barros, accused of covering up the sexual abuse crimes of a Chilean priest, to the Diocese of Osorno. Following the commission’s vote, Mr. Saunders told *The Irish Times*, “I cannot be part of something that runs alongside a system that is essentially corrupt and unwilling to do the right thing...protect children.” Other members, including Marie Collins, an abuse survivor, insist that the role of the commission is not to comment or intervene in individual cases but to consider overall church policy and to advise Francis on best practices in fighting sexual abuse. There were concerns that Mr. Saunderson’s work as an advocate could interfere with this specific mission.

That may be the case. But having the voice and witness of survivors on the papal commission is essential. Mr. Saunders should be replaced with someone who shares his tragic, firsthand knowledge of this open wound in the Catholic Church.

On a Mission for Mercy

On Ash Wednesday this year, Pope Francis welcomed more than 700 “missionaries of mercy” to the Vatican to receive a special mandate. These are priests who responded to Francis’ call, prior to the Year of Mercy, for members of the clergy to take on this role, which includes special authority to absolve sins for which absolution has been traditionally reserved to the Holy See. More than 1,000 priests from around the globe have been given this mandate, including 125 from the United States. They will seek to live out this mission of mercy in their own dioceses but may also be invited by bishops to visit other dioceses.

It is no coincidence that this commission coincided with the start of the Lenten season, during which the church reflects more deeply on prayer, penance and sacrifice. The sending forth of these missionaries serves as a reminder of the importance of the sacrament of reconciliation in healing our relationship with Christ and our community. But while the official title may be given only to some, the mission of mercy has been given to all of us. The Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization encouraged priests who were not among those chosen for the role to “work as witnesses of mercy in their own daily missions, in the parishes, institutes, and other communities where they offer their service with love.” And the same can be urged of all people of good will. Mercy is not confined to a particular role or state in the church but rather is given to us freely by God and lived out fully and truly by all who desire it.

A Holy Right

The state of religious liberty in the world today is an urgent and complex subject that cannot be summarized in a single editorial or essay. As Elias D. Mallon, S.A., notes in this issue, the sheer number of reports detailing violations of religious freedom is daunting. Yet few issues are more worthy of a believer's attention. We should be thankful that the agencies dedicated to documenting these abuses are so robust and vigilant.

Moving from documenting these violations to correcting them represents a Herculean task. Religious divides in some countries have festered for centuries and may take just as long to heal. The United States enjoys a long tradition of religious freedom, of which we are justly proud. Because of it, we have a unique responsibility to argue for the importance of religious freedom on the international stage. It is our duty to convince our allies around the world, through intense and sustained diplomatic efforts at the highest levels, that religious freedom is not a special privilege reserved for members of democratic societies. It is a fundamental human right that must be at the center of the social contract between a government and its citizens.

One U.S. ally that deserves special attention is **Saudi Arabia**, a country with deep economic and security ties to Washington. Conversion from Islam is a crime punishable by death in the kingdom, and alleged apostates are often subject to brutal torture. Christians, meanwhile, most of whom are foreign workers without citizenship, are not allowed to worship in public. These and other violations of religious liberty have been a source of concern for U.S. leaders for some time, and a report in 2006 aimed at holding Saudi leaders accountable remains a useful yardstick for progress. But reform has been slow to come, and as James Zogby notes in a report from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom in 2015, a more thorough revisiting of the 2006 report is necessary.

Unlike Saudi Arabia, **India** is not a theocratic state and is home to a diverse religious community and a tradition of secular leadership. Yet minority religious communities have not fared well in the majority-Hindu country, and the country's current prime minister, Narendra Modi, has a checkered history with the country's Muslim minority. Since the Bharatiya Janata Party took power in 2014, India has seen a worrying increase in the number of religiously motivated attacks against Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. Meanwhile, a number of Indian states have anticonversion laws on their

books. President Obama has urged India to pay greater attention to these issues, but more formal diplomatic engagement is required. Since 2009, the United States and India have engaged in five "strategic dialogues" on various questions including trade, education, technology and gender. Religious freedom should be added to the agenda of the next meeting.

The U.S. State Department maintains a list of countries whose antireligious record merits "particular concern." **Pakistan** is not currently on that list, but perhaps it should be given its poor record of protecting believers. The Pakistani Supreme Court tried to address the issue in 2014 by calling for the creation of police forces to protect minority communities, but the government has failed to follow through. The country's blasphemy laws, which are vaguely defined, have been used to target Christians and Muslims and can result in severe sentences. With the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United States may not have as much sway in Pakistan as it once did, but the two countries share strategic interests, and U.S. leaders should argue strongly for the repeal of the country's egregious blasphemy laws. This will be a difficult task, as Pakistan remains a vocal opponent of expanded religious freedom on the international stage.

Many other allies could be added to this brief list. Turkey routinely interferes in the affairs of religious communities by, for example, restricting the ability of religious communities to train priests. In **Egypt**, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has pledged greater tolerance for religious diversity, but Coptic Christians remain a target of violence, and blasphemy laws are still enforced. To maintain pressure on these countries to change, support is needed from both U.S. and international leaders. Congress should hold annual hearings on the implementation of the International Religious Freedom Act, and the United Nations could supplement its special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief with special rapporteurs assigned to some of the worst offending countries.

Religious liberty is not just another special cause lobbying for the attention of government leaders. It is a matter of essential human dignity that deserves our respect, our protection and, if necessary, all the economic and diplomatic influence a nation like the United States has at its command.



REPLY ALL

What Does Evil Look Like?

I was deeply disappointed in the choice of picture to accompany “The Glamour of Evil,” by Gerald Schlabach (2/8). Granted, the gal is wearing an outfit I wouldn’t be caught dead in because it is way too revealing. Nonetheless, I believe it’s pairing with an article on “evil” is deeply offensive. What was **America** trying to convey? Women are evil? Certain clothing choices are evil? Alcohol is evil?

In my mind pictures of an atomic bomb and its destruction, the institutional church’s lack of appropriate and timely response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis, the way the people of Flint were lied to and endangered—now those are evil in my mind.

This picture was sexist and inappropriate to be paired with an article on evil. **America’s** readers deserve an apology and a firm resolve to do better in the future!

DONNA SCHNEWEIS
Topeka, Kan.

Congress Behind the Curtain

Thanks to the editors for bringing attention to Congressman David Jolly’s Stop Act legislation in “Dialing for Dollars” (Current Comment, 2/8). It is greatly appreciated. However, I need to point out Mr. Jolly’s bill is aimed at Congressional reform; it is not campaign finance reform. The Stop Act is simply about getting members back to work and doing the job they were elected to do.

I fear the comment misses that and makes readers believe this is a proposal designed to tackle campaign finance; again, that is not the case. Those who would like additional background on the bill can read “Peeling Back the Curtain,” an op-ed Mr. Jolly penned, available at floridapolitics.com

PRESTON RUDIE
Saint Petersburg, Fla.

The writer is the communications director for Representative David Jolly.

Unhappy Alum

In “Students Hike Own Fees” (Current Comment, 2/1), the editors praise students at Loyola University Chicago for voting to raise their own fees “to create a scholarship fund for undocumented immigrant undergraduate students.” So, my alma mater is now supporting illegal activities? Maybe the accounting department can have a class on how to embezzle money? As a former member of the student government, I am pretty disappointed.

J. D. SPARKS
Online Comment

More Justice, More Peace

Re “Our Reason for Being,” by Don Briel, Kenneth E. Goodpaster and Michael Naughton (2/1): I graduated from a Catholic women’s college at a time it was merging with a Jesuit men’s college. We were not just in single sex dorms, but on single sex campuses. We had mostly (maybe all) Catholic professors. We had crucifixes in every classroom; and most professors started class with a prayer. We were required to take six semesters of philosophy and six of theology long before “peace and justice” studies had arrived. My classmates and I grew up in the pre-Vatican II church, doing all the things that some believe would be the magic needed to stem the hemorrhaging of adults from the Catholic Church.

The results? Of my classmates, about 25 percent left the church immediately upon graduation. Over the years, more than half, pushing two-thirds of my friends and classmates left the church. Some are still going to Mass but don’t believe in what the church teaches. Some don’t even believe in God.

There is no panacea, no magical formula to “keep” young adults in the church. Studies show that while young adults still believe in God, they see institutional religion as irrelevant, wrong and/or hypocritical. They love Pope Francis, who speaks of love and

mercy. But they do not return to the church because it is unlikely that his papacy will leave a lasting impact on the church.

The issue of “Catholic identity” in Catholic universities and colleges is not as simple as some would have it. Many young Catholics are far more attracted to the social justice teachings of the church than they are to the judgmental aspects of the doctrinal teachings. Perhaps there is a need for more of those “peace and justice” courses rather than fewer.

JEANNE LINCONNUE
Online Comment

A ‘Seamless’ Philosophy

While I enjoyed “Cupich: Confront Gun Violence,” by Judith Valente (2/1), the author is incorrect in implying that the “seamless garment” image originated with Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago. Cardinal Bernardin coined the phrase, “a consistent ethic of life” at the Gannon lecture at Fordham in 1983.

The phrase “a seamless garment” was first used in 1971 by Eileen Egan, a pacifist associated with Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement, to describe a holistic ethic of life and to challenge those members of the pro-life movement who were in favor of capital punishment. The seamless garment philosophy, according to Ms. Egan, holds that issues like abortion, capital punishment, indiscriminate warfare and euthanasia demand a consistent application of moral principles that value the sacredness of all human life. “The protection of life,” said Ms. Egan “is a seamless garment.” Ms. Egan was the official biographer and friend of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, worked resettling refugees in Europe after World War II and was one of the founders with Dorothy Day of Pax Christi USA, a branch of the International Catholic Peace Movement.

ANTONIA MALONE
Middletown, N.J.

Compete With Planned Parenthood

I was encouraged by the notation on “New Strategies to Support Mothers” in the Signs of the Times (2/1). The effort to broach the public square on the issue of abortion needs more than the “frontal attack” of protest, especially against Planned Parenthood. The Catholic Church has been establishing various facilities to provide women’s health care, but that alone will not be enough. If we can partner with facilities that do not do abortions and that do provide affordable health care to women, we can outflank Planned Parenthood. This would take the wind out of their “affordable cost” sail.

ROBERT KELLER, O.P.
Denver, Colo.

End the Second

Re “A City Under Fire,” by Judith Valente (1/18): Gun control alone is not the answer. Gun control measures will be struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court, as long as the Second Amendment is in effect. First repeal the Second Amendment, and then gun control will become a reality. We the people of the United States need to live with peace in our hearts and extend our respect to human beings and to God’s creatures. The Second Amendment was important at the time it was added to the Constitution. But in 2016, when so much blood has been shed, it is time to repeal it. The above opinion is just a humble thought of this old man, a Knights of Columbus member and a permanent deacon in the Catholic Church, which teaches that God created all creatures, including the unborn, terminally ill and seniors at the gate of heaven. God alone has the right to end any life.

JOSEPH CHATHAPARAMPIL
Online Comment

The Church of Tolerance

In her letter “From Tolerance to Inclusion” (Reply All, 1/4), Jane Bleasdale laments the achievement gap

between white and minority students. As a retired teacher, I think the problem starts in the home, where children spend most of their time. Parents who are educated, who encourage their children to read, etc., usually send better students to classrooms. Minority families often lack educated parents who pass on high expectations for their children. We should challenge all churches to a more robust ministry in building up broken family cultures.

Ms. Bleasdale also includes L.G.B.T.Q. students as among those suffering injustice; she says we should challenge “oppressive structures in our society.” But there is a distinction: One is born a certain race, but one chooses a certain lifestyle. Every single person has immense dignity as a child of God. But a lifestyle at odds with Catholic teaching, like being a practicing homosexual, is not to be condoned.

Some people do not have a solid moral creed like Judaism or Christianity, so they often frown on those who do, preaching instead an “enlightened” tolerance for all, as in, “You’re not wrong and I’m not wrong.” But Pope Francis says he is a sinner. So I guess there is still a difference between right and wrong. Admitting one is wrong is hard, but it opens the door to seeking forgiveness from God, who is mercy.

DAVID B. CONNER
Macon, Ga.

Class Comparisons

Re “Defending the Middle Class” (Editorial, 1/4): The comparison of income quintiles has several limitations due to non-income shifts, and the fact that these quintiles are relative and lend themselves to the sins of jealousy and envy. Even if all quintiles

have improved actual material wealth, but the wealthier advance faster, it is seen as something negative. Another problem with quintile analyses is how quickly things can change for an individual unrelated to economic policies. A large influx of immigrants from a lower-income country can quickly improve their economic situation while appearing to hurt the lower class.

Then there is another cause of the loss of the middle class that has not been mentioned by the editors—the massive breakdown in the family structure, which includes reduced marriages, increased divorces, a hedonistic culture, loss of religious practice, etc. Government policies have unfortunately played a central role in this destruction. This knowledge used to be bipartisan (remember Democratic Senator Moynihan’s warnings), but ideology has now overtaken pragmatism in the big-government wing of American politics.

TIM O’LEARY
Online Comment



CARTOON: PAT BYRNES

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** website (americamagazine.org) and posts on Twitter and public Facebook pages. All correspondence may be edited for length.

GLOBAL TERROR

With Focus on ISIS, Boko Haram Rampage in Nigeria Continues

Recent attacks on civilians in Nigeria renew a grisly debate: Is Boko Haram the world's deadliest terrorist group or should ISIS bear that odious distinction? Though it received relatively little press attention, in 2014 Boko Haram managed to kill far more people in its various rampages than ISIS killed in Iraq and Syria. The extremist group was responsible for 6,644 deaths in 2014, a 300 percent increase from the previous year, according to the Global Terrorism Index. During that time frame, Islamic State killed 6,073.

Altogether Boko Haram's six-year-old Islamic insurgency has claimed 20,000 lives. It has driven 2.5 million from their homes and broken across Nigeria's northern borders.

With international antiterrorism efforts focused on the Middle East, Nigeria's military claimed in December the "technical defeat" of the Islamist terror group because it had driven the militants from key villages. That dislocation however did not prevent Boko Haram from continuing a deadly focus on creating civilian casualties. In January and February, spectacular attacks claimed scores of lives and scorched entire communities.

On Jan. 30 Boko Haram fire-bombed the northern Nigerian village of Dalori. More than 86 people died, including young children, and 62 others were seriously injured, as insurgents lobbed firebombs into homes and other buildings. Days before, a Boko Haram suicide bomber killed 25 people in the Christian community of Chibok, a town previously devastated by the kidnapping and disappearance of more than 200 schoolgirls in April 2014.

And in the early morning on Feb. 9, two of three teen female suicide bombers who had infiltrated a refugee camp detonated their devices: 58 people were killed and 78 wounded. The victims were among 50,000 people taking refuge in the Dikwa camp after being forced from their homes by Boko Haram. The camp is located 53 miles northeast of Maiduguri, the biggest city in the northeast and the birthplace of the Boko Haram insurgency.

The teenage bomber who did not

complete her mission had been outfitted with a booby-trapped vest and sent into Dikwa by Boko Haram to kill as many people as possible. But she tore off the explosives and fled as soon as she was out of sight of her handlers, apparently recognizing that her own parents and siblings were among the refugees. Discovered by local self-defense forces, the girl's tearful account is one of the first indications that at least some of the child bombers used by Boko Haram are aware that they are about to die and to kill others.

"She said she was scared because she knew she would kill people. But she was also frightened of going against the instructions of the men who brought her to the camp," said Modu Awami, a self-defense fighter who helped question the girl.

The girl is in custody and has given officials information about other planned bombings that has helped

them increase security at the camp, said Satomi Ahmed, chairman of the Borno State Emergency Management Agency. Awami said he had no information about how the girl came to be with Boko Haram.

The extremists have kidnapped thousands of people, and there are fears they are turning some captives into weapons. An army bomb-disposal expert told the Associated Press that some suicide bombs are detonated remotely, so the carriers may not have control over when the bomb goes off.

Many of those killed at Dikwa had returned to Nigeria from Cameroon in January only after Nigerian soldiers declared the area safe. But, advocates from New York's Human Rights Watch argue, the desire of the government to return the northeast to normalcy cannot be an excuse to press civilians to return home when they feel these areas are not safe.





SEEKING SAFETY. Rescue workers transport a victim of a suicide bomb attack for treatment at a hospital in Maiduguri, Nigeria, Feb. 10.

AP PHOTO/JOSSY OLA

POLICE REFORM

25 Years Later, Signs of Trouble in Los Angeles

Twenty-five years after the videotaped beating of Rodney King on March 3, 1991, caused a national sensation, little is reported about similar specific acts of police brutality in Los Angeles, which may very well be a sign of the progress that has been made.

And yet shootings by police in Los Angeles County nearly doubled in the last year, to 45 cases from 23, 19 of them fatal. One week in July alone included six different officer-involved shootings. In one a suspect was shot in the back after supposedly attacking officers with his skateboard—an accusation the police involved later admit-

ted was a lie. On Feb. 9 a 22-year-old man was shot and killed by police at a park in Anaheim after complaints about a man knocking on a resident's door and ringing the bell. At press time no weapon had been recovered at the scene of the incident.

A study released by a local National Public Radio station, KPCC, in November reports that between 2010 and 2014 over 375 people were shot by L.A. police; one in four of them had been unarmed. And though African-Americans represent only 8 percent of the county's total population, 24 percent of those fatally shot by police between 2010 and 2014 were African-American.

In many ways the state of California as a whole fares even worse. In 2015, the state ranked first in people killed by police; its 210 victims constituted roughly 20 percent of all those killed by police across the country. And Kern County, located inland in California's Central Valley, ranked first in the nation last year in police-related deaths per capita.

It goes without saying that when it comes to statistics like these, the devil is in the details. The fact that a shooting occurred does not in itself prove an unwarranted use of force—though 375 cases certainly sounds extreme.

But the fact that the KPCC study found that not a single officer in Los Angeles has been prosecuted for an on-duty shooting since 2000 raises further concerns.

As is true in so many other communities grappling with these issues, there are lots of explanations and solutions on offer in Los Angeles—from better training in de-escalation techniques or interacting with the mentally ill to increased use

of Tasers and bean bag shotguns. The L.A. police department recently took the unusual step of instituting an award for officers who do not use deadly force in situations where they could have done so.

Matthew Johnson, an African-American entertainment lawyer recently elected president of the Los Angeles Police Commission, argues that a primary problem is the difficulty the geography of Los Angeles poses to building relationships. "When you walk around New York," he told *Los Angeles Magazine* in February, "you see police officers constantly interacting with people, whether it's in Times Square or a neighborhood in Brooklyn." To have the same number of cops per capita in Los Angeles would require an additional 7,000 officers, and culturally speaking there is not an awful lot of "walking around" in much of the city.

The consequence, Johnson argues, is not only that normal people do not have regular engagements with the police, but that the average officer's instincts become formed to expect only trouble. "Most of our officers are going from call to call.... If you're just dealing with people on their worst days, that's going to give you a skewed perspective on the community you're serving."

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J.



JUSTICE-DRIVEN. U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch speaks about improving relationships between police and their communities on Feb. 8 at the Justice Department in Washington.

AP PHOTO/EVAN VULCCI

Coptic Kidnappings

More than 150 Coptic Christians took part in a sit-in convened on Sunday, Feb. 7, in front of the provincial administration office in Minya, Egypt, to bring to the attention of the authorities the case of an 18-year-old Coptic girl missing for several days. The family of the young woman, resident in the city of Samalot, are convinced that she was kidnapped. Kidnappings that target Christians remain a scourge for the Coptic community in many areas of Egypt. Already several appeals have been launched by Christian organizations to Egyptian authorities, including President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, to ensure that adequate measures are taken to combat this phenomenon. These flash kidnappings usually end up with ransom demands based on the economic capacity of the families of the hostages. But in several cases, the kidnappings have ended with the death of the hostages.

Lent Begins in Kenya

A prominent Kenyan bishop said Lent is a time to celebrate and experience God's mercy, then donated clothing and food to more than 4,000 households in Ngong on behalf of the bishops' conference. Bishop Cornelius Arap Korir of Eldoret called on Kenyans to forget their past experiences and to forgive and love one another as the country moves toward a general election in 2017.

Launching the national Lenten campaign on Feb. 7, Bishop Korir said Kenyans "need to shun corruption, negative ethnicity and radicalization and embrace oneness, tolerance of one another and creation of job opportunities for the youth."

Before the service in the city's cathedral, church leaders joined government officials in a walk through Ngong. Later, the food and clothing were donated to

NEWS BRIEFS

The U.S. bishops' conference announced on Feb. 8 that it is launching a new **National Catholic-Muslim Dialogue** to be headed by Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago. • Just days before Pope Francis was scheduled to visit a prison in Ciudad Juárez, a **brutal fight between rival factions** on Feb. 11 at a different prison in northern Mexico resulted in the deaths of 52 inmates. • Meeting **Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq** on Feb. 10, Pope Francis expressed his hope that Iraq and other war-torn countries would have leaders strong enough to bring divided peoples together. • Yu Zhengsheng, a member of China's Politburo, told faith leaders on Feb. 4 that religious groups must **promote Chinese culture** and become more compatible with socialism. • The president of the Brazilian bishops' conference criticized a proposal by the U.N. Human Rights Commission that countries allow abortion in cases in which the mother was infected with the Zika virus. • On Feb. 9 the Vatican named Natasa Govekar, a Slovenian theologian, as the director of a **new theological-pastoral department** within the Secretariat for Communications. • Pope Francis named **Msgr. Peter B. Wells**, a native of Tulsa, Okla., as the next papal nuncio to South Africa and Botswana on Feb. 9.



Haider al-Abadi greets Pope Francis

households in Ngong's Mathare slum. The bishops' campaign asks Kenyans to pray and reflect on responsible citizenry, care for the environment, family values, insecurity and corruption. In the preface to the bishops' Lenten guide, Bishop Korir said, "Kenya is a blessed country, but when we do not take responsibility of our affairs and when we remove God from our dealings, we lose a lot".

Market Warning

Democracy and market economies go hand in hand but are risky and can be abused if they do not sustain human dignity and support the common good, according to a Vatican economic official. Joseph F. X. Zahra, a Maltese economist who is deputy coordinator of the Vatican Council for the Economy, spoke at a U.N. side event

on Feb. 8 on "Market Economies: Insights and Warnings of Catholic Social Teaching." Zahra said, "An economic system is a theoretical piece of work unless we put people into it." Its results depend on people and whether they are using or abusing the system. Economic systems are operated by people and should be based on principles of freedom and dignity, he said. The people administering the systems must focus on the long-term impacts of their decisions instead of the short-term rewards. According to Zahra, contemporary financial and economic systems, challenged by globalization, inequality, social liberalism and the financial meltdown of the last decade, should be reformed to be more virtuous and reinforce human dignity and human rights in the service of freedom.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

CSI: South Africa

No, the title of this column does not mean that someone in South Africa has plagiarized that globally popular U.S. stable of television series. Nor am I analyzing the state of forensics in this country. This is rather a “crime scene investigation” of a wholly literary type: the dramatic rise in quantity and quality of the crime fiction that has emerged in post-1994 South Africa.

Before this country’s democratic transition, the crime novel had been a very small part of South African fiction output. Though crime featured in both mainstream and genre fiction, few authors were identified with the genre, except perhaps for the journalist James McClure. But he had already relocated to Oxford in the United Kingdom by the start of his career.

But today crime has become a central genre of South African popular fiction. Outstanding among the emerging crime authors, with works published and translated internationally, are Margie Orford, Deon Meyer, Andrew Brown, Jassy Mackenzie, Angela Makholwa and Mike Nicol. Their works depict gritty worlds of criminality and conspiracy, featuring interesting riffs on the standard police officer and private eye personas against backgrounds where serial killers and organized crime syndicates butt heads with the labyrinthine and often corrupt politics of contemporary South Africa.

In these crime stories, the heroes

are complex, often flawed characters: journalists with traumatized pasts, misfit police officers or disgraced former cops, even—in Nicol’s case—former guerrillas turned private security consultants with a tendency to mete out rough justice. There are similarly grim subtexts.

Orford’s Clare Hart novels have as a recurring theme violence against women, an all-too-real phenomenon.

The crime genre’s current popularity is an expression of a new political concern.

Makholwa writes from within the world of the young, new black middle class struggling to find its way amid apartheid’s legacy and the lures of crime and political corruption. The pervasiveness of organized crime and its real or perceived ties to politics feature significantly in Meyer’s books and emerge overtly in Nicol’s “Revenge” trilogy.

The novels of the lawyer and reserve police officer Andrew Brown combine a strongly literary tone, addressing political issues (like racism and xenophobia) head on, along with classical crime fiction tropes of whodunit, why-they-dunnit and the hero at risk. The success of Brown’s combination of genre and literary fiction can be measured by the fact that his *Coldsleep Lullaby* won the 2006 Sunday Times Literary Award, the nation’s most prestigious prize for fiction.

Why, one might ask, is this genre so successful in today’s South Africa?

First, one sees an ideological shift in the South African literary scene since the early 1990s. The pressure is off writers to make their work into anti-apartheid political discourse.

For some critics, the crime genre’s current popularity is an expression of a new political concern, rooted in the sense that democracy, human rights and social justice have not taken root yet. But many contemporary writers would deny the view that crime fiction is the political fiction of present-day South Africa. When I made that proposal at a book festival in Johannesburg a few years ago, I was politely but firmly put in my place.

And yet....

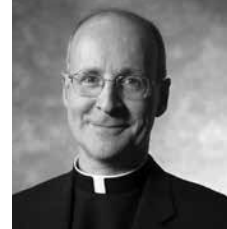
Though authorial views should be respected, on another level it is hard to deny an underlying “politics” in the new South African crime novels that could be the reason for their popularity. Granted that they are primarily what Graham Greene used to call entertainments, in their content these novels echo current events and real South African fears—of crime and violence, of corrupt politicians and police, of genuine insecurity where anarchy is the reverse image of order, raw power that of human rights. This is not political fiction as explicit social critique or offering new visions of governance, but it remains highly political nonetheless.

If one reflects on the logic and structure of the crime novel or thriller—a “normal” context deeply disordered by the crime, the protagonists forced out of relative comfort into crisis, leading to a resolution, however temporary or precarious—we may well be talking about day-to-day life in South Africa. The political intrudes in the private. South Africa’s new generation of crime writers reminds us of that.

Which is why we read them.

ANTHONY EGAN

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A Lenten Mystery

There are many mysteries in the Catholic faith.

Some of the less profound, and perhaps even mildly amusing ones, are the conundrums that I ponder every year during Lent: First, why is there so little time between the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Lent? In some years, like 2016, it seems as if Jesus' hair is hardly dry from his baptism when we start to think about the end of his life. If I were ever put in charge of the liturgical calendar (which is highly unlikely) I'd stretch out Ordinary Time in the early part of the calendar year, so that we can hear more about Jesus' public ministry.

Second, why on Ash Wednesday do we hear a Gospel passage in which Jesus says, "But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others" (Mt 6:17) and then invite everyone to the front of the church to receive ashes on their forehead, with the result that they will be seen to be doing penance? Yes, I am aware that the answer has to do with church tradition, but every year it strikes me as, at the very least, ironic.

Finally, why, if we are not supposed to celebrate a Mass on Good Friday, in order to, among other reasons, underscore our sense of loss, do we nonetheless distribute Communion? Yes, again a complicated answer, but, again, it always strikes me as odd.

But these are mainly liturgical questions, not true mysteries. Each is based in the unfolding of church tradition over the centuries and has a his-

torical and rational explanation.

Then there are the real mysteries of our faith: truths that elude rational analysis. One of the best definitions of that phenomenon comes from the indispensable *Dictionary of Theology*, whose entry on mystery, by Philip Gleeson, O.P., defines it as "something hidden which has been revealed, something unapproachable which invites entry and something unknowable which offers true understanding," like the Trinity, the Incarnation and, ultimately, God.

The mystery that I ponder most frequently is that of Jesus' two "natures," which is closely aligned with the Incarnation. Jesus Christ, as some of the earliest church councils affirmed, is "fully human and fully divine."

For me that is endlessly fascinating. How could someone be a human being and God at the same time? What would it have been like to be around this unique person? Of course we know that both the disciples and crowds were often "amazed" or "astonished" by what he said and did. But what would it have been like to be in his presence? Other tantalizing questions flow from this mystery: Did Jesus understand his divinity from the moment of his conception, as some believe? Or did his divine identity dawn on him gradually, over time?

One point made during my graduate theology studies was that Jesus is always fully human and fully divine. I suppose if you had asked me before graduate school whether I believed that, I would of course have said yes; but like many people I had a tenden-

cy to "compartmentalize" his natures. Some passages seem to privilege his divinity over his humanity, like the physical healings and the nature miracles. Others seem to emphasize his humanity—for example, when he loses his temper with the disciples, calling them a "faithless and perverse generation" (Mt 17:17; Lk 9:41). But here's the rub: He is not human in one event and divine in another. He is both at all times. When he is sawing a plank of

wood in the carpentry workshop, he is fully divine. And when he is raising Lazarus from the dead, he is fully human.

The way we view his two natures influences how we view the events commemorated during Lent, particularly on Good Friday. If we overemphasize his divinity,

we may relegate his sufferings to something "less than" what we mortals undergo. Downplaying his humanity will then subtly influence the way we relate to Jesus.

If we think that Jesus did not really suffer emotionally, physically and even spiritually on the cross, we may be less likely to turn to him in our own struggles. We may think, "What could he ever understand about me?"

If we focus overly on his humanity, however, we may begin to wonder about his power to help us. "Why should I bother asking Jesus for help? He's only human." Keeping both of his natures before us is essential if we want to enter more deeply into his love.

As I said, it's a mystery, but a beautiful one to ponder, especially during the Lenten season.

Jesus is
not human
in one
event and
divine in
another.

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is editor at large of *America* and author of the new book *Seven Last Words: An Invitation to a Deeper Friendship With Jesus*. *Twitter*: @JamesMartinSJ.

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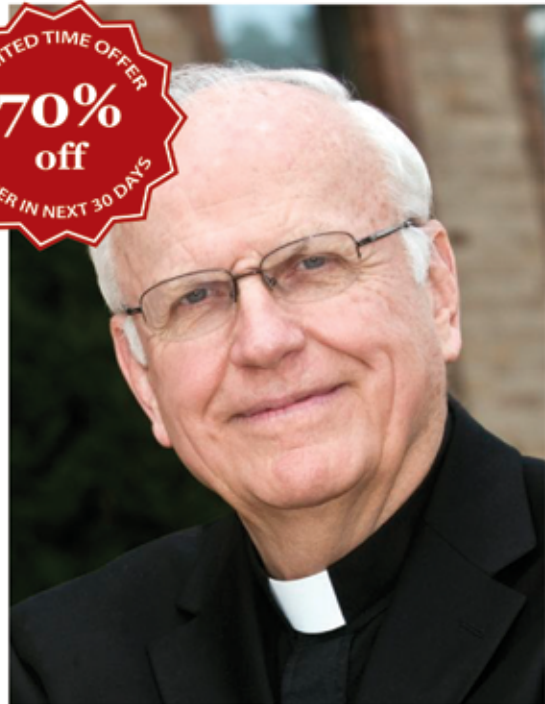
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Liberty's Rise and Fall

A modern history of religious freedom

BY DREW CHRISTIANSEN

When St. John XXIII released his encyclical "Peace on Earth" weeks before his death in 1963, the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray saw in it promise for a new era in church-state relations. Like other editors of *America* at the time, however, Father Murray was skeptical of the dying pope's utopian schemes for peace.

Anti-Communist, staunchly patriotic, the editors were at first less than enthusiastic about the encyclical. In the atmosphere of the Cold War, they mistrusted Pope John's disengagement of Italian bishops from Christian Democratic politics, his rapprochement with Soviet President Nikita Khrushchev and his projection of a global peace built on the promotion of human rights.

In an early response to the papal letter, however, Father Murray found the pope's distinction between popular movements and ideologies as a ray of light. It opened the way, he believed, to a "complete, unitary Catholic doctrine of Church and State" based on religious freedom and the separation of church and state suited to "the political and religious conditions of our times." Far more than Father Murray realized at the time, "Peace on Earth" laid the foundation for a new Catholic political theology, a social-pastoral strategy of engagement with the world in the promotion of human rights and a new image of the church itself as servant to the world.

As a theological expert at the Second Vatican Council, Father Murray would become a principal drafter of the council's "Declaration on Religious Freedom," one of its major achievements. Together with the council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," the declaration opened the way for the church's active presence in the modern world.

A Servant Church

Perhaps the most far-reaching proposition found in "Declaration on Religious Freedom" was the council's affirmation of the church's rights in the public square. "It comes

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within the meaning of religious freedom," the council declared, "that religious communities should not be prohibited from freely undertaking to show the special value of their doctrine in what concerns the organization of society and the inspiration of the whole of human activity" (No. 4).

In the following years, even knowledgeable parties often continued to regard religious liberty narrowly as simply freedom of worship. The declaration makes clear, however, that "Religious freedom...ought to have this further purpose and aim, namely, that men may come to act with greater responsibility in fulfilling their duties in community life" (No. 8).

Furthermore, the council proclaimed, "the Church by virtue of the Gospel committed to her, proclaims the rights of man; she acknowledges and greatly esteems the dynamic movements of today by which these rights are everywhere fostered" ("Church in the Modern World," No. 41). Among the responsibilities the council listed for bishops was speaking out on "the most serious issues" in public and international life ("Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," No. 12).

Under the inspiration of the council (See "Church in the Modern World," Nos. 89-93), lay Catholics were among the pioneers in the human rights struggles of the late 20th century. Laypeople, like Kim Dae Jung in South Korea, Lech Walesa in Poland, John Hume in Northern Ireland and Corazon Aquino in the Philippines, led human rights movements in their countries. A number were named Nobel Peace Prize laureates. In its service to the world the postconciliar church had become a public church, a church in the street as well as in the sacristy.

Religious Liberty for All

The regnant Catholic view prior to the council had been that error had no rights, and the model church-state arrangement was one in which the Catholic Church would be the established church, as in Franco's Spain. For that reason, prior to Vatican II, the Vatican had used its diplomacy to secure the freedom of worship and the administration of the sacraments.

Beginning with the "Declaration on Religious Freedom," however, the church promoted the freedom not just of Catholics, but of all believers. The new teaching on religious freedom altered Vatican diplomacy itself. Before the Second Vatican Council, concordats (treaties with the Vatican) pro-



VOICES FOR FREEDOM. Pope John Paul II talks with Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev during a historic 1989 meeting at the Vatican. The two expressed broad agreement on the need for greater religious freedom in the Soviet Union.

tected the church's right to minister to its people. Now, the church demanded protection for all believers.

At the conclusion of the meeting of the Synod of Bishops for Lebanon in 1997, for example, Pope John Paul II in "L'Espérance Pour le Liban" ("Hope for Lebanon") repudiated "confessionalism," the status quo in Lebanon since independence in 1943. Confessionalism apportioned political power according to sectarian membership, so Lebanon's president is a Maronite Catholic, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of the parliament a Shiite.

Instead the pope urged freedom of religion and equality for all citizens. Enjoyment of the rights of the church, he hoped, would be best secured with the civil freedoms of its members. The civil freedom of citizens became the underlying premise of the Holy See's Middle East policy in treaties with Israel (1993), Jordan (1994), the Palestinian Liberation Organization (2000) and the Palestinian Authority (2015).

Poland: An Early Paradigm

The lived connection between religious liberty and promotion of human rights more broadly can be seen in the case of Poland. Since the Middle Ages, religious freedom, understood as freedom of the institutional church, had been described as "the first freedom," opening space for the growth of other liberties because it limited the reach of secular power and guaranteed a domain in society subject to other

values. In Poland, the maxim proved true once again: The church became the refuge of freedom.

In the 1970s church construction itself became a contentious issue. The identification of Poles with the church was especially strong. While Poland's Communist governments were repressive, when it came to the church they acted cautiously, allowing the church a margin of action not found elsewhere in Soviet-dominated Europe. When the government attempted to restrict church construction, parishioners built churches without permits. Soon churches were rising like mushrooms in a fall rain.

Churches became symbols of collective Polish resistance to Soviet domination. Catholic intellectuals, like Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and then other independent thinkers held their meetings in churches and printed their literature from them. In 1989 Mazowiecki would become the first non-Communist prime minister since 1946.

As bishop, archbishop and later as pope, St. John Paul II showed how important the church's institutional freedom could be to the liberation of an entire people. His pastoral visits as pope in 1979, 1983 and 1987 greatly strengthened popular resistance to Communism. In 1980 his direct intervention with Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev helped prevent Soviet suppression of popular movements. That allowed the Polish political situation to evolve with minimal bloodshed.

By 1987 Poland's President Wojciech Jaruzelski had built a secret dialogue with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and Pope John Paul II, resulting in a series of reforms and confidence-building messages. Their exchanges led eventually to elections and the end of Communist government in Poland. In early 1989, Mr. Jaruzelski also brought together government ministers and the Polish hierarchy to plan the forthcoming elections.

On Dec. 1, 1989, following the revolutions across Eastern Europe, President Gorbachev came to Rome to visit Pope John Paul. The pope told his close advisers afterward that Mr. Gorbachev was prepared "to go all the way on religious liberty and other freedoms."

In some Soviet bloc countries, like Czechoslovakia, Catholics like Tomas Halik joined in the so-called Velvet Revolution with secular leaders like Vaclav Havel. In East Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, through its Peace Prayer Groups, played a role similar to that of the Catholic Church in Poland, providing sanctuary for dissident intellectuals.

In majority-Catholic countries like Poland and the Philippines, as well as in South and Central America, church leaders and justice and peace commissions often took the lead on religious liberty and human rights issues.

In Christian-minority countries—Pakistan and India, for example—justice and peace commissions, sometimes ecumenical in composition, defended the liberty of Christians but also spoke out for the rights of workers and the poor. Religious liberty had been extended from the sacristy to the public square.

Disquiet on the Eastern Front

In the years following the council, in many places the exigent human rights issue was still the freedom of the church. In Eastern Europe, for example, even after the fall of Communism in 1989, the implementation of the right of religious freedom was more complicated than it had been in Poland.

Despite the opportunities Mr. Gorbachev had opened, there was only partial success in taking possession of one-time Catholic churches in Russia and Ukraine because of opposition from the Russian Orthodox Church. Even in the Baltic countries legal title was confused by a succession of different church and state owners.

In Russia itself after 1989, Orthodox metropolitans often adhered to a hegemonic view of state religion. They regarded even Catholic efforts to minister to extant Catholic popula-

tions as poaching on Orthodox territory. In Catholic circles, the desire to re-establish or strengthen a Catholic presence often competed with the goal of promoting ecumenical harmony between Catholics and Orthodox.

In the current Ukrainian crisis, however, a national ecumenism reigns, with the three Orthodox churches united with the Latin (Roman) Catholic and Ukrainian Catholic churches in resistance to Moscow's ambitions for regional dominance.

Overtures in China

China remains a uniquely complex religious liberty case. During the presidencies of Jiang Zemin (1988-2002) and Hu Jintao (2002-12), the Holy See made multiple attempts to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing in hope of normalizing the church's status. In large cities there was informal collaboration between registered (government

approved) and underground Catholic communities, but elsewhere the "two faces" of the Catholic community were sometimes at odds. The status of religious liberty was further complicated because repression often came from local authorities and party officials acting independently of the Beijing government.

Anticipating formal normalization of relations, however, in 2007 Pope Benedict XVI published a letter to the church in China meant to heal internal differences. But normalization did not come. The appointment of bishops has been a litmus-test issue. At stake is the right of the church to determine its own organization and communicate with its clergy and people.

The "Declaration on Religious Freedom" (No. 4) asserts that immunity from coercion applies to the religious community as well as to individuals. In particular, it affirms that "religious communities also have the right not to be hindered, either by legal measures or by administrative action on the part of government, in the selection, training, appointment, and transfer of their own ministers..."

In the late 1990s and early 2000s the two sides began to make progress on episcopal appointments, first with the Holy See legitimizing government-appointed bishops who requested recognition and later with the Chinese electing bishops from a slate approved by the Vatican. In a few cases in recent years, in the interest of internal church unity, newly appointed bishops were announced as the joint successors to both registered and unregistered bishops, suggesting greater collaboration between Rome and Beijing.

Chinese authorities still fear foreign influence and desire

St. John Paul II showed how important the church's institutional freedom could be to the liberation of an entire people.

more authentically Chinese forms of religious expression. A few years ago, for those reasons, Pope Francis' desire to promote greater synodality in church governance and his view of cultural variety as integral to orthodox ecclesiology might have appealed to the Chinese authorities as congenial to Chinese Catholicism. But the heightened suspicion of today's Chinese leadership toward any independent source of authority outside the Communist Party makes that unlikely.

The Catholic Human Rights Movement

The first great explosion in Catholic human rights advocacy took place with the 1973 coup overthrowing the government of President Salvador Allende of Chile. Initially, an ecumenical coalition called the Committee for Peace sought to defend those pursued by the military and to document the military's abuses. When the committee came under pressure from the Pinochet regime, Cardinal Raúl Silva Hernández, S.D.B., took the committee under the protection of the Archdiocese of Santiago with the new title Vicariate of Solidarity.

The vicariate became a model for Catholic human rights offices all over Latin America and then around the world. In the 1970s and '80s, Tutela Legal in San Salvador and the archdiocesan office in Guatemala City gathered documentation and publicized human rights violations. In the courts and the media, they defended prisoners of conscience and

those caught up in the Reagan administration's Contra wars.

In Guatemala, Bishop Juan Gerardi, who had headed a committee that drew up a report on rights violations during that country's civil war (1960–96) called "Nunca Mas" ("Never Again"), was killed in 1998 on the day after making the report public. Later the Bartolomeo de Las Casas Center in Chiapas and the Miguel Pro Center in Mexico City carried on similar work in Mexico.

Over the past 50 years, the promotion and defense of religious liberty have been aided by diplomatic and legal developments. A key step was the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975. The climactic event in the détente between the Soviet Union and the West, the Helsinki Final Act's Chapter VII guaranteed human rights, including "freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief," in 35 signatory states.

Monitoring provisions led to formal review mechanisms in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In the United States, Congress's Helsinki Commission (a joint body of the House and Senate), Helsinki Watch (later Human Rights Watch) and other advocacy groups regularly reported on progress and setbacks in the field. A 1981 U.N. "Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief" also mandated an annual report to the secretary general by an independent consultant.

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Aided by the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment, in the 1970s and 1980s the United States government, along with Jewish defense organizations, put a great deal of energy into freeing Soviet Jews for emigration to Israel. Jackson-Vanik was one religious liberty initiative that had real teeth.

Events of special concern to Catholics, like the assassination of Archbishop Óscar Romero in 1980, the murder of a group of U.S. churchwomen the same year and the killings in 1989 of Jesuits at the University of Central America in El Salvador, ran athwart U.S. foreign policy. They were investigated only after extensive Congressional pressure and the personal involvement of House speaker Thomas P. O'Neill.

Today's Challenges

Major concerns like China aside, the decline of progress in human rights has coincided in large part with the tension between Catholic rights concerns and U.S. strategic interests. Despite the institutionalization of human rights concerns in the State Department under President Jimmy Carter (1977-81) and the more recent establishment of the Office of International Religious Freedom



At al-Mazraq refugee camp near the Yemeni Province of Saada.

and the independent, bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (1998), Catholic human rights and religious liberty concerns have played a limited role in U.S. foreign policy.

We continue to witness the massively destructive results of the 2003 U.S. war of choice in Iraq. The conflict created conditions for the persecution of Christians, leading to a major exodus from Iraq and later Syria, and it exacerbated the division of Sunni and Shiite Muslims. However otherwise undesirable, the secular Baathist regimes of Iraq and Syria had long provided refuge for a variety of Christian and Muslim sects.

Beginning with the Iraq war, the Eastern Churches have been greatly reduced in number in their homelands, first by Sunni jihadists in Iraq and more recently by the Islamic

State in Iraq and Syria. Despite Pope Francis' popularity, his many appeals for Christians in the Middle East have not been heard, it appears, except in the larger strategic context of the fight against ISIS.

U.S. coddling of our Saudi Arabian ally has further embittered Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Saudi-backed Wahhabi missionaries have put minority Shiites at risk all over the Muslim world. In Yemen, moreover, the United States has assisted Sunni Saudi Arabia in its war against Yemen's Houthi minority.

The Saudis regard the Houthis as heretics, exaggerating their political ties to Shiite Iran. For their part, the Houthis took up their rebellion in large part to defend themselves against the imposition of Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia. One decisive step the United States could take to aid religious freedom today and advance the cause of peace would be to cease abetting the worldwide Saudi war against the Shiites from which Christians as well as Shiites, and even many Sunni, suffer.

In 2013 Secretary of State John Kerry established a new Office of Religion and Global Affairs to engage religious communities at home and abroad on areas of common concern. That office has greatly improved the education of the U.S. Foreign Service about religion, and it promises an increased role for religious expertise in making foreign policy. Let us hope that in the decade ahead, with this new expertise, the United States will find inventive ways to promote religious freedom even when it seems in tension with the nation's strategic interests.

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Criminal Politics

This year's presidential race is understandably the most talked-about topic in American politics. Regrettably, a national campaign that monopolizes our attention for more than a year means less attention to state issues, which often affect us more directly. Some of those issues came up in the State of the State addresses delivered by governors this winter; overall, the governors took a more positive tone than we've seen from elect-me-or-we're-all-doomed presidential candidates.

The governors talked about challenges unique to their states—the decline of the sugar industry in Hawaii, the “most tropical Christmas in memory” in the ski resorts of Vermont and the aftermath of tornadoes in Tennessee—and many called for bipartisan efforts to keep their budgets balanced. (States, unlike the federal government, cannot just run deficits when there is no agreement on spending cuts or tax hikes.) Gov. Bruce Rauner of Illinois, a Republican, echoed President Obama's call for nonpartisan redistricting of Congressional districts.

One effort that continues to transcend ideology and party lines is criminal justice reform. Governor Rauner supported a bipartisan committee's proposal to reduce his state's prison population 25 percent by 2025 through the greater use of substance abuse treatment and other rehabilitation programs. Mary Fallin of Oklahoma, a Republican, called for lowering that state's mandatory drug possession sentences, saying: “Let's acknowledge the elephant in the room. Oklahoma's drug possession sentences haven't deterred

substance abuse and have filled our prisons to over capacity.”

Jack Markell of Delaware, a Democrat, boasted about his state's declining prison population, credited in part to community-based supervision programs for nonviolent offenders. Pete Ricketts of Nebraska, a Republican, proposed \$26 million for job-training and work-release programs to help prisoners “avoid becoming repeat customers.” In Alaska, Bill Walker, a Republican, said that fewer prisoners could mean \$500 million in savings to the state over the next decade.

“I am proud to be the governor who has closed more prisons than any governor in the state of New York,” said Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, a boast it is hard to imagine coming from a chief executive in either political party two decades ago. “We have seen a substantial drop in our prison population,” Gov. Nathan Deal, a Republican, reported to his constituents in Georgia, “as thousands of non-violent offenders are being diverted into accountability courts, where they are given a second chance to receive treatments for their addictions.” The governor said that “converting inmates into taxpayers” both saved money and made the state safer. Similarly, Terry Branstad of Iowa, a Republican, called for a “more equitable criminal justice system” and said, “in many cases, tax dollars may be better spent on rehabilitation rather than incarceration.”

Across the states, the consensus on finding alternatives to mass incarceration is remarkable. And for a time, it seemed that the same kind of prog-

ress could be made at the federal level, thanks to an array of supporters ranging from the American Civil Liberties Union to Charles and David Koch, two of the best-known donors to conservative causes.

But last month a bill to ease mandatory minimum prison sentences for nonviolent offenders stalled in the U.S. Senate. The New York Times reported that Mitch McConnell, the majority leader, was reluctant to bring the bill

to the floor and force his fellow Republicans to cast a difficult vote on a “law and order” issue in an election year. Tom Cotton of Arkansas, a Republican, warned against releasing “thousands” of violent felons, but John Cornyn of Texas, a Republican, called this a distortion of the bill's effects.

It is disheartening, but hardly surprising, that a reform movement that has been so successful at the state level may be running aground in Washington, D.C. And except for Rand Paul, who has withdrawn from the race, none of the Republican presidential candidates seem interested in the issue. This is an important omission, as states often follow the lead of national elections, as well as the national news media. If we return to a climate in which both parties try to label the other as “soft on crime,” the sensible reforms that are reducing prison populations at the state level may be in jeopardy. We hope that instead, Congress learns from the states (or the “laboratories” of democracy, as Justice Louis Brandeis termed them) on this issue.

ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN is an associate editor of *America*. Twitter: @RobertDSullivan.



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A Global Peril

The state of religious freedom today

BY ELIAS D. MALLON

The status of religious freedom in the world is not something to celebrate these days. The situation in the Middle East remains dire. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced, and religious minorities are being persecuted and slaughtered. But this sad state of affairs is not unique or limited to that region. South Asia has recently seen a disturbing increase of sectarian violence against Christians and Muslims. Together the Middle East and South Asia are home to most of the major religious traditions of the planet. Not surprisingly, they are also home to many of the violations against religious freedom.

“Freedom of thought, conscience and religion” is guaranteed as a human right in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which most countries of the world have bound themselves by treaty and international law. Nevertheless, the sad fact is that abuses against freedom of religion are probably the most widespread and varied of all abuses. Issues involving the freedom of religion vary from the requirements of the Affordable Care Act in the United States to the genocidal tactics of ISIS in Syria and Iraq. They run the gamut from the legal to the existential.

In evaluating the status of religious freedom in the world there are, on the one hand, almost more resources than one can handle. The U.N. special rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief regularly reports to the U.N. secretary general on the status of freedom of religion. The Pew Research Center also reports on restrictions and hostilities toward religion on the level of governments and society. Its last report, “Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities,” appeared in February 2015. The European Parliament Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance published its latest annual report, subtitled “The State of Freedom of Religion or Belief in the World,” in June 2015.

While these studies are crucial to understanding the situation of religious freedom in the world, events outrun the official reports, which are always at least one year out of date. By monitoring the news throughout the world, an interested reader has no trouble keeping up to date with a steady



CRIES FOR HOME. Syrian refugee children in front of Macedonian riot police at the Greek-Macedonian border, near the village of Idomeni, Greece, Aug. 21.

CNS PHOTO/YANNIS BEHRAKIS, REUTERS

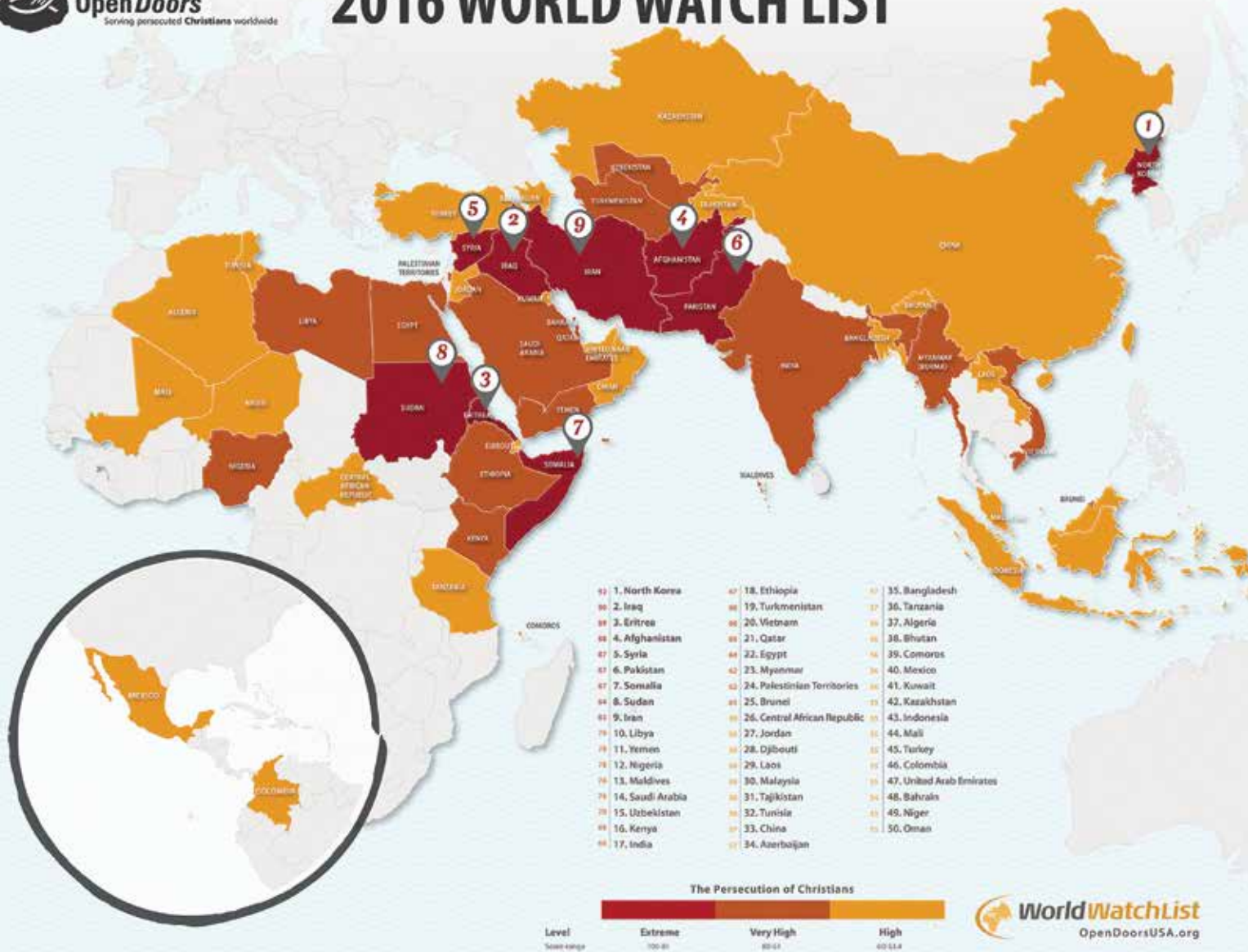
stream of almost daily reports about the persecution of one or another religious group.

The emergence of ISIS in Syria and Iraq in June 2014 added to the misery of religious minorities already under great strain from the breakdown of society in Iraq and the civil war in Syria. The plight of Christians in the Middle East has received considerable coverage in the media in the past two years. Groups have been formed to defend and protect Christians and to accept (in some cases exclusively) Christian refugees. Thus, for most people in the Western world, the plight of Christians is relatively well known and documented.

We often hear that Christians are “the most persecuted religious group in the world.” To some extent that is true, largely because Christians are the largest and most geographically dispersed of all the world’s religions. Demographically, Christians offer the most convenient “targets of opportunity” for those who would abuse freedom of religion.

It would, however, be a serious error to think that the persecution of Christians around the world is unique or somehow worse than the persecution of other religious groups. There are other religious minorities enduring persecutions that are literally existential. While one hears of the tragic and unthinkable “extinction of Christians in the Middle East,” other religious groups, like the Yazidis, Sabaks and others in Iraq, and the Rohingya in Myanmar, face total extinction worldwide, with few advocates on the world stage.

ELIAS D. MALLON, S.A., is external affairs officer for Catholic Near East Welfare. He has been involved with nongovernmental organizations at the United Nations since 2006 and with the Christian-Muslim Dialogue since the 1980s.



Disturbing Trend in India

The Middle East deservedly receives a great deal of media coverage over persecution of religious minorities, as some of the most egregious violators of freedom of religion are found there. The group Open Doors sees Iraq, Syria and Iran as among the nine countries in the world where Christians are enduring “extreme persecution.” The European Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief notes: “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the worst violators of FoRB in the world. The degree to which the country restricts the right of freedom of religion or belief other than Sunni Islam is unique and extreme even by the standards of other violators.”

But abuses against freedom of religion and religious minorities are not restricted to the Middle East. Ever since it achieved independence in 1947, India has experienced sectarian tensions and outbreaks of violence. Tensions between Hindus and Muslims resulted in the creation of Pakistan



Hindu holy men shout slogans and block a road during a protest against alleged violence against Hindus in Jammu, India, July 19.

(and later Bangladesh), but especially in northern India there have still been clashes between Hindus and Muslims and, to a lesser extent, Sikhs for decades.

Recently, there has been a disturbing increase of sectarian

violence throughout India. Narendra Modi, who was elected prime minister in 2014, is a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party and also a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a right-wing Hindu nationalist movement that has been at times involved in sectarian violence. Some Hindu extremists—including members of the B.J.P.—have initiated *ghar vapsi*, or “homecoming,” supposedly to convert Indian Christians and Muslims “back home” to Hinduism. Monetary rewards have been offered for converting a Christian or a Muslim to Hinduism.

As reported in *Christianity Today*, the Evangelical Fellowship of India documented 600 violent attacks against Muslims and Christians in India in the 300 days from May 2014 (when Prime Minister Modi took office) through March 2015. Christian churches have been attacked and burned. Christians have been beaten or killed. In March 2015, a 74-year-old nun was assaulted and raped in Ranaghat, West Bengal, during an attack on the Convent of Jesus and Mary School.

Few, if any, of the attacks on Muslims or Christians have resulted in arrests, much less convictions, under the present government. Akanksha Narain of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies has sharply criticized the Modi government for its silence when faced with sectarian violence. It does not seem that the sectarian violence in India is going to abate soon.

Looking Inward

Few people in the West have heard of the Rohingya. They are a Muslim ethnic group that has lived for over 1,000 years in the northwest of what is now Myanmar (Burma). Although they have been living in that area since about the eighth century, they are not accepted as citizens by the Myanmar government. Denied the rights and protections of citizenship, the Rohingya have been described as “the most persecuted people on earth,” according to a report last year in *The Economist*. As many as 140,000 refugees have been interned in refugee camps in Myanmar.

In a situation eerily similar to that in Europe, Rohingya refugees are flooding Bangladesh, Thailand and Malaysia,

where they often receive a very cold welcome. The government in Myanmar has offered the Rohingya citizenship on the condition that they renounce Islam and accept Buddhism, the religion of the majority in that nation. Understandably, few of the Rohingya have been willing to do this. As a result, almost 1.3 million Rohingya live a precarious existence in Myanmar, disenfranchised and persecuted in their own country, not welcomed by neighboring countries and, for the most part, unknown to the rest of the world.

The situation in the Middle East and these two examples, one from the largest democracy in the world and one from a relatively unknown group that is threatened with extinction, indicate that the status of religious freedom in the world at the start of 2016 is not good. Discrimination and outright persecution are fairly widespread. The Pew Research Center report shows that religious minorities continue to suffer for their faith. There is a further note, however, that is disturbing but which might point to a possible solution.

Although there are no “pure” conflicts (i.e., purely religious, purely ethnic, purely political, etc.) and there are inevitably many forces that play primary or secondary roles in conflicts, the presence of sectarian violence is deeply disturbing. And although there are countries that profess to be atheist and that—sometimes violently—discourage religion, most of the countries where freedom of religion is abused have some type of “religious marker” in their self-identity. All too often the conflict is between two or more groups who self-identify religiously. In parts of the Middle East, it is Muslims against Christians, Yazidis, Mandaeans and others. In other parts of the region, it is Sunnis against Shiites, Ahmadiyyah and Zaidis. In India, it has been Hindus against Muslims and Christians. In Myanmar, it is Buddhists against Muslims. Not long ago, it was Catholics against Protestants in Northern Ireland and Orthodox against Orthodox in Ukraine.

This is not to say that religion is the sole source of the problem. It is, however, to recognize that in far too many places religion is at least part of the problem. Patterns exist around the world that simply cannot be ignored—or are ignored at our own peril. Twenty-five years ago the Swiss priest-theologian Hans Küng gave a lecture at the University of California in San Diego titled “No Peace Among Nations Until Peace Among Religions.” The sad status of freedom of religion in the world and especially for religious minorities is not something that can be improved by some magic formula. Nevertheless, Professor Küng’s point is very important. All believers need to recognize how our own traditions have helped fuel conflicts. Each of our traditions has been at one time or another not only a victim but a victimizer. We then need to work courageously within and between our traditions to build a world in which freedom of religion is not merely an idea but a reality. ▲



Refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh in Julok, Indonesia, on May 20.

CNS PHOTO/STRINGER, EPA

Peace Is Our Calling

Catholics on the front lines of religious freedom advocacy

BY MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE

Sister Maria Hanna, prioress of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena in Iraq, had a decision to make. The Islamic State's killing campaign across the Nineveh Plain threatened the primarily Christian community of Qaraqosh outside of Mosul, Iraq, on Aug. 7, 2014. The peshmerga, security forces from the neighboring Kurdish region of Iraq, had been defending the area but were returning to Erbil. The roads were filled with Christian and Muslim families fleeing the Islamic State, also known as ISIS.

In theory, "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion." This is international law, protected in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In practice, religious persecution is on the rise.

How are Catholic groups protecting and advancing international religious liberty in response to this growing threat? Religious actors bring three "I's" to the public sphere: institutions, ideas and imagination. Catholic actors working across national borders bring a deep bench of institutions, rich ideas and religious imagination to international religious freedom issues. But the far-flung breadth and depth of institutions carry costs as well, particularly in translation, communication and coordination. Consider what followed for the Dominican sisters in Iraq.

A Reluctant Exodus

The phones rang nonstop with impassioned pleas, imploring the sisters to leave, warning it was not safe for them to remain. But the sisters wanted to stay. While all around them people fled, the sisters gathered for an hour to pray just be-

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fore midnight. After receiving Communion, they discerned that they must join the exodus, accompany the people of Qaraqosh and flee ISIS.

The sisters crammed tightly into cars with nothing but the clothes on their backs. A journey that would usually take one hour instead took 18 hours. The road surged with refugees on foot and in every conceivable conveyance. Within a day of arrival in the Kurdish Iraqi city of Erbil, the sisters—refugees in their own country—set up a health clinic in a tent to minister to the displaced peoples fleeing ISIS. Within two weeks they expanded the clinic to two temporary buildings. Today they serve thousands in the Mart-Shmouni Medical Health Center for displaced persons, run the Annunciation (Al-Bishara) school and post updates by email and social media to their Dominican family and supporters. Ten Dominican sisters, however, weakened by the ordeal, died.

People caught in war zones rarely have the time and opportunity to address international audiences, but one of the sisters, Diana Momeka, O.P., did just that. She traveled to

Washington, D.C., and on May 13, 2015, testified before the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and members of Congress regarding the plight of Christians and minorities in Iraq and Syria—then promptly returned to the refugee camps to continue her work with the sisters' new nongovernmental organization, the Humanitarian Nineveh Relief Organization. The war still rages, and people cannot return home; ISIS has destroyed their homes and churches. Internally displaced persons, often called I.D.P.'s, still need sustainable housing, education, health care, transportation and jobs.

'First Generation' Advocacy

Unfortunately, struggles like those facing the Dominican sisters are on the rise, requiring redoubled advocacy. A collaborative international research project called Under Caesar's Sword documents Christian responses to violations of international religious freedom (often referred to as I.R.F.). Led by the Center for Civil and Human Rights at the University of Notre Dame, and the Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University, the project recently convened international scholars and practitioners to mark the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on Religious Freedom".

Catholics may seem unlikely advocates of religious liberty. For centuries, Catholics persecuted non-Catholics. "Error" had no rights. The horrors of the Holocaust and Second World War, the end of colonialism and the expansion of the church in developing countries led to a new Catholic position on church-state relations, culminating in the council's affirmation of religious freedom as the foundational human and civil rights.

Today myriad church institutions combine humanitarian assistance with advocacy for the protection of persecuted people. Catholic Relief Services, the Caritas network and Jesuit Refugee Service provide sustainable housing and humanitarian assistance to refugees and I.D.P.'s in Iraq and Syria, as well as for those who leave, while also advocating internationally for greater aid and diplomacy to end the wars. The Catholic Near East Welfare Association, Aid to the Church in Need and the Knights of Columbus help to rebuild churches, schools and health clinics for the I.D.P.'s and refugees. The Knights of Malta provide assistance to refugees in perilous journeys to Europe. Women's religious congregations and Catholic bishops' conferences work on the front lines of conflict and also press governments and international organizations to protect persecuted people and religious freedom. Peace and advocacy groups from Sant'Egidio to Pax Christi work to end the wars that force out Christian communities. Some focus primarily on I.R.F. advocacy, like Dr. Paul Bhatti, advisor to the prime minister of Pakistan for minority affairs, who took that dangerous

job after his brother Shahbaz Bhatti was assassinated by the Taliban while serving in the same position.

The "first generation" of I.R.F. advocacy in the United States led to the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and the creation of the position of ambassador at large for international religious freedom at the State Department, as well as the nonpartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which aims to better integrate I.R.F. into foreign policy. Catholics serve on the commission, and these first-generation efforts have survived congressional threats to defund them.

Catholics have also helped to develop new I.R.F. advocacy models abroad. Ambassador Andrew Bennett is Canada's first ambassador for religious freedom (and a Catholic). The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, an informal network of parliamentarians and legislators from 50 countries, who advance I.R.F., began in 2014 and met in tandem with Pope Francis' visit to the United Nations in September 2015.

Interconnected Action

These examples show Catholic networks using all three "I's" to advance religious freedom and aid persecuted people. In politics, we call these groups that work for common values across borders transnational advocacy networks. In the church we use the terms body of Christ and communion of saints. We are all connected, as Jesus showed us, and as Pope Francis reminds us in this Year of Mercy. Jesus himself was a Middle Eastern refugee from the Roman district of Greater Syria persecuted for his minority religious views.

Religious demographics leave Catholic institutions well positioned to advocate for I.R.F. Demographically, Buddhism and Hinduism never left the cradle of their birth. According to Pew research data, 99 percent of Buddhists and Hindus live in Asia. Almost all Jews live in only two countries: the United States and Israel. Nearly two-thirds of Muslims live in Asia. Christianity, with Catholics as its largest group, is the most evenly distributed religion geographically, with believers all around the globe. Thus when persecution happens in Nigeria, Pakistan or Iraq, it is not happening to "others;" it is happening to "us," to people with whom we are in relation through our common faith networks of sisters, parishes, bishops, schools, universities, hospitals and aid and advocacy organizations. Our linked networks help move us beyond the "globalization of indifference" that Pope Francis talks about so eloquently.

Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Internationalis, for example, have served in the Middle East for many decades, long before the current attacks by ISIS. C.R.S., Caritas and Jesuit Refugee Service serve all vulnerable people, based on need, not creed. These organizations serve persecuted peoples wherever they are. They bring humanitarian assistance

to conflict-stricken areas so people in can stay in their home countries wherever possible, directly countering ISIS's genocidal efforts. When people choose to flee, C.R.S., Caritas and J.R.S. serve them all along their flight path and in the neighboring host countries (Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey for Syrian and Iraqi refugees).

Solidarity, subsidiarity and integral human dignity are the groups' operating procedures. They hire local refugees and I.D.P.'s to provide jobs and dignity and to address local needs. For the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Jesuit Refugee Service has launched a campaign called Mercy in Motion, which works to improve the education of refugees. Young people fleeing war and persecution lose not only their homes but their schooling, making them vulnerable to a lifetime of poverty and unemployment. For Pope Francis, this is not only a humanitarian imperative but a religious-freedom strategy, as education can help refugees "grow in self-confidence, to realize their highest inherent potential and to be able to defend their rights as individuals and communities." The Mercy in Motion campaign aims to create more Sister Dianas and Dr. Bhattis—people who can fight for the rights of their persecuted communities.

Peace or Apocalypse?

Catholic groups also take a holistic approach, advocating for an end to the root causes of persecution, to end the wars

and repression that cause people to flee for their lives. They believe that peace is possible, peace is practical and peace is our calling.

This differs from some I.R.F. religious advocacy groups, who believe that current conflicts in the Middle East signal apocalyptic end times, that peace between Christians and Muslims is not possible or advisable, that "error has no rights" and that Christians should not work for peace, as this would interfere with God's will for a coming battle between good and evil, Christians and Muslims. Some Christian I.R.F. advocacy groups focus on smuggling Bibles into communist and other dictatorial countries. Their advocacy and aid is directed only or primarily to Christians. Apocalyptic visions divide peace from justice; they trim religious freedom to merely a defense of Christians, not a defense of all, and do not tie this work to a larger effort for peace.

The Catholic Church is committed to working with other faiths for peace and justice and has a deep bench of institutions sharing common ideas. Catholic Relief Services receives money from the Islamic Relief organization and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But these extensive networks are also a challenge. Translation costs alone make international meetings expensive. Groups are not always on the same page and may disagree on tactics. For example, local Christians often want sustainable eco-

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conomic investments to be able to stay in persecuted countries, while some in the diaspora community favor assistance to help more Christians escape and resettle in third countries as refugees.


Related to this, many Catholics in the Middle East and North Africa do not explicitly refer to the persecution of Christians; they do not want to single themselves out for special treatment while so many Muslims are suffering. They understand that their safety and their ability to remain in or ever return to their homes depends entirely on rebuilding strong and resilient ties with their Muslim neighbors. Thus when nationalist parties oppose the building of mosques in Italy, or when Catholics support political candidates and policies that seek to ban Muslims from the United States, this hurts persecuted Christians and plays into the narrative of violent groups like ISIS. It is necessary to model I.R.F. at home if it is to be respected abroad.

Put 'Mercy in Motion'

When I travel to visit Sister Diana later this year at the invitation of the local church, I will travel with architecture professors from the Catholic University of America, who will create architectural plans for sustainable refugee housing for Iraqis; with C..U.A. law professors who work on the genocide resolutions making their way through legislatures; with C.U.A. language professors working to save the

Aramaic language; and with doctors and medical students from Georgetown University's Global Surgical and Medical Support Group, who will assist in Sister Diana's clinic.

I also will take along drawings and cards from my daughter's first Communion class to Sister Diana's first Communion class, in a simple gesture of solidarity among 7-year-olds. When I return, I will report to government officials and I.R.F. advocacy groups, and our Under Caesar's Sword book will document the stories of persecuted peoples. Our efforts will not change the calculus of ISIS forces, but they may help bolster the persecuted. Pope Francis urges us to act in solidarity with the vulnerable, to put mercy in motion, so that those who have lost their homes will not also lose their hope. I.R.F. advocacy is a long game, not generally rewarded by quick victories.

But there is much we can do to support the persecuted today, while pressing for sustainable peace and I.R.F. in the longer term. When Sister Diana testified to U.S. policymakers, she said that for the first time in 1,600 years, the church bells were silent on the Nineveh Plain. When the State Department published its latest report on international religious freedom, Ambassador David Saperstein paraphrased Sister Diana in the lead for the report. When a Jewish rabbi and U.S. ambassador quotes an Iraqi Catholic nun, we know our transnational advocacy networks on international religious freedom are working. 

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Restore the Soul

Report From Vietnam

The struggle between government and religion

BY THOMAS REESE AND MARY ANN GLENDON

Religion in Vietnam today looks markedly different than it did 40 years ago. This is the message we repeatedly heard during a recent trip to Vietnam. Vietnamese faithful conveyed, on the one hand, how religious freedom has expanded in the last four decades. On the other, they believe many government officials still misunderstand religion and the positive role it can play in society, instead subscribing to outdated fears and prejudices about the right to freely practice one's faith.

After the war ended in 1975, Vietnam's Communist leaders severely constrained religious freedom in a number of ways, including outright bans on religious organizations and their activities. Most religious leaders had opposed the Communist revolution, fearing what would happen if atheistic Marxists took over. After the war, the predicted bloodbath did not occur, but the new government confiscated religious property, imprisoned many religious leaders and persecuted many of their followers. Christians in particular were seen as tools of foreign oppression, while members of some of the local religions, like the Cao Dai, were targeted for having fielded troops to fight the Communists.

While markedly better today, Vietnam still has a long way to go before it meets the international standards to which it has officially agreed, like Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In time, the regime moved from full-bore state persecution to state control, creating a government-sponsored Buddhist organization and a government-sponsored Cao Dai. Those who continued to practice with unsanctioned religious organizations were frozen out and sometimes even "excommunicated" by the established religious authorities. This made them "dissidents" to both their faith and the state. Catholics avoided being co-opted under a government-sponsored entity like the Patriotic Association in China, but the government kept the clergy on a short leash and continues to play a direct role in approving candidates for bishops selected by the Vatican.

A Complex Situation

In order to better understand the current situation, we visit-

THOMAS J. REESE, S.J., and MARY ANN GLENDON are members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Father Reese was editor of *America* (1998-2005) and is now senior analyst for *The National Catholic Reporter*. Professor Glendon is the Learned Hand Professor of Law at Harvard University and a former U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See.

ed Vietnam at the end of August as part of a delegation from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief abroad, and to give independent policy recommendations to the president, secretary of state and Congress. What the delegation learned will become part of the commission's official findings—for example, in its annual report on religious freedom.

The situation on religion in Vietnam is complex and at times confusing. On the one hand, Catholic churches are packed and vocations plentiful; the government recently granted Catholics permission to found a university-level institute of theology in the South. Catholics can even hold government jobs, and it is not uncommon for party members to send their children to Catholic preschool programs or to Catholic universities in the United States.

On the other hand, we heard credible reports corroborating the commission's past findings that police often harass and assault religious followers from independent, unregistered religious organizations, including many Protestant churches.

In general, the Catholic Church has fewer problems with the government than Protestant churches; state-sponsored religious groups do better than independent groups, and registered bodies do better than those that are not.

To achieve legal status, religious organizations must register with the government, without which they are considered illegal and cannot rent or own property. Registration requires religious organizations to report their membership, leadership, beliefs and activities. Even for registered organizations, many activities require the permission of the local, provincial and/or national government. If a group wants to open a new church, for example, or to move a minister from one church to another, it needs government approval.

But even government approval does not solve all problems. For example, one group received permission to open another house church but had difficulty getting a rental because landlords did not want the extra police scrutiny that would come with the presence of a church on their property.

The Vietnamese government is currently drafting a new law to govern religion. Before visiting Vietnam, we studied the fourth draft, which largely put into law what in the past had been done by ordinance and decree. The draft stipulated



PRAYERS FOR FREEDOM. Protesters hold candles during a Mass at Thai Ha Redemptorist Church in Hanoi, Vietnam, on Dec. 27. Vu Minh Khanh, center, holds an image of her husband, Nguyen Van Dai, who was badly beaten by unknown attackers and arrested in December for anti-state “propaganda.”

a number of religious activities in addition to registration that required government approval, including several clauses governing the approvals required when groups select or move religious personnel. This example became more poignant after learning from one group during our visit that half the candidates they proposed to become pastors had been rejected by the government.

While in Vietnam, we learned the government is currently working on a fifth draft that appears, in some instances, to have downgraded “approvals” to “notifications.” Although requiring groups to notify the government of their activities is still problematic, each language modification from “approve” to “notify” is a significant step forward for Vietnam.

Some religious groups reject registration on principle, choosing instead to maintain their independence from state control. These groups routinely suffer harassment from the police, as do those which publicly complain about the ill-treatment they experience and those alleged to have contacts with foreign and/or human rights organizations.

Factors Affecting the Faithful

After listening to numerous religious leaders, we concluded that the scope and degree of government intervention, including sometimes violent intervention, often depended on a number of conditions over which religious organizations have little control.

First, religious organizations and individuals are at great risk if authorities believe they are a threat to the government or the Communist Party. Óscar Romero, the murdered Roman Catholic archbishop known for preaching on social justice and human rights, would not be tolerated in Vietnam

any more than he was in El Salvador. Religious organizations, therefore, are forced to suppress their prophetic role if they want to survive in Vietnam. This means abandoning support for anything that may be perceived as contrary to party policy, like democracy and human rights. Activists openly supporting these basic freedoms, including Catholics and Protestants, have been imprisoned.

In 1980, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Vietnam issued a pastoral letter saying that good Catholics must be good citizens, which pleased government officials and opened the way for fewer restrictions. Likewise, Muslim leaders stress that their religion requires their followers to observe their country’s laws as long as this does not violate their belief in one God or interfere with their duty to pray.

On the other hand, government officials become nervous when a local pastor has more credibility and authority in his village than the local party and government officials. For example, when the local officials tell demonstrating villagers to go home, they ignore him, but if the pastors say, “Go home,” they obey.

Likewise, the Redemptorists, a Catholic religious order, suffered harassment because it allowed dissidents to meet on its property. The Redemptorists are also in a dispute over land being confiscated for development by the government, which is not inclined to be nice to “troublemakers.” Last year, the order received a new provincial superior who is taking a less assertive stance, which may cause the government to ease up on them.

Second, the state’s single-minded commitment to maintaining public order takes primacy over religious freedom and indeed many other freedoms. This puts severe restraints

on evangelization. Knocking on doors or handing out pamphlets on the streets or in a public park can prompt police intervention. Independent Buddhists and Cao Dai believers who refuse to join the state-sponsored organization are also at great risk.

Those who actively evangelize among ethnic minorities in the highlands have especially run into trouble, although they say that conflicts with the government often calm down after evangelizing in a village has successfully converted most villagers. But such transitions can take decades. Others, like the Mormons and Muslims, navigate restrictions by limiting their converts to those who approach them for instruction at their places of worship rather than risk problems with the government by actively proselytizing.

Third, the wide latitude given local officials to interpret and enforce religious policy according to their own caprices contributes to an inconsistent, unpredictable environment. Some religious organizations have the good fortune to operate in provinces where officials bear no particular antagonism toward religion or ethnic minorities. Almost every group we met said they experienced more problems in some provinces than others. Many pointed to the Central Highlands as a problem area, where any activity among the ethnic minorities makes government officials nervous, often resulting in harsh repression. These ethnic groups prize their independence, and some were allies with Americans against the Communists.

In these provinces, it is difficult to get government approval for new houses of worship or religious activities. Some local officials fear religious leaders who have more authority among the populace than they do. Some are simply old guard who still believe that a heavy hand is needed to control things. This mentality at times leads to acts of police brutality, which instead of solving conflicts makes matters worse. One national official frankly complained of the incompetence of some of these local officials. Whatever the case, the central government rarely steps in to protect religious groups from provincial abuse. Local officials are rarely held to account for their actions.

Fourth, since trust can be a critical factor in reducing problems with local officials, some religious leaders take pains to establish personal relationships with government officials. One church leader told us how he got a policeman friend to introduce him to the police official in charge of religion in his area. He then invited the official to his church services. His goal was to establish trust through transparency and dialogue. Hierarchical organizations like the Catholic Church

are better equipped for this because there is a church official who can speak with authority for his flock. Trust and understanding, once established on both sides, can help alleviate suspicions and ultimately result in local officials backing off; unfortunately, this process often takes a long time.


When trust is lacking and suspicions high, the government maintains an intimidating presence in religious affairs. In fact, a number of the people we met told us that they had been visited by government officials prior to our visit. It was clear that the government wanted them “on message” and was suspicious about what they might say to a U.S. government delegation. One group stayed away from their homes the night before meeting us so that the police could not keep them from leaving their houses.

Vietnamese religious leaders attempt to navigate these four conditions in order to survive, with varying degrees of success, but the situation obviously is far from the ideal of religious freedom as articulated in international law.

Vietnam has made some progress in religious freedom since the dark days following the Communist takeover in 1975, and

this offers hope that genuine and enduring improvements that meet international standards are possible. It is also clear that Vietnamese officials want to have good relations with the United States, and they know that religious freedom is an issue close to our hearts. Many officials realize that beating up believers is not worth while if it sours their country’s relationship with the United States, but too many officials still believe heavy-handed tactics are the way to go.

How Vietnam respects and protects religious freedom also has implications beyond its own borders. Violations of religious freedom are all too common throughout Southeast Asia. Vietnam’s neighbors—particularly Laos, which similarly has a Communist government and intently mimics Vietnam with respect to rights and freedoms—pay close attention to Vietnam’s actions and their impact on relations with the international community, including the United States. Clearly, Vietnam has a lot at stake.

Will religious freedom in Vietnam ever meet international standards, or have improvements plateaued? A law on religion that simply endorses the status quo will be bad news. However, if it reduces requirements for government approval and reporting, this will be a sign that things are heading in the right direction. But unless the government pulls back from its intrusive and thuggish treatment of independent, registered and unregistered religious organizations, no one can say that Vietnam has reached the level of religious freedom required of a state under international law. 

When trust is lacking and suspicions high, the government maintains an intimidating presence in religious affairs.

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A BETTER PATH. Pakistani men at Friday prayers in the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) on July 10, 2009, in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Islamic Awakening

An ancient faith encounters modernity

BY DANIEL PHILPOTT

There is a culture war in the West over Islam. It has flared up again following last year's attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, the daily predations of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and the ongoing violence of Boko Haram in Nigeria; but the contretemps has roiled through every major violent episode involving Islam at least since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Hawkish voices say that Islam is hard-wired for violence and incompatible with democracy and human rights and that the West must fight a long civilizational struggle against this threat. Dovish voices hold that Islam, like every religion, is historically malleable and diverse, home to a few extremists but otherwise hospitable to human rights and democracy; that the West's history of colonialism and military aggression is responsible for no small part of Islam's problems; and that dialogue and peacebuilding are called for. Along these lines, the two sides square off, again and again.

Who is right? Might the culture war be mitigated or rendered more complex? Progress begins with identifying the right criterion for a peaceful religion. Often, tolerance is proposed as the measure. The trouble with tolerance, though, is that while it implies restraint from violence toward or co-existence with minority groups, it is temporary, strategic and reversible, much like a truce. One of history's most famous instances of tolerance was the Edict of Nantes in 1598, in which the King Henry IV of France decreed that Protestant Huguenots would be permitted to worship in a predominantly Catholic France. Two generations later, however, in 1685, Henry's grandson King Louis XIV revoked Nantes, outlawing the Huguenots and forcing their expulsion.

DANIEL PHILPOTT is professor of political science and peace studies at the University of Notre Dame.

A better criterion is religious freedom. Enshrined in the leading human rights conventions and in state constitutions around the world, religious freedom is widely affirmed as a fundamental and permanent principle of justice, not to be abandoned. It includes but is more robust than abjuring violence and discrimination, calling for broad respect for persons and communities in the practice and expression of religion. A principle by which people of different faiths who inhabit the same territory live together as citizens enduringly, it is an apposite yardstick for judging whether a religion is peaceful and compatible with human rights or violent and divisive.

A Closer Look

How does Islam fare by the criterion of religious freedom? From a global satellite view, the hawks appear to be closer to the mark. The sociologists Brian Grim and Roger Finke show in their book *The Price of Freedom Denied* that 78 percent of Muslim-majority countries carry high levels of state restrictions on religion, compared with 43 percent of all other countries and 10 percent of Christian countries, while 83 percent of Muslim-majority countries have high levels of social hostilities (that is, carried out by nonstate groups like terrorist cells) as compared with 30 percent of all other countries and 16 percent of Christian countries. Prevalent among today's Muslim jurists is a premodern doctrine that enjoins the state to promote Shariah law—or the principles of Islam—in all areas of life and sanctions the state to enforce it through coercion.

Zooming in closer, however, Islam appears more complex, as the doves would have it. Judged by the data found in a widely cited 2009 report of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Global Restrictions on Religion," of roughly 47

Muslim-majority countries, 12, or just over one-fourth, are ranked “low” on a Government Restrictions Index—meaning that they are the most religiously free. Although these states are a minority, they are too numerous to be dismissed as anomalies. Making the case further for diversity in Islam, in many of the 35 Muslim-majority countries that are less than fully free, Islam is not the source of the curtailment of religious freedom.

While it is true that 21 of these countries fit an “Islamist” pattern—meaning that they are governed by strong Shariah law—another 14 are “secular repressive,” which means that the regime controls Islam in order to further a Western ideology of modernization. In many other Muslim-majority countries where religious freedom is scarce, it is Islamic movements that advocate for greater freedom and democracy. In Turkey, for instance, it is the religiously based Justice and Development Party that has sought to pry loose the authoritarianism of a sharply secularist regime. Finally, there now exists a global cluster of Muslim intellectuals who make the case for religious freedom on Islamic grounds.

So, the Muslim world suffers from a global dearth of religious freedom yet is mottled with states, movements and intellectuals who further religious freedom. Partisans of religious freedom ought to acknowledge the forces for freedom that exist in Islam but also remain firm in their hope that these forces will broaden their influence.

Does history contain any models for how this might happen? One of the frequent pronouncements heard in the recent culture wars is that what Islam needs is a Reformation, or, in another version, an Enlightenment. Both assertions invoke Western history to show Islam a pathway to freedom and tolerance. But these historical comparisons are flawed. Protestants proved just as capable of repression as Catholics. Both Martin Luther and John Calvin called for burning at the stake dissenters from their own orthodoxy. England’s Queen Mary may be known as “bloody” for burning 283 Protestants at the stake in restoring Catholicism to the land, but her younger sister, Elizabeth, proved no less bloody in re-establishing the Anglican Church.

The Enlightenment philosophical movement of the 18th century advanced the cause of individual religious freedom, including the emancipation of Jews, but was skeptical toward religious authority and revelation. The French Revolution followed the Enlightenment’s script, extending religious freedom to Jews and Protestants but outlawing the authority of the Catholic Church. It advanced (some) human rights

but beheaded religious men and women. These analogies, then, will not inspire Muslims as a pathway to freedom.

A Pathway to Follow?

Should Westerners, then, avoid altogether looking for lessons for Muslims in their own history? No; the history of the West contains a different experience that may prove a more promising model for Islam: that of the Catholic Church. The church came around to religious freedom quite late in history upon the Second Vatican Council’s promulgation of its “Declaration on Religious Freedom” in 1965—three centuries after a pocket of Protestant theologians began to argue for religious freedom and two centuries after the Enlightenment did so. This latter-day awakening, though, is part of what makes the Catholic Church’s road to its declaration exemplary. It shows how a religion whose authority refrained from teaching religious freedom for centuries succeeded in finding a basis for the teaching in its own tradition rather than in modern secular ideologies.

To be sure, the Catholic Church’s pathway to religious freedom is not applicable to Islam in every particular. Islam lacks a single leader, like the pope, whose embrace of a doctrine would be authoritative for all believers. Still, the parallels are strong. Catholicism, like Islam, existed long before modernity. In order to arrive at the “Declaration on Religious Liberty,” the church had to leave behind the ideal of medieval Christendom, where church and state worked in close partnership to uphold a thoroughly Christian social order. Heresy, in that milieu, was not merely a sin but also an act of sedition. St. Thomas Aquinas compared heresy to counterfeit money, implying that just as the king or prince could

use his authority to protect the economy, so, too, he could muzzle spiritual miscreants to safeguard the spiritual ecology.

In Islam’s early centuries, a doctrine of “Islamdom” came to prevail. Here, too, apostasy and blasphemy were tantamount to rebellion and merited death. Non-Muslims living under Islamic law were in many places allowed to practice their religion but were restricted in expressing it publicly and spreading it to others—something well short of religious freedom in full. While the Catholic Church eventually left Christendom behind, though, Islamdom still predominates among the world’s Muslim thinkers. Its most extreme version is found in the Islamic State, Boko Haram and Al Qaeda.

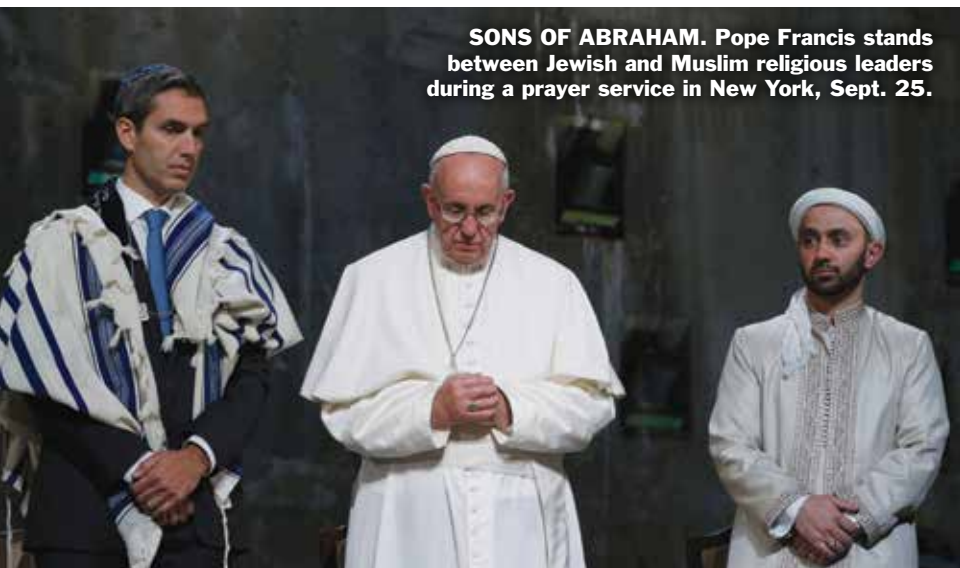
Catholicism and Islam are also similar in having been treated as an enemy by the movements that have claimed to carry freedom into the modern world. When a few

While the Catholic Church eventually left Christendom behind, ‘Islamdom’ still predominates among the world’s Muslim thinkers.

Protestant theologians warmed up to religious freedom in the 17th century, they continued to denounce the Catholic Church. The Protestant philosopher John Locke, for instance, relegated Catholics along with atheists to the category of people to whom religious freedom could not be extended in his “A Letter Concerning Toleration.” In the minds of most Enlightenment philosophers, the church was the architect of the Inquisition, the silencer of Galileo and the foe of free thought. In the 19th and 20th centuries, political parties based on Enlightenment ideals in Europe and Latin America sought to eradicate the church’s social influence. Anticlerical forces in the French Third Republic, for in-

from governing mosques to decreeing a ban on headscarves far more sweeping than France’s. Secular repressive governance was imitated by Egypt and other Arab countries after World War II, and by the Pahlavi shahs of Iran, Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Suharto in Indonesia. Secular repression, combined with the fact that Muslims around the world first met up with modernity through being colonized by a European power, makes it hardly surprising that for millions of Muslims, modernity is marginalizing.

Eventually, the Catholic Church came around to religious freedom. While a dialogue with modernity can be credited for the church’s evolution, even more crucial was the work of Catholic intellectuals like Jacques Maritain, John Courtney Murray, S.J., and Heinrich A. Rommen in developing a defense of religious freedom that swung free from Enlightenment secularism and rested on traditional Catholic commitments. At the Second Vatican Council, skeptics of the human rights of religious freedom echoed the 19th-century popes in objecting that error has no rights. Defenders of what became the “Declaration on Religious Freedom” replied that it is rather the person who has rights—namely to search for, embrace or reject religious truth without being coerced. The dignity of the human person ordered toward religious truth was at the heart of the declaration. On this basis, the council declaration affirmed something different from what 19th-century popes had rejected



SONS OF ABRAHAM. Pope Francis stands between Jewish and Muslim religious leaders during a prayer service in New York, Sept. 25.

stance, exiled priests, shut down religious orders and closed the vast majority of Catholic schools in the name of a doctrine of *laïcité* that called for secularizing public life and privatizing religion. It was on account of the Enlightenment’s hostility to the church as well as its religious skepticism that 19th-century popes denounced religious freedom as “absurd” and “erroneous.”

Messengers of Modernity?

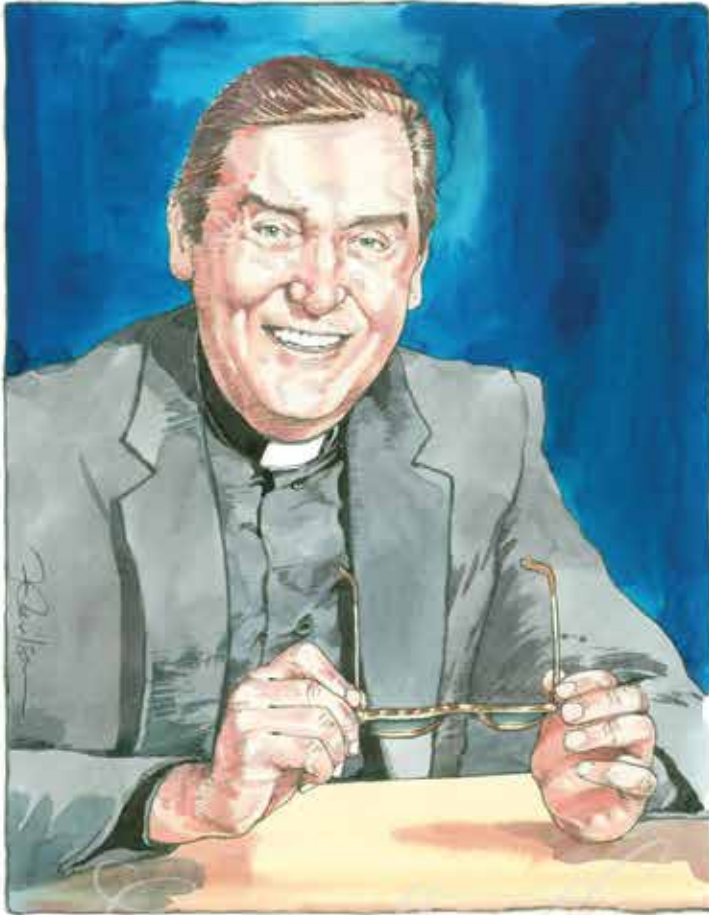
Muslims have found the messengers of modernity to be no less hostile. While the French Catholic Church made peace with the state after World War II, today it is France’s Muslim minority who experience *laïcité*’s sharp restrictions, most notoriously in the form of laws that forbid the wearing of headscarves, a key staple of traditional Muslim women’s dress. Historically, French *laïcité* directly inspired what I have termed secular repressive governance in Muslim-majority countries, whose standard-bearer is the Republic of Turkey. Founded by Kemal Atatürk in 1923 on an ideology of nationalism, secularism, equality and modernization, Turkey has imposed sharp controls on Islam, ranging

and thus preserved continuity in the church’s teachings.

Might a similar trajectory be followed among Muslims who do not yet accept religious freedom? Crucially, Islam has seen the rise of its own John Courtney Murrays who are making the case for religious freedom—on Islamic grounds. They appeal to Quran 2:256, “let there be no compulsion in religion,” one of the most direct and forceful injunctions against religious coercion found in the texts of any religion. They work to show that other verses and traditional teachings that appear to counsel coercion were in fact directed against rebellion or outside attack or were driven by the narrow designs of political rulers. Arguments for religious freedom of this kind require no skepticism toward the authority of scriptures or compromise of the aspiration for an Islamic society. Rather, an authentic Islamic society would be one where no one is coerced in his faith. Although Islam will not have a Vatican Council, we can hope that this way of seeing things will become widely accepted by Muslim scholars and widely ensconced in Islamic societies. Events involving Paris, San Bernardino, the Islamic State and Boko Haram have made this hope maximally urgent. ▲

GEORGE W. HUNT, S.J., PRIZE

For Excellence In Journalism, Arts & Letters



MISSION OF THE \$25,000 GEORGE W. HUNT, S.J., PRIZE

The George W. Hunt, S.J., Prize for Excellence in Journalism, Arts & Letters is awarded annually by the trustees of *America* and The Saint Thomas More Chapel and Center at Yale University. The mission of the Hunt Prize is five-fold:

- To promote scholarship, the advancement of learning and the rigor of thoughtful, religious expression;
- To support and promote a new generation of journalists, authors and scholars;
- To memorialize the life and work of George W. Hunt, S.J.;
- To forge a lasting partnership between *America* and the Saint Thomas More Chapel and Center at Yale University, two places that were central to Father George Hunt's life and work;
- To support the intellectual formation, artistic innovation and civic involvement of young writers.

CRITERIA

The Hunt Prize is awarded annually to a single individual in recognition of his or her literary work. The 2016 Hunt Prize will be awarded to a journalist.

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Only English language works of which the nominee is the sole or principal author will be considered.

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Applicants must devote 50 percent or more of their professional hours to their work as journalists, primarily in print and/or written digital formats. Full-time broadcast journalists are not eligible.

- He or she must be 22 years of age on the day of nomination and no older than 49 years of age by December 31, 2016.
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- He or she should be a person of sound moral character and reputation and must not have published works that are manifestly atheistic or morally offensive.
- A person may be nominated more than once, if otherwise eligible.
- A previous recipient is ineligible.

NOMINATIONS

Nominations for The Hunt Prize will open on George W. Hunt's birthday, at 12 a.m. on January 22, 2016 and the nomination period will close at 11:59 p.m. (EST) on March 31. All submissions may be made at: huntprize.org.

FORMAL AWARD AND CEREMONY

The winner will be announced in Spring 2016, and will be awarded \$25,000. Formal awarding will take place at the Saint Thomas More Chapel and Center at Yale University in September 2016.

The recipient of the award will deliver a lecture that is related to his or her primary works, and the lecture will be published as a cover story in *America* within three months of its delivery.

For more information: huntprize.org



What Will Francis Say?

In the first two months of 2016, Pope Francis made front-page news worldwide by his meeting with the president of Iran, his decision to participate in the Lutheran-Catholic commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, his *Asia Times* interview on China, the historic encounter with the Patriarch of Moscow and his stunning visit to Mexico.

In March, he is sure to be in the news again when the Vatican releases his apostolic exhortation on the family. The target date for publication is March 19, the third anniversary of the inauguration of his Petrine ministry and the feast of St. Joseph.

In writing the exhortation, Francis drew on the work of the Synod of Bishops' meetings on the family in 2014 and 2015 and especially the final report from last October's assembly. The discussions at the meetings and the final report covered a vast area, extending from the very different socioeconomic, cultural, religious and interreligious situations in which families live to the serious challenges they face. Those range from extreme poverty, armed conflict, migration, secularization and ideological colonization to young people's fear of entering lifelong commitments, polygamy, cohabitation, openness to having children, single-parent families, the breakup of marriages and the consequences of this for children and the passing on of the faith.

The final report in 2015 reaffirmed traditional church teaching on marriage and the family and highlighted

the need to give greater attention to preparing couples for marriage and to the pastoral care of families. Significantly, however, it closed no doors to the development of new pastoral approaches to complex marriage situations, including those of divorced and remarried Catholics (whether they may receive Communion, for example), and to the issue of homosexuality and the family.

Francis had all this before him when he began writing the exhortation immediately after last October's synod. Moreover, he came to the task with a rich pastoral experience from his 21 years as bishop in Buenos Aires (including 15 as archbishop) and almost three years as pope. That experience is likely to have had a decisive impact on his magisterial text on the family.

What then can we expect in the exhortation? The text is still secret, but one can predict some things. First of all, there will be no change in church doctrine; that was never in the cards. Pope Francis will reaffirm that marriage is between a man and a woman in a lifelong union open to having children. He will restate church teaching on the indissolubility of marriage and emphasize the importance of proper preparation of couples for marriage and of ongoing pastoral accompaniment of married couples and the family. His catechesis on the family in 2015 offers insights into what to expect here.

On the other hand, Francis is expected to open doors in terms of the church's pastoral approach to issues such as cohabitation, how divorced and remarried Catholics—"They are not excommunicated," he insists—may be

reinstated in the church and allowed to receive Communion, and homosexuality in the family. In this context, it is worth recalling what he said in his homily at Mass with new cardinals on Feb. 15, 2015. He reminded them that "the church's way, from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement....The way of the church is not to condemn anyone for eternity; [it is] to pour out the balm of God's mercy on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart."

In the exhortation, Pope Francis is sure to emphasize that mercy is the heart of the Gospel message and that justice has to be seen in that infinite light, not just according to limited human standards. He

will also highlight the vital importance of "accompaniment" and "reconciliation"—two key concepts at the synod assemblies.

One can therefore expect that in the exhortation (more than 100 pages) Francis will offer encouragement to people in various kinds of difficult situations. He is likely to open doors in pastoral praxis that offer new hope to people in complex marital or family situations. And given the cultural diversity in church, he might decentralize decision-making on certain matters to the local churches. If all this were to happen, then bishops and priests will have much more work to do in accompanying and helping people discern, in conscience, their path ahead as followers of Christ and members of the church.

Francis could open doors in his Exhortation on the Family.

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: @gerryome

Centered by Prayer

A Catholic in the Muslim world

BY JAMES M. LANG

It's dawn in Amman, and I crack open the window of my room to catch the call to prayer singing across the terraced landscapes from the nearest mosque. The wail of the muezzin through the loudspeakers invites the Muslims around me to their first prayers of the day; four more such calls will follow throughout the day. My Jordanian driver and guide, Walid, had explained this all to me yesterday, giving me a thumbnail version of the spiritual practices of the faith of his fathers in broken English. I am visiting Jordan for a few days in the late fall, called here for work but also seeking to deepen my own understanding of this fascinating but unfamiliar part of the world.

What I had originally heard as a single call, Walid points out to me, actually consists of two separate moments: the initial summons, in which listeners are informed that the time for prayer has arrived, and then the prayer itself. The gap between the call and the prayer gives faithful Muslims the opportunity to complete their ritual ablutions, cleansing and purifying themselves for the prayer. These five daily prayers remind worshipers to center their lives upon God, to remain ever thankful for his blessings and to live according to his will. According to at least one estimate, just around half of all Muslims obey the daily summons to prayer all five times.

JAMES M. LANG is a professor of English and director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Assumption College. His most recent book is *Cheating Lessons: Learning From Academic Dishonesty* (Harvard Univ. Press).

Throughout my visit to the city of Amman, trips to the small villages on its outskirts and one long drive into the desert, I see mosques everywhere. They dot the landscape like Christian church steeples in a New England town. But unlike those more familiar steeples, each mosque comes equipped with a tall minaret, and each of those minarets boasts loudspeakers pointed to the four corners of the earth. From those loudspeakers drift the calls, the first one coming just prior to dawn, the last just after sunset. At one time the calls were issued live, in real time; now they are mostly recorded versions.

On my third day in Jordan I escape the chaos and crowding of Amman for a visit to Petra, the site of such natural and constructed miracles that it could feed a lifetime's appetite for visual beauty. The opening of the narrow canyon known as the Siq onto the immense tomb carved into the red rock face of the cliffs—made famous in the final scene of “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade”—is even more breathtaking and majestic than the many photographs I have scrolled through on the Internet prior to my trip.

But that enormous sculpture, known as the Treasury, which is de-

picted in nearly every image of Petra, represents only a fraction of the wonders to be found there. From the



Treasury one strolls past camel drivers and donkeys down the Street of Facades, where tomb after sculpted tomb has been carved into the ragged cliffs. Some of them are massive, stately affairs, rectangular and columned; these give way to outcroppings of red rock honeycombed with tomb openings, nothing sculpted but the rough entrances themselves. Tea and souvenir stands line the popular hiking routes, with gently insistent Bedouin shopkeepers hawking their wares: “No charge for looking!”

In the early afternoon I climb up a winding set of stairs to one of the higher and more ornately carved tombs, with a broad front porch and muscular columns. I pass several souvenir

stands along the way but notice with curiosity that they are empty; the sellers have disappeared. I pause to peer at the jewelry laid out on one table, happy to browse without pressure—but then notice, on carpets behind the tables, two women bobbing up and down in their prayer rituals. Although I had not heard the call, I check my phone and see that it's prayer time. And so even here, among the trinkets and the rocks, the Japanese tourists and the Bedouin camels, the women hear the call and pause to make time for God.


That night I sleep more easily than I have since my arrival in Jordan, exhausted from my day of hiking and with my body slowly adjusting to the time change, but still I rise before dawn. I crack open the window of my room and, as if it were waiting for my rising, the call drifts through the darkness from the mosque below. I don't know the prayers the Muslims around me are reciting, but I sit down in the chair in my room just the same and

make my opening: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son..."

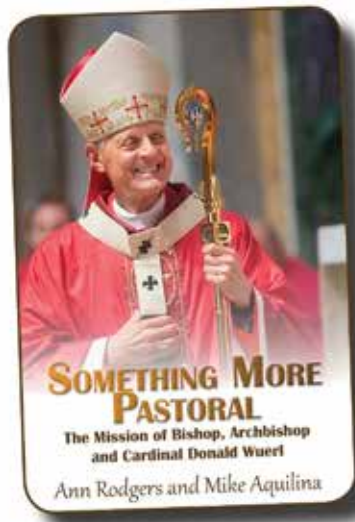
I've battled with prayer my whole life—just as, in many ways, I've battled with my religion. When I was a young man, my father used to quote from memory Francis Thompson's poem "The Hound of Heaven," in which religious faith stalks the speaker relentlessly. Either the poem or the hound has performed its work on me, and in my mid-40s now I have settled comfortably into the realization that something in me loves religion, sees the good in faith and finds life empty without it. Belief won't let me go, and I've stopped fighting it. The hound can have me.

But that doesn't mean that I don't struggle to maintain a daily relationship with God. Try as I might to remember my daily prayers, they are often lost in the crush of family and professional obligations, drowned by my pleasures and desires, pushed out by my hobbies and my passions. Not

so while I was traveling in the Muslim world, and the voice of God sang to me through the loudspeakers all through the day, reminding me of God's presence in my life and of my obligations to him. Not so in this beautiful religion that I have glimpsed previously only through the sheen of Western prejudice, and will set out to understand more deeply in the weeks and months following my visit to Jordan.

I still attend to the Catholic faith of my own father; if anything, my experience in the Muslim world has drawn me closer to it. And I am glad to be back in my familiar spaces, among my family and friends, and enjoying the American comforts to which I have grown accustomed. But sometimes still I long for that voice of God singing to me across the landscapes of my hometown, over the roofs of coffee shops and car dealerships and elementary schools, calling me to prayer and into his presence in the midst of my endless daily routines. 

READ THE PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN PASTOR: CARDINAL DONALD WUERL



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— Robert P. Lockwood, *Our Sunday Visitor*

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Lenten Freedom

Lent is not what it used to be. Fasting and abstinence have been reduced to a minimum. Crowds for weekday Mass and seasonal devotions have ebbed. Few Christians renounce the theater and the cinema in a spirit of penance. Still, Lent remains our great ascetical season, one part Jenny Craig, three parts Stoicism and six parts Gospel. It is the desert where we seek a spiritual freedom that differs from free will, the freedom of the virtuous pagan and the liberationist freedom of altered social arrangements. As we drape the church in purple, we sharpen a will that has grown dull and rediscover the Christian liberty to adore and serve God as our supreme desire.

The evangelical counsels can help us to grasp the freedom of the redeemed during Lent. Poverty, chastity and obedience are not limited to the formal vows undertaken by members of religious orders; they are the virtues of any Christian who seeks to love God as a mature disciple lucid about the world's seductions.

Poverty frees us from being defined by the material goods that beckon us. The decision to forgo a favorite food reminds us that we are more than our physical appetite. We choose to pray or just to think—to exercise the spirit—rather than to surrender automatically to hunger. In a marketplace of consumption we consciously choose to sacrifice what we usually unconsciously treat as a necessary part of our daily routine. Window shopping can become an arena of resistance

when we place the new shirt or laptop we covet at a deliberate, unpurchased distance.

Perhaps more crucial is the decision to refuse the spell of the screen for a week or even an hour. Contemplation and the art of conversation replace the omnipresent image and background noise. Such mindful dispossession can free us to embrace the impoverished other in the simple act of almsgiving. Even at its most partial, the desert's denudement reveals to us our freedom to challenge the encircling chatter and to recognize how deeply our daily slavery to it has drugged our spiritual senses to sleep.

Chastity is more than the refusal to engage in sexual relations outside the covenant of marriage; it involves a purification of our desire to use others as objects of carnal conquest. A Buddhist student of mine once wrote a fine essay on Buddhist sexual ethics. She argued that in her religious tradition, just engaging in romantic daydreams about someone who is not your spouse or fiancé violates that person's integrity. The real person is reduced to an object of imaginative fantasy and illusory domination. As our bishops have recently warned us, cultivating such a detached, sober love in our pornographic culture is no easy task. Chastity involves more than sex. It is an oddly analogous quality.

I was once visiting a church whose neoclassical sanctuary had a simple color scheme of blue, silver and white. An architect in our group was astonished at "how chaste" the building was. We

often "feel chastened" during a moment of humiliation, such as when someone we have mocked in the past praises us to others. The virtue of chastity frees us to step away from our exhibitionist culture, cluttered with cant, and to embrace what is pure, simple, unadorned, objective rather than projective.

Lententide obedience is more than filial piety. One place to begin in the search for Christian freedom is creation itself. Christian Stoics often conceived of the cosmos as the obedience of otherwise soulless matter to God's will that the world should exist and that it should exist in such a rational, harmonious pattern. All human science, art and morality become enfolded within this one great assent to the divine will flaming out in the

universe. As a priest and a university professor, I have often counseled students about their vocational choices for the future. Despite the omnipresent A.M.D.G. signs on campus, it is rarely the glory of God that motivates such choices, even in the lives of pious students.

Part of Lenten asceticism is scraping off the rust from our distracted souls and reigniting the joy of a freedom rooted in personal obedience to God's will. Of all the sacred seasons, it is Lent where we penetrate to the heart of this obediential freedom, finally found in Christ and not in our own ascetical exercises. With Gethsemane as the prelude, the cross reveals this obedience in all its saving power.

JOHN J. CONLEY

As we drape
the church
in purple,
we sharpen
the will.

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THEATER | ROB WEINERT-KENDT

ARGUMENTS WITH GOD

The spiritual side of two Broadway revivals

Part from tales of the incarnation in the person of Jesus, God makes few appearances in our drama. God's appearances on stage often are as the subject of a debate or a presence who acts and speaks through others. In this context, God becomes a kind of backstory and the ultimate existential answer to the oft-parodied actor's question, "What's my motivation?"

In two current Broadway musical revivals, God is also the ultimate off-stage character—the silent confidante, conscience and occasional lightning

rod for the lead characters as they journey through life and struggle to find meaning in its outsized hurdles and hardships. Both Tevye, in **Fiddler on the Roof**, and Celie, in **The Color Purple**, are protagonists whose prayers to the Almighty are central through-lines of their respective shows. In soliloquies that freely intermingle pleas, doubts and exultations, both Celie and Tevye argue with a God who, if we follow their eyes' direction, is located somewhere in the theater's second balcony. And though both have the kind of bone-deep faith that is all the more

unshakeable for having been so thoroughly shaken, they follow separate paths to very different conclusions—as do these variably felicitous stagings.

In "Fiddler," the brilliantly polished 1964 distillation of Sholom Aleichem's tales of Jewish life in pre-World War I Eastern European shtetls, the milkman Tevye (Danny Burstein) wears his native religion with roughly the same mix of dutiful devotion and loving complaint as he does the perennially horseless dairy cart he hauls around the stage. As he watches his three eldest daughters marry off one by one, in escalating defiance of traditional Jewish custom, he also witnesses with growing anxiety the encroachment of Cossacks on the humble market village of Anatevka. These parallel assaults on his faith and his ethnic identity at last come to seem

intertwined, indistinguishable—as the slings and arrows endured by a people blessed by God but cursed by their fellow men. As Tevye says, in a typical formulation, "I know, I know: We are Your chosen people. But once in a while, can't You choose someone else?"

The sober-minded staging by Bartlett Sher, the director, feels heavier on the curses than the blessings. While his "Fiddler" has many of its well-worn charms in place—the pluperfect Burstein heads a fine, complementary acting company, and the show's score is indestructibly tuneful and moving—he has directed it more as a drama than as a musical comedy. To be fair, this temptation is built into the material, as

STANDING TALL. Jennifer Hudson, center, in "The Color Purple"

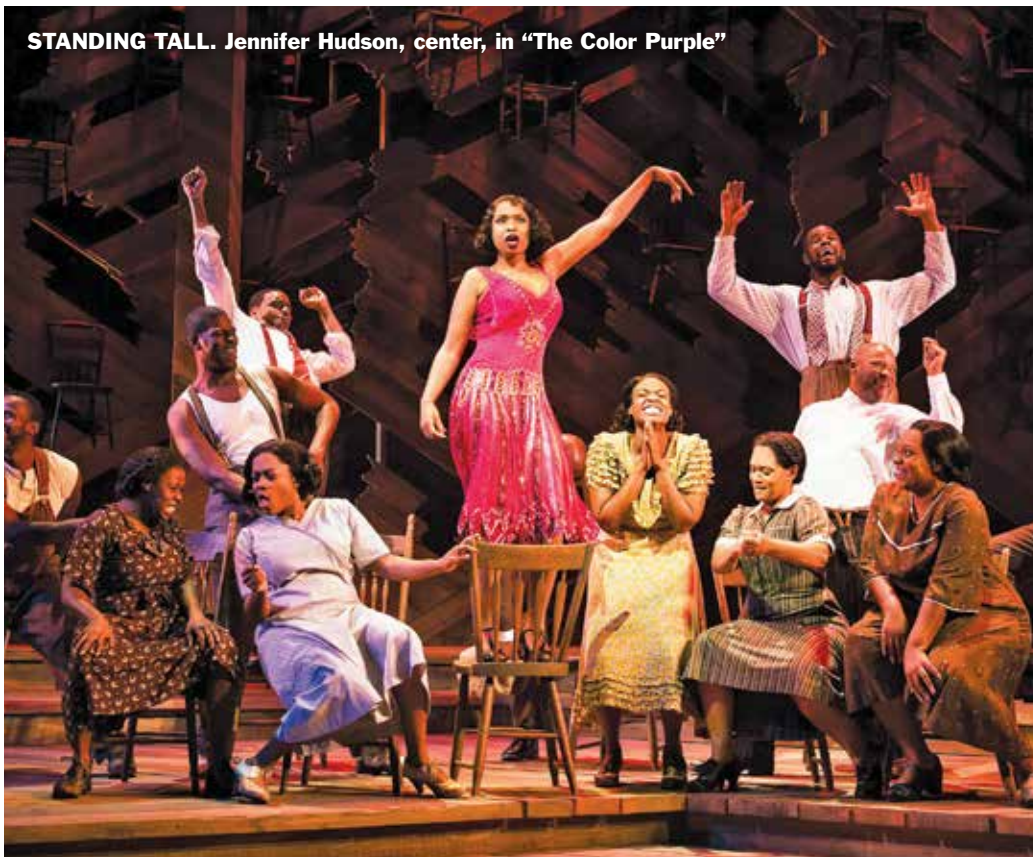


PHOTO: MATTHEW MURPHY

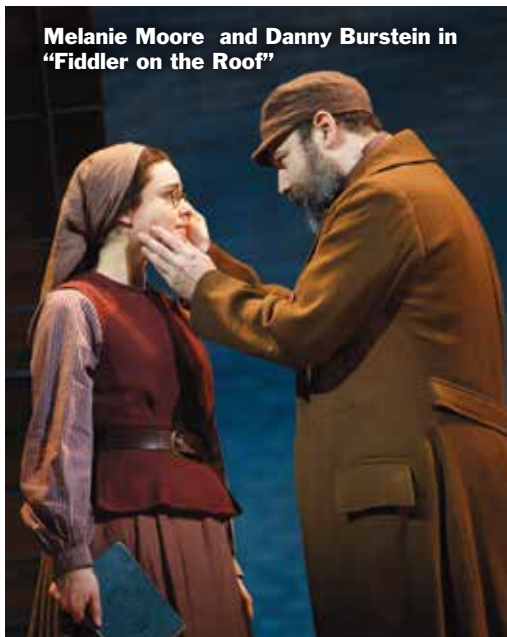
both of the show's acts end unhappily. Still, this is not a Jewish "King Lear."

The song "Matchmaker" offers a case study of the production's misplaced emphasis. This exuberant, major-key waltz begins with Tevye's daughters waxing dewy-eyed about marriage, only to have the eldest daughter, Tzeitel, dash their dreams by conjuring the terrible husbands Yenta may find for them. In Sher's hands, this mildly cautionary but lightly smiling deflation of youthful romanticism becomes a startling wakeup call for the younger girls, who seem genuinely terrified by their bleak marriage prospects. In a show with violent pogroms yet to come, this sets the bar for tragedy pretty low.

Elsewhere Sher's attention to nuance has its dividends. The show has lively new dances, adapted liberally from the original conceptions of Jerome Robbins by Hofesh Shecter, that feel at once more folky and more contemporary. And the matter-of-fact prominence of "shuckling"—the Jewish tradition of swaying during prayer—adds to the production's sense of lived-in authenticity. But a striving for the authentic can be a dubious goal in a Broadway musical, as synthetic an art form as the animated film. As with Sher's lovely but hollow current revival of "The King and I," this relatively subdued "Fiddler" has an attention to detail that comes at the expense of larger gestures, of put-it-over-the-footlights showmanship, and that is a deficit beyond the reach of divine intervention.

"The Color Purple" is more successful in part because, in John Doyle's singleminded staging, it aims straight for the only kind of authenticity that matters in musical theater: the emotional kind. It also benefits from a wider range, both in the vocal and the dramatic sense. Celie, the downtrodden sharecropper's wife who miraculously manages to transcend a Job-like series of trials and torments, descends lower

into dejection and rises higher in celebration than Tevye. And in Cynthia Erivo, a black Briton who originated the role in this imported revival—the rest of her costars here are African-



Melanie Moore and Danny Burstein in "Fiddler on the Roof"

American—this "Purple" has launched an incandescent new Broadway star.

In all my years attending theater, I have seldom felt as much direct, electric connection between an audience and a performer as in Erivo's rendition of the roof-raising 11 o'clock number, "I'm Here," in which Celie rediscovers the faith she thought the world had kicked out of her, but in a surprising new place: in her own beautiful, irreducible, God-given self. "With all the love alive in me," she sings, "I'll stand as

tall as the tallest tree."

Perhaps that image inspired Doyle's stark, somewhat abstract design: towering stacks of chairs and unfinished wood. Elsewhere the director rightly puts most of his attention on burnishing the assets of the show, which had an underrated premiere in 2005. Artfully trimming Marsha Norman's script (itself a deft if overstuffed pruning of Alice Walker's original novel), Doyle makes the central relationships snap into focus: the thorny love triangle among Celie, her oppressive husband Mister (Isaiah Johnson) and the free-spirited singer Shug (Jennifer Hudson); the rocky but finally rock-solid union of the fierce Sofia (Danielle Brooks) and pliant Harpo (Kyle Scatliffe); the attenuated but unbreakable thread between Celie and her sister Nettie (Joaquina Kalukango).

Of course, there is also the relationship between Celie and her creator. Like Tevye's, it remains seemingly one-sided, a monologue rather than a dialogue. But in this resplendent "Purple," the sense of a feedback loop is palpable. When Celie sings "I'm Here," it is not her presence alone that we are made to feel.

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

BOOKS | ALFRED LAWRENCE LORENZ

GOING LIVE

THAT'S THE WAY IT IS A History of Television News in America

By Charles L. Ponce de Leon
The University of Chicago Press. 352p
\$30

Network television news programs

have brought reports and pictures of news events, mundane and catastrophic, into American homes for little less than three-quarters of a century—not a particularly long time as history goes, but long enough for the medium to have spun a history of its own. It is one that has been told by a number of writ-

THE BURNING LADDER

Jacob

never climbed the ladder
burning in his dream. Sleep
pressed him like a stone
in the dust,

and when
he should have risen
like a flame to join
that choir, he was sick
of traveling,

and closed
his eyes to the Seraphim
ascending, unconscious
of the impossible distances
between their steps,

missed
them mount the brilliant
ladder, slowly disappearing
into the scattered light
between the stars,

slept
through it all, a stone
upon a stone pillow,
shivering. Gravity
always greater than desire.

DANA GIOIA

DANA GIOIA is a poet and critic whose collection of poetry *Interrogations at Noon* (2001) won the American Book Award. His critical collection *Can Poetry Matter?* (1992) was a finalist for the National Book Critics Award. He served as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts from 2003 to 2009. His 99 Poems: New & Selected will appear in 2016 from Graywolf Press.

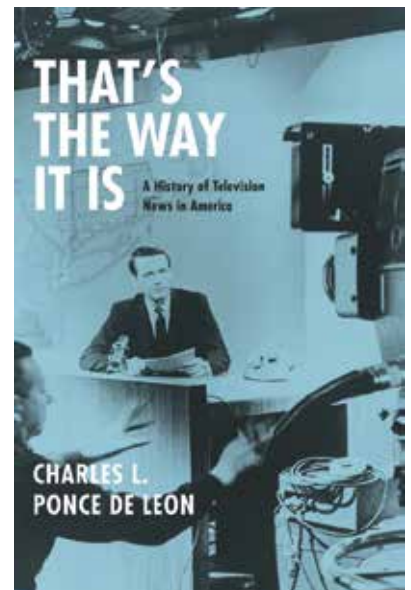
ers over the years, largely by television insiders—former producers, anchors and reporters—but also by academics. Charles L. Ponce de Leon is an associate professor of history and American studies at California State University, Long Beach. His comprehensive *That's the Way It Is: A History of Television News in America* is a narrative history for a broad audience, he tells his readers, and he mined many of those earlier sources in writing it. The result is a readable recounting of the growth of the television news industry.

Much of his book deals with the struggles of each network to attract the largest audiences in order to win the greatest share of advertiser dollars—by shuffling anchors and news executives and, on occasion, even changing the types of stories considered to be news. Ponce de Leon's central focus is on the evening news programs, beginning in 1944, when CBS inaugurated a 15-minute broadcast on Tuesday and Friday evenings, the only hours the fledgling network was on the air. NBC followed with a similar program on Sunday nights. Both programs were heavily “tell,” with anchors reading the news; the “vision” was provided by newsreels of the sort the audience had been accustomed to seeing between feature films in movie houses. Those pioneering news programs had few viewers; television began its growth only after World War II when receiving sets at affordable prices became available, local stations went on the air and technological advances allowed television signals to reach from New York up and down the East Coast and then across the country.

Readers of an advanced age may recall, as this reader can, watching John Cameron Swayze, anchor of the Camel News Caravan, smok-

ing a cigarette as he told viewers of the events of the day. He was the first of a now-long list of network anchors de Leon conjures up. That term “anchor,” by the way, was first applied by Sig Mickelson of CBS News to describe Walter Cronkite's role in synthesizing items from floor reporters at the 1952 national political conventions, deLeon writes; other sources, however, attribute the term's first use to other broadcasters.


NBC replaced the Camel News Caravan with the Huntley-Brinkley



Report after the 1956 conventions. Chet Huntley reported from New York and David Brinkley from Washington, D.C. CBS provided them with strong competition from Walter Cronkite after 1961, when Cronkite took over CBS Evening News. Critics occasionally complain that television news and public affairs programming degenerated over time into “infotainment” to draw viewers, but de Leon maintains that infotainment was there at the beginning. Consider—extreme example though it may—NBC's Today, a morning program of news, weather and entertainment, which

featured a chimpanzee, J. Fred Muggs, along with the human cast. Viewers in mid-century also saw the beginnings of serious news/public affairs programs when Edward R. Murrow, who had gained fame during the pre-war and war years for his reporting from London for CBS radio, joined with producer Fred Friendly to develop the radio program *Hear It Now*, a mix of recorded events and interviews. So successful was the format that they adapted it for television the following year as *See it Now*. While the program drew solid audiences, advertisers shivered when topics were controversial, and CBS executives dropped it. More acceptable to both was Murrow's subsequent *Person to Person*, on which he interviewed celebrities. Later in a widely quoted speech to the Radio Television News Directors Association, Murrow would express his frustration with what he saw as the networks' overwhelming concern with garnering advertising income while failing to enable the medium to live up to its potential and responsibility to keep the public fully informed of public affairs. In a later television era, one of stronger oversight of stations by the Federal Communications Commission, that would change for the better.

De Leon also points to technological developments—program delivery by cable, microwave and satellite—as providing a wider swath of the public with a greater variety of news programming and with a degree of immediacy unknown by earlier generations. He especially lauds the advances provided by Brian Lamb's Cable Satellite Network (C-SPAN) and Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN). While Turner is most often credited with CNN's success, de Leon notes that Turner had the good fortune to hire a veteran United Press International editor, Reese Schonfeld, who had headed UPI Television News. Schonfeld and a staff of long-time news executives



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designed the CNN format to allow viewers to get news and news features at any time, not just at the dinner hour. In response, network news executives were forced to make changes to remain in competition.

If *That's The Way It Is* has a fault as a history, it is its lengthy and, to this reader, disproportionately detailed description and critique of the current

state of broadcast news. All told, however, the work is a solid contribution to our knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the broadcast news industry and the role it has played in American public affairs.

ALFRED LAWRENCE LORENZ is the A. Louis Read distinguished emeritus professor at Loyola University New Orleans.

NICHOLAS D. SAWICKI

MOVEMENTS OF FAITH

STRUCTURES OF GRACE Catholic Organizations Serving the Global Common Good

By Kevin Ahern
Orbis Books. 224p \$35

Following the Second Vatican Council, there has been a significant growth in the number of lay and ecclesial Christian movements focusing on the building of community, creating peace, fighting for social justice and offering opportunities for prayer and reflection. Following the canon of social teaching developed since Leo XIII's groundbreaking *Rerum Novarum*, these organizations have developed to meet the needs of today's world with a new emphasis on the call for justice mandated in the New Testament. However, the types of movements and the internal struggles that have developed have produced a diverse and unique set of communities that exist for the betterment of mankind.

In *Structures of Grace*, Kevin Ahern tackles the question of where exactly the balance lies for these organizations between the temporality of social justice and the eternity of the spiritual self. How do organizations strike a fair balance between verticalism (a predominant focus on spiritual needs) and horizontalism (a predominant focus on social justice and earthly needs)? On top of that, Ahern raises the further

challenge of organizations that stray away from their initial charism, and from Christianity altogether, and how this may affect their ability to achieve their intended goals. Drawing on his own experience as the former president of International Movement of Christian Students, Ahern provides an insider's view to the world of Christian lay movements while at the same time producing an overtly scholarly work worthy of our attention. While *Structures of Grace* is written primarily in the style of a textbook meant for a college seminar, Ahern gives an encompassing picture through the lens of three distinctly different movements: Jesuit Refugee Services, the Young Christian Workers movement, and the Plowshares Movement.

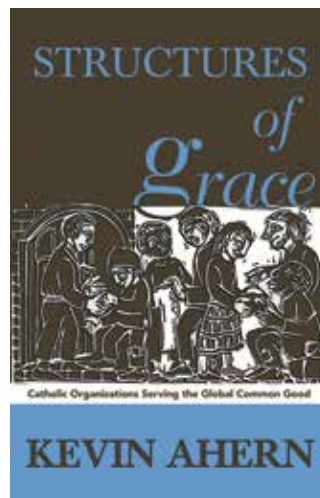
When it comes to organizations that emphasize social justice while remaining within the structures of the Catholic Church, there are few better examples than Jesuit Refugee Services. J.R.S. is an organization that spans the globe, filled with lay and religious volunteers and overseen directly by the Society of Jesus as well as the Vatican. Its highly

organized structure, non-governmental organization status, and ecclesial oversight place it very much as an institutional response from the Catholic Church to a continually growing world problem. But that is not to say that it is without its challenges. For example, one of the key components emphasized in J.R.S. is accompaniment, or a direct personal contact with those they seek to help. Yet when J.R.S. makes decisions on actions that advocate on behalf of refugees, there is little to no input from these people. Similarly, one of the greater struggles faced by J.R.S. is how to incorporate non-Christians into their work while maintaining an Ignatian identity central to the work.

Ahern then focuses his narrative on a second type of movement: those rooted in the actions of the laity while remaining close to their Christian identity and, in many cases, the power structures of the church. He highlights the peace-keeping mission of the Community of Sant' Egidio in Mozambique, the ecumenical community

and the prayer life of L'Arche, which brings together people with normal capacities and those with intellectual disabilities, and, finally, the Young Christian Workers, whose efforts—although splintered over the years—continue to empower youth to fight for the rights of the worker.

These communities, organized around structures that are often inclusive of religious influence and have centralized methods of leadership, enjoy a greater sense of freedom within these internal structures. For all the benefits they provide, they, too, are not without their problems. The Y.C.W., for example, is broken into national conferences, and a growing number of these con-



ferences continue to move away from their traditionally Christian identity to become more inclusive as they meet the needs of non-Christian populations. Other groups experience similar problems over mission, either through the rejection or the complete return of their founding charism, the need to be inclusive, or the need to engage a world that is increasingly secular.

A third example that Ahern focuses on is organizations that adhere to a basic mission, but not to a centralized structure. Citing groups including Plowshares and the Catholic Worker Movement, Ahern recognizes that these organizations place a greater emphasis on small community reflection and action. The autonomy placed on

these loosely affiliated groups provides benefits in the ability of these communities to respond to the needs of their locales. However, this structure often leads to a greater divergence in what the communities focus on and their methods. The very name of the Plowshares movement, for example, is rooted in Scripture and the foundation of the movement is Christian. However, the movement has become very secularized in Britain and Sweden. Some would argue that this is necessary—to meet the people and their needs.

“Grace,” states Ahern, “is experienced in the world... through the actions of Christians and Christian communities that attempt to bring

about positive social transformation aimed at healing broken relationships.” Encapsulating both the essence and the imminent problems faced by social justice movements in Christianity, Ahern provides not only an analytical narrative of what these Christian movements have accomplished, but also inspires the reader to see what they may become. The stories of all Christian movements are intertwined in the sense that, much like the faith from which they draw their inspiration, there is a great uncertainty, only outpaced by a greater hope.

NICHOLAS D. SAWICKI is a senior at Fordham University, Bronx, N.Y., focusing his studies on theology and history.

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Pilgrimage

PILGRIMAGE: FRANCE—Ignatian-Jesuit, Catholic, American May 9-18, 2016. Rouen, Normandy Beach, Mont St. Michel, Chartres, Versailles, Paris.... Michel Cooper, S.J.: michael.cooperinf@gmail.com, Ph.: (727) 644-5544; Caroline Cervený, S.S.J. [T.O.S.F.]: c.cervený@verizon.net; Ph.: (727) 744-4684.

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The Home of Repentance

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (C), MARCH 6, 2016

Readings: Jos 5:9–12; Ps 34:2–7; 2 Cor 5:17–21; Lk 15:1–3, 11–32

“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you” (Lk 15:18)

Amy-Jill Levine, in her excellent book *Short Stories by Jesus*, offers an examination of Jesus’ parable of the two sons, traditionally known as the parable of the prodigal son. In her study she corrects a number of common misreadings of the parable, especially those that come from reading Jesus’ story as a comparison between “merciful” Christianity and “unforgiving” Judaism. Such interpretations veer into Marcionism, she argues, since the God of Jesus is thus presented as other than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Levine focuses, therefore, on reading this parable in its Jewish setting, particularly in its presentation of family dynamics and the younger brother-elder brother theme, which runs all through the Old Testament.

She also wants to reject what she calls the allegorical reading of the parable, in which the father represents God and the elder son “those grumbling Jews.” But we can reject the view of the elder son as a negative representative of the Jews and still see this parable about the repentance that God desires of us and the forgiveness that God offers us by focusing on the family dynamic within the story.

Whether we read this parable as an allegory or not, we must be willing to see it as an analogy. The father in this parable is a model for God’s forgiveness, and the two sons represent personality types that we find among people then and now. In the human family, all of

us have gone astray in our own ways, and all of us must begin the process of coming to understand our need for repentance. We need not see the sons as representative of gentiles and Jews, but both sons need to repent and to accept God’s forgiveness.

While Jesus naturally sets his story in a first-century Jewish family, even 21st-century Americans can relate to the behavior of the two Jewish brothers and the tensions between them. The brothers in Jesus’ parable reflect real family dynamics, replicating different personality types that grate on one another. Each of us is more like one brother or another, and each type has strengths and weaknesses, gifts and destructive tendencies.

Levine proposes that when the younger son says, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,” he might simply be rehearsing lines to tell the father and has not genuinely repented. He has just tired of being hungry and living with pigs. And the elder son has not yet accepted his brother, whom he accuses of wasting his father’s property—literally “his life” (*ton bion* in Greek)—with prostitutes. The elder son has also not yet accepted his father’s love, though the father “pleads” with him. Indeed, the Greek verb translated “plead” is *parakaleô*, which can have the sense of “to comfort” or “to console.”

Both brothers have started the process of repentance by returning to the father and entering back into relation-

ship with him. Repentance is not usually a one-time event but a process of restoring relationships. Repentance requires time, healing, understanding of oneself and the other and growth, but God always calls us to come home to console and to comfort us.

Jesus’ parable offers hope. The younger son has returned, perhaps with imperfect repentance and maybe still a sense of entitlement. The elder son needs to get his act together, work out his anger issues and become less self-righteous. But both of them now know clearly:



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Meditate on the parable of the two sons. To which son’s personality do you most relate? When is it most difficult for you to repent of your behavior? Do you sense the constancy of God’s love and forgiveness whenever you come home?

they are loved by the father no matter who they are and no matter what they have done. They can always come home, and they will find forgiveness.

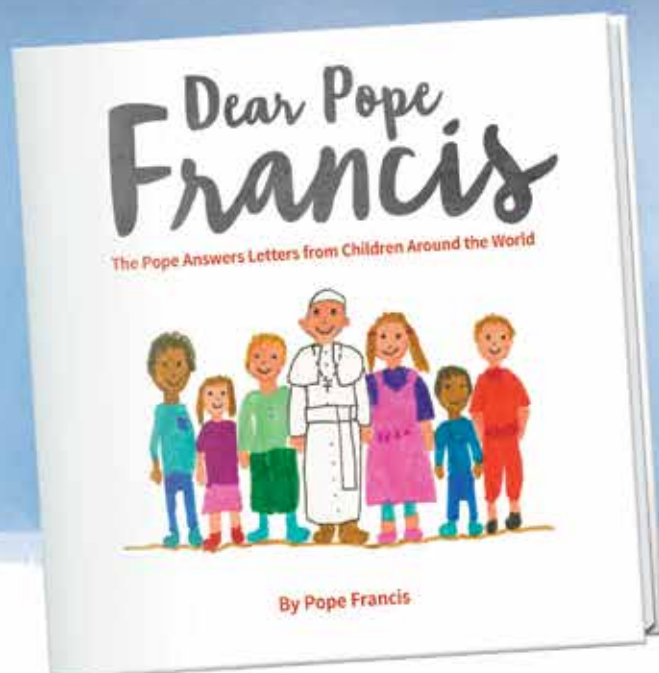
Repentance is a process of building and rebuilding relationships with God. Neither of these brothers is innocent or perfect, and a major flaw is indicated in how they have harbored faulty perceptions of their father’s love. Jesus’ parable tells us that however they, or we, have misperceived the love of God, it is there, waiting for us when we begin the process of repentance. God loves us and wants each member of the family to come home again.

JOHN W. MARTENS

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

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