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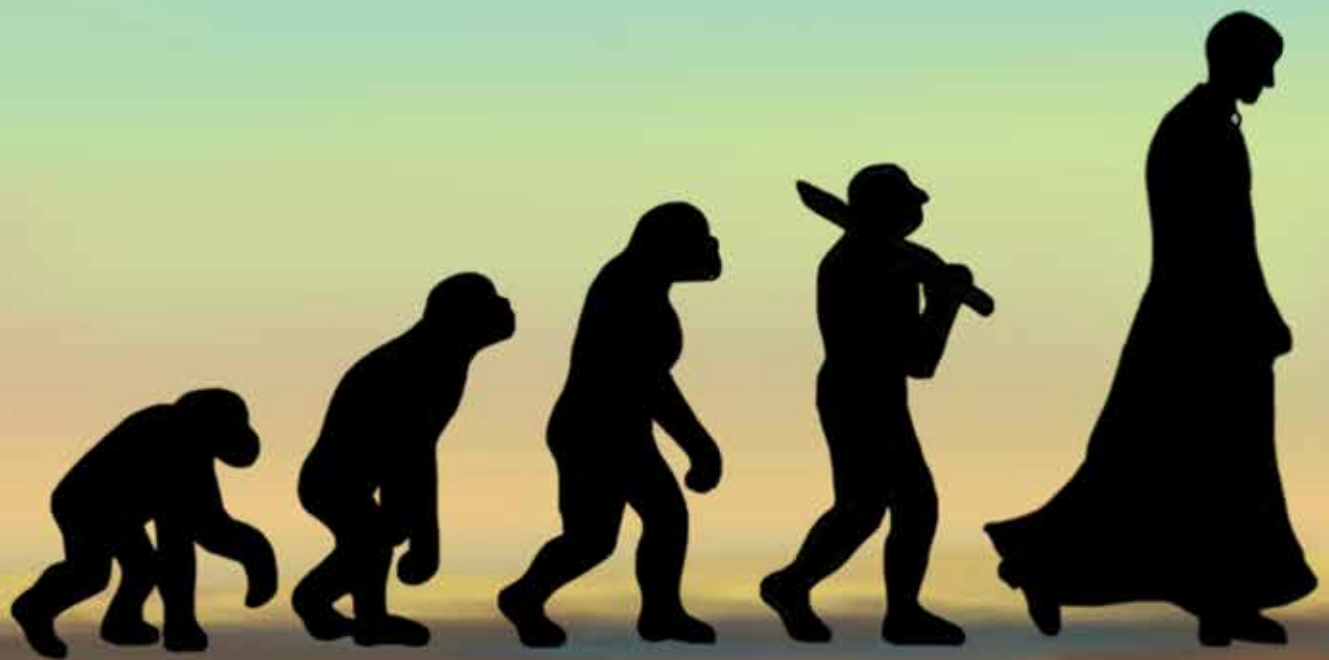
THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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Justified Reason

THE COLLABORATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH

ADAM D. HINCKS



A Complicated Grief

PERSEVERING IN FAITH IN THE
MIDST OF SUFFERING

KERRY WEBER

The current archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I., undoubtedly possesses one of the finest intellects in the American episcopate. His most important book, *The Difference God Makes: A Catholic Vision of Faith, Communion, and Culture* (2009), is an intellectual tour de force, an engaging account of the church's relation to the secular world. Throughout the work, the author affirms the "primacy of relationship in establishing identity," not just at the ontological and metaphysical levels, but on the theological, philosophical and practical planes as well.

One of the cardinal's themes is the relationship between faith and reason, which has been undermined, if not altogether severed, by modern minds. "Ever since the enlightenment," Cardinal George writes, "thoughtful people in the West have seemingly had two choices: to swear allegiance to religious faith and so foreswear investment in the human project, or to swear allegiance to reason and so foreswear commitment to religious faith." As then-Father Joseph Ratzinger reminded us in his *Introduction to Christianity*, faith and reason are not only compatible with each other but each without the other ceases to be what its name would signify. Faith without reason is dangerously fideistic; reason without faith is strictly rationalistic.

One of the most important contributions, therefore, that Catholics can make to the public conversation in the United States is "to enlarge their culture's appreciation of human reason," Cardinal George writes.

The essay by Adam Hincks in the present issue is one modest contribution to such an effort. "The contemporary urge to separate knowledge from [religious] belief," writes the Jesuit astrophysicist, "overlooks the essentially collaborative nature of human inquiry. By cordoning reason off from faith, it

also threatens to strike at the very root of rationality itself."

Faith and reason are also two necessary dimensions of any intelligible political theory. Mark Lilla, for example, a Columbia University professor, has said that Thomas Hobbes re-oriented the philosophical conversation in the mid-17th century by changing the subject "from God and his commands, to man and his beliefs." This divorce of faith and reason, says Dr. Lilla, has served us well, for it enabled the complete separation of church and state and the subsequent triumph of Western liberalism. Hobbes inaugurated the process through which "political theology centered on God was replaced by political philosophy centered on man. This was the Great Separation," according to Dr. Lilla.

We should question the accuracy of such a straightforward narrative. As Charles Taylor has written, progress is not inevitable, for history is not a linear process but rather a dialectical process involving variant stages of re-imagining, re-interpreting and re-appropriating humankind's longing for the transcendent.

The main problem with Dr. Lilla's thesis, however, is not the facile historical narrative on which it relies, but rather the feeble philosophical pillars on which his nation-state rests. For if the separation of church and state requires the separation of faith from reason, then the philosophical foundation of Western liberalism, our common understanding of the relationship that establishes our identity as a political people, is dangerously impoverished.

For while there are basic presuppositions about which we may all axiomatically agree, says Dr. Taylor, "the key beliefs we need to establish our basic political morality are not among them." If, then, Western liberalism is utterly self-justifying, then it is itself a Leviathan and no less a tyrant for simply bearing the name "democracy."

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ON THE WEB

In a new video in "The Living Word" series, **James Martin, S.J.**, reflects on the practice of "lectio divina." Plus, **Father Paul Farren**, right, talks about his new book, *Freedom and Forgiveness: A Fresh Look at the Sacrament of Reconciliation*. Full digital highlights on page 17.



Final Payments

So-called “death panels” are in the news again. The phrase, coined by Sarah Palin’s advisers in 2009 to attack the Obama administration’s Affordable Care Act, implied—incorrectly—that a commission of bureaucrats would judge at what point the elderly sick would lose financial support. The government, opponents of the law alleged, would cut off failing seniors to save money. Today, with such concerns over the A.C.A. subsiding, Medicare is considering a request from the American Medical Association to reimburse doctors for end-of-life counseling sessions.

If Medicare follows the recommendation, these “advance care planning” discussions could begin as early as next year. In the meantime, *The New York Times* (8/30) reports private insurers and various states are “bypassing the political process” to incentivize these important conversations. Blue Cross Blue Shield in Michigan and New York, for example, pay doctors from \$35 to \$150 for time spent discussing treatment options and completing the required forms. *The Times* describes a hospital doctor counseling patients in free 40-minute to hour-long conversations; he said he would “do one of these a day” if he were reimbursed. Without payment, doctors say they rush these meetings to squeeze in more billable patients.

Of course doctors must be paid, and everyone has experienced the overcrowded doctor’s office where the patient, having waited over an hour, gets a quick 15 minutes of the physician’s time. But should not something this important be an ongoing part of the compensated relationship rather than a one-time, monetized session stuck on the bill? According to the *Journal of Oncology* (July 2008), physicians should discuss issues of medical futility and palliative care early on and throughout their time with a patient and family members to the very end.

An Act of Solidarity

Recent news reports have shed a troubling light on the growing black market for kidneys. Patients in Israel and other countries are willing to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to organ dealers rather than risk waiting for a kidney that may never become available from the legal donor network. The shortage of kidneys has grown so acute that the argument for legalizing their sale is steadily gaining traction.

The sale of human organs on the open market is a bad idea for many reasons. The human body, in any form, should never be for sale. Government policies, like expanded medical

leave for live kidney donors, can help to address the kidney shortage, but they alone are not sufficient. Unless more people consider kidney donation as a truly life-giving option, the problem will continue.

Encouraging more people to donate their organs after death is one important step. So is highlighting the church’s positive stance on the issue. Pope Benedict XVI called organ donation an “act of love” in a 2008 speech, adding the important caveat that any transplant must be done with “informed consent” of the donor. The church teaches that organ donation is a “noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity.”

Unfortunately, this part of church teaching is not well known. A greater education campaign is called for, perhaps in conjunction with Jewish and other Christian groups who also vigorously support organ donation. Since objections to organ donation are often based on misunderstandings of religious teachings, religious groups have a special duty to correct this misperception.

Ordinary Time

The song says the best things in life are free. Now science may back that claim. A recent study published in *The Journal of Consumer Research* found that for older people small, quotidian events can provide as much happiness as extraordinary experiences. This is not to say that the long-planned trip to Paris or that once-in-a-lifetime skydiving adventure will not prove enjoyable. These types of rare or monumental experiences have been shown to provide happiness for young and old alike—and experiences, in general, have been proven to provide more happiness than things. But researchers found that the small, routine events—a trip to the grocery store, a morning cup of coffee, time spent reading a good book—take on greater significance as we age and, for older Americans, provide a satisfaction equal to that of the rare events. While younger people may search out extraordinary events in an effort to define themselves, older people, often more assured in their sense of self, take comfort in the small things that define their days and the lives they have built.

In a still-turbulent economy, this research provides a helpful reminder to young and old alike to avoid the temptations of consumerism and to focus on events and experiences that help us become our truest selves in the eyes of God: “Tell them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share, thus accumulating as treasure a good foundation for the future, so as to win the life that is true life” (1 Tim 6:18-19).

Remarriage, Mercy and Law

The tragedy of divorce has in some way touched nearly every family in the contemporary Western world. Large numbers of Catholics have not been spared. In the agonizing aftermath of divorce, many encounter great spiritual and psychological challenges. They often wonder, for example, whether they will ever love again and even whether they are loveable at all. Catholics who have divorced and entered into a second civil marriage without a decree of nullity from the appropriate church authority, moreover, bear an additional burden. According to the current church regulations, they may not receive absolution or holy Communion under most circumstances. Recent reports in the media, however, indicate that the Synod of Bishops on the Family that convenes next month may examine anew the pastoral situation of divorced and civilly remarried Catholics.

It is in this social and ecclesial context that Cardinal Walter Kasper, the former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, has asked that the church critically evaluate the current rules. Cardinal Kasper's invitation, which he reiterated in these pages last week ("The Message of Mercy," 9/15), is rooted in the imperative of mercy, which he sees as the central message of the Gospel and the motive force of the church's pastoral ministry. "What does [mercy] mean for the church itself and its behavior," the cardinal wrote, "not only toward those who are poor in a material sense but toward people within the church who feel neglected, put aside, marginalized and excommunicated—if not in a strict canonical sense, then in a de facto sense—because they are not allowed to take part in the table of the Lord?"

We should bear in mind what Cardinal Kasper is not saying when he asks this question. First, the church's teaching on the indissolubility of a sacramental marriage is settled doctrine; it is not within the power of any human being to change it. Second, we must not frame the question as a choice between law and love. The church's authority "to bind and to loose," which she receives from the Lord himself, Cardinal Kasper has said, has a legal as well as a pastoral character and both are essential dimensions of the church's ministry. Far from seeking to undermine the juridical character of that ministry, Cardinal Kasper seeks rather to preserve it, by rendering the church's discipline more effective and credible in light of contemporary challenges. Third, Cardinal Kasper's proposal involves neither the casual re-admittance of divorced

and civilly remarried Catholics to the sacraments, nor the casual application of mercy, which would make "cheap grace out of God's precious grace."

At the same time, "canon law should be interpreted and applied in the light of mercy because mercy opens our eyes to the concrete situation of the other." The question before the church and the synod, says Cardinal Kasper, is this: If a Catholic who is divorced and civilly remarried, without a decree of nullity, "repents of his failure to fulfill what he promised before God, his partner and the church in the first marriage, and carries out as well as possible his new duties and does what he can for the Christian education of his children and has a serious desire for the sacraments, which he needs for strength in his difficult situation, can we after a time of new orientation and stabilization deny absolution and forgiveness?"

The Gospel, as well as the essential pastoral character of the church, which was more fully illuminated by the Second Vatican Council, suggest that the answer to the cardinal's question is "no." Some pastoral accommodation should be made for the kind of person he describes. Identifying and implementing such a change, however, will not be easy and we should bear the following in mind: First, any change to the regulations should also account for the men and women who have derived spiritual benefit from their fidelity to the church's current discipline. Second, every party to the discussion and deliberations should presume the good intentions of the others. While Catholics may disagree on this matter, it is both reasonable and right to presume that most everyone involved has the good of the other as his or her primary motive. Third, any change should be seen not as a revolutionary gesture on the part of the current pope, but rather as the church's response to the signs of the times. Cardinal Kasper's modest proposal is in essential continuity with urgent appeals for mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation that characterized the ministries of Pope Francis' immediate predecessors. As the pope said in one of his recent daily homilies, the church sometimes calls us to change our structures, to pour "new wine into new wineskins."

Finally, we must trust that, as ever, it is ultimately the Holy Spirit who guides the church's discernment. Let us pray that all of our choices will bear the marks of the Holy Spirit, which are, as well, the visible signs of the church's ministry everywhere: generosity, charity, fidelity and hope.



REPLY ALL

Place of Grace

Re “Grace on the Greyhound,” by James Martin, S.J. (9/1): I find it commendable that Father Martin decided to spend a few hours in solidarity with the poor by traveling by bus from Massachusetts to New York. I was a little disappointed, however, at where he decided to place the existence of grace. On the bus he encountered two individuals who clearly had a lot of problems: sex work, drug use and domestic violence. While the latter two of these do not relate to the poor specifically, prostitution most certainly does. The “grace” Father Martin speaks about refers to a woman who spends the entire trip reading the Bible, who, he extrapolates, has probably been faced with the “indignity” of overhearing the problems of a prostitute and her pimp (or something similar) on a bus ride before.

What about the indignity for a woman who is prostituting herself to earn a living? What horrible things have happened in her life that left her high on a Greyhound arguing with her pimp in the first place? Why does a young man pimp to earn a living?

While I find it commendable that this woman managed to find some solace amid the situation, I wonder where God’s grace was that night. Jesus, who said “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40), spent most of his time with those who suffer, and demanded we do our part in caring for them. I can only hope that God’s grace was with that man and woman as well, and that they will find a better place.

ELIZABETH JAHR
Arlington, VA

Familiar Story

I love Father Martin’s authenticity in sharing this story. I can relate. As a clinical social worker, I often encounter similar situations and emotions.

As I was reflecting on your article,

the thought “Familiarity breeds content” popped into my mind, and I thought about how it becomes easier to love and serve marginalized people as you get to know them. Then, I realized, quite serendipitously, there was a link to “Familiarity Breeds Content,” by Helen Alvaré (5/28), beneath Father Martin’s column. I think that she and I are very different politically, and at the same time I was touched by her words that validated the experience of social activists. It made me realize how very important it is to try to understand another’s worldview, whether it is a prostitute on “the Dog” or someone on the other side of the political fence.

SARA DAMEWOOD
Online Comment

Whose Nation?

“A Country in Question,” by David Stewart, S.J. (8/18), is a relatively sophisticated version of the usually highly emotional arguments that Cardinal Keith O’Brien, the former Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, occasionally used to advance in favor of Scottish independence.

What was lacking from this cerebral piece is any concentration on how lower-income Scots (among whom Catholics are disproportionately numerous) can be shielded from economic adversity in a post-British era. It has become increasingly clear, even to Scots who are tired of Westminster and warm to the Scottish National Party mood music, that the separatist leader Alex Salmond is skating on economic thin ice. His promise of expansion of state services could only be fulfilled by massive borrowing. He wishes the monetary arrangements of his new country to be handled by a foreign land—the one Scotland was part of for 307 years.

This is really pretend nationalism that enables a dedicated alternative elite to be somebodies on the world stage, nearly all of whom have no interest in elementary housekeeping. And the history of European political nationalism

from 1848 onward demonstrates that leaders of Mr. Salmond’s stamp will expect the church to play along with whatever temporal leaders feel is expedient.

TOM GALLAGHER
Online Comment

God and Country

In “Of Many Things” (8/4), Matt Malone, S.J., cites William Cavanaugh saying that wars “were usually fought for King and country and not, as is often thought, for doctrinal purity.”

I do not believe this explanation applies to the Muslim-on-Muslim violence between Sunni and Shia and their sub-sects in Iraq. The attacks by the Muslim fundamentalists of the Islamic State on the Yazidis would appear to be driven by doctrine, as the Yazidis have neither territory nor resources worth killing for. Wasn’t the violence in Northern Ireland doctrinal, not political, in its foundation? In our own country, past violence against Catholics and Jews doesn’t have a “King and country” basis. Violence between nations may hide under the mantle of “King and country,” but intranational violence, e.g., civil war, does not.

LAWRENCE DONOHUE
Online Comment

Healing in Korea

Since I was a long-time missionary in Japan, I read with great interest “Healing an Old Wound” (8/4), by Dennis P. Halpin, a superb article on Korean comfort women. It’s a must read for all to understand the tension between Korea and Japan. Japan’s ruthless rule of Korea is not forgotten by Korean citizens—and rightly so. The subject of comfort women, in my view, is a political problem between the two countries. The Japanese government over the years has apologized time and again for her cruelty in China, Southeast Asia and Korea during World War II. In regard to massacres in China and comfort women in Korea, however, I do not think Japan has taken full respon-

sibility. Still, I disagree with Mr. Halpin that the pope should enter into this political tension. What is the point of infuriating the Japanese by this condemnation of the Japanese military? The pope would be despised by the present day Japanese who have hardly any knowledge of the sins of their grandfathers.

THOMAS P. DWYER, O.S.A.
Villanova, Penn.

Still Extraordinary

In his article on Denise Levertov, "Something Extraordinary" (8/4), Edwin Block Jr. asks an odd question: "Why would a poet who began publishing poems in the late 1940s...be worth reading today?" His answer then seems equally strange: "She is worth re-reading and remembering now because of her continued relevance to the 21st century." This makes poets sound like political theorists or ethicists. Surely Ms. Levertov was an artist who created unique and lasting work, poignant and probing the human condition. Hers is verse for the ages.

JON M. SWEENEY
Evanston, Ill.

Faithful Stewards

Thank you for the column by Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M., "Community of Creation" (7/21), in which he describes human beings' relationship to the created world. There is, however, one key nuance missing: Humans are not only part of creation but are its crowning achievement. Thus, if a situation occurs in which a choice is required between protecting a human or saving an animal or plant, the human must take precedence. Jesus demonstrated this when he cured the Gerasene demoniac by sending the evil spirits into the herd of swine (Mk 5:1-14). Pope Francis has also referred to this distinction by deploring the resources spent on pets, calling it a kind of idolatry, when there exist so many needy people. It is true that this highest place in the hierarchy of creation has been abused, but is that not

TWITTER TALK

Followers respond to the announcement that Elizabeth Tenety will be joining *America* as community and engagement editor.

Honored to join the incredible team at @americamag as their new engagement and community editor!
ELIZABETH TENETY
@ETenety

Congratulations to my friend @ETenety on her new gig with @americamag! A great pickup for

more a result of human greed than of a misuse of terminology? We are indeed called to be "stewards," but good, and not self-centered, ones.

ANNE BARTOL, O.S.C.
Langhorne, Pa.

No Joke

I read with dismay a misogynous poem by David Kirby that was included in "Objects of Contemplation" (5/19), an otherwise delightful "anti-review" of poetry by Joseph Hoover, S.J. The poem made light of violence against women, treating a husband's murder of his wife by heavy machinery as fodder for humor: "It doesn't do the chipper any good, either." Brother Hoover called

America and good news for religion observers #AMDG.

MICHAEL BAYER
@mbayer1248

Jesuits! Wasn't the papacy enough?
DAVID GIBSON
@GibsonWrites

Congrats to @ETenety on new @americamag gig, joining @Americaeditor's Murderers' Row of religion writers.

RACHEL ZOLL
@rzellAP

this poem "hilarious." We must take the culture of violence against women seriously. Using women as the victims of an exaggeratedly heinous action as the set-up for a joke is so ubiquitous as to be calmly, even enthusiastically accepted and repeated. It's hard to imagine similar humor about the killing of any other group of human persons being acceptable (try substituting "children" in the poem). Nor would the joke have been considered funny if dogs were being fed into the chipper. Such casual references to the abuse and killing of women do not belong, and certainly should not be celebrated, in the pages of *America*.

DOROTHY BLISS
St. Joseph, Minn.



CARTOON: HARLEY SCHWADRON

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

JUST WAGE

National ‘Fight for \$15’ Movement Launches Fast Food Protests

‘I’m doing this for my future, for my sons to have a union,’ Jamne Izquierdo said, holding up a sign demanding a better wage outside a McDonald’s restaurant on 8th Avenue and 56th Street in New York on Sept. 4. Izquierdo has worked at a different Manhattan McDonald’s fast food restaurant for eight years, and earns just \$8.20 an hour, a wage that leaves behind each month “a lot of bills, a lot of problems,” she said, shaking her head.

The New York protests were a small part of the nationwide fast-food workers strike, an effort coordinated with nonunion fast food workers, civil society groups like “Fast Food Forward” and “Fight for \$15” and national unions. Like thousands of workers across the United States who picketed fast food restaurants in more than 100 cities in a growing national effort to highlight the predicament of the nation’s low wage workers, Izquierdo complains that there is no way for her to get by and care for her two boys on a minimum wage, currently \$7.25, or near minimum wage salary. Worse, she said, like most of the other employees at her franchise, she has been unable to get the full-time hours she has requested. The owner of her franchise puts her on the work schedule just four days a week.

Many who argue that setting wages is best left up to the market may want to keep in mind what Izquierdo said next. Asked how she can possibly get by in New York on the \$180 a week she earns at McDonald’s, Izquierdo explained that the government has stepped in where her weekly wage fails her. Izquierdo and her two boys live in a Section 8 apartment and qualify for federal nutrition support programs and Medicaid. In other words, taxpayers are keeping her and her small family above water—barely—while she goes to work each week for one of the most profitable fast-food corporations in the world.

The Rev. Clete Kiley, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago who currently works as director of immigration policy for Unite Here, the hotel, restaurant and textile workers’ union, in Washington, D.C., points out that the movement has the potential to affect far more people than the workers at fast food restaurants. “Clearly they’re laying out an issue that is bigger than McDonald’s and other [fast food] places,” Father Kiley says.

“Folks are working harder and they are falling farther behind; they are working multiple jobs and cannot even work full-time. Our tradition talks

about a living [just] wage; we don’t even talk about a minimum wage.

“We are nowhere near a living wage and that is [a concern] that we as a church bring to the table constantly.” Catholic social teaching talks about a just wage, and he said, “by that we mean a wage that allows workers to support a family, that allows them to put something aside for their future and have adequate health care.”

Father Kiley adds, “Pope Francis has used this phrase a number of times; he’s talked about ‘an economy that kills.’” The pope is not necessarily speaking metaphorically, Father Kiley argues, citing the case of Maria Fernandes, a 32-year-old Newark woman found dead after she napped in her car while waiting for a shift to begin at one of the four part-time jobs she held down. Police report she succumbed to a deadly mixture of carbon monoxide and fumes

FAST FOOD, LOW WAGES. A worker joins a nation-wide campaign outside a Midtown Manhattan McDonald’s



from an overturned gasoline container.

“Pope Francis is also speaking globally,” Father Kiley says. “People are dying crossing oceans to find work, and people at our own borders are dying in the desert because of the way the economic structure is set up. They have to find a way to make a living and they are dying in the process.”

KEVIN CLARKE

CALIFORNIA

Reforms for Mentally Ill Inmates

The State of California’s Corrections Department will end its policy of isolating mentally ill inmates for up to 23 hours a day and instead move them into specialized



PHOTO: KEVIN CLARKE

housing, where they will receive more humane treatment.

The move, announced on Aug. 29, comes after U.S. District Court Judge Lawrence Karlton ruled in April that the state's overall treatment of its mentally ill inmates violated their constitutional rights and constituted excessive punishment. Amid the evidence presented during the case were videos of correction officers pumping multiple canisters of pepper spray into cells as mentally ill inmates within howled in pain.

Under the new policy the state will provide separate, short-term accommodation at three of the state's 34 prisons and long-term accommodation at nine others for up to 2,500 mentally ill inmates who require some sort of isolation

for disciplinary reasons. While there, they will have access to individual and group therapy and visits with mental health professionals. They will be allowed more time outside their cells and have some access to television or radio. The state also took the additional, not mandated step of instituting a case-by-case review of all inmates in psychiatric units, with the hope of returning those who no longer pose a threat to less restrictive units.

In a statement for the California Catholic Conference, Bishop Richard Garcia of Monterey, chair of the conference's steering committee on Prison Ministry and Correction, voiced "cautious optimism" about the newly announced procedures. "They are definitely a step in the right direction," Bishop Garcia writes, "but they are long overdue. It has been 20 years since the courts first ruled that mentally ill people should not be housed in the Special Housing Unit."

George Williams, S.J., Catholic chaplain at California's San Quentin State Prison, has over 20 years experience in prison work. He likewise calls the news "very encouraging."



SAN QUENTIN COUNSELOR. George Williams, S.J., has worked 20 years with California inmates.

"Taking already unstable people and locking them up in small cells without TV or radios for weeks or months on end as 'punishment,'" he said, "was not helping either the prisoners or their keepers."

Bishop Garcia indicated that during the next two months the C.C.C. Restorative Justice Committee will be closely watching the department's training on these new procedures. "This period will be an important indication as to how effective the new policy will be."

Questions persist about the use of isolation in California state prisons. Pelican Bay State Prison, California's highest security prison, regularly keeps prisoners in solitary for years on end. Some have been kept in isolation for over two decades.

In 2013, 30,000 inmates in such units throughout the state held a state-wide hunger strike to protest conditions. After two months the legislature agreed to hold hearings on the conditions in California's maximum security prisons. This June, District Judge Claudia Wilken gave a group of Pelican Bay inmates class action status in a lawsuit about their treatment against the state.

"Most of the men and women I have ministered to in isolation units," says Father Williams, "have been traumatized by violence in their lives—often since childhood. It seemed clear to me that the experience of being tackled to the ground, handcuffed and shackled and put in empty cells for days and weeks at a time served to re-traumatize them."

PHOTO: KERRY WEBER

But when it comes to the mentally ill, Stephen Barber, S.J., who served for 14 years as Catholic chaplain at San Quentin, points out that the issues are often complex. “Among certain prison populations, the mentally ill are targeted by other inmates.” Single-cell housing becomes an important means of protection, one that “many inmates prefer.”

Barber also notes that much of the plight of the mentally ill in California prisons today can be traced back to then-Governor Ronald Reagan’s decision in the 1970s to close many state-run mental health facilities. “Many of these men and women,” he said, “now live in prisons as a direct consequence of that barbaric act.”

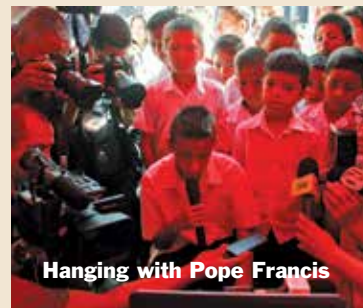
JIM McDERMOTT, S.J.

ISIS Terror Tracked

Amnesty International has issued a devastating report detailing summary executions, child abductions, sexual assaults, forced religious conversions and “ethnic cleansing on a historic scale” committed by the Islamic State militant group as it swept across northern Iraq from its base of operations in Syria. Amnesty International found that the Islamic State systematically targeted non-Arab and non-Sunni Muslim communities in overrun communities, killing or abducting hundreds, possibly thousands, and forcing more than 830,000 others to flee the areas it has captured since mid-June. Field investigators conclude that ISIS “is systematically and deliberately carrying out a program of ethnic cleansing in the areas under its control.” Ethnic and religious minorities—Assyrian Christians, Turkmen Shiites, Shabak Shiites, Yazidis, Kakai and Sabeen Mandaeans—have lived together in the Nineveh Province, much of it now under ISIS control, for centuries, A.I.

NEWS BRIEFS

In a technological and cultural first, Pope Francis joined a Google Hangout, **video chatting** with young people across five continents, including a student in the gang-infested neighborhood of La Campanera, in San Salvador, on Sept. 4. + The cause for canonization of **Archbishop Fulton Sheen** has been suspended indefinitely, according to a statement issued on Sept. 3 by the Diocese of Peoria, Ill., where the archbishop was born. + More than 50 representatives from national religious groups, gathered into the **Faith Forum for Middle East Policy**, wrote to President Obama on Aug. 27 urging alternatives to U.S. military action in Iraq and proposing nonviolent practices to counter conflict situations. + “The federal court rightly declared that **Louisiana’s marriage laws** ‘serve a central state interest of linking children to an intact family formed by their biological parents,’” Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, chair of the U.S. bishops’ Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, said, applauding a decision upholding Louisiana’s marriage amendment on Sept. 3. + Former President Shimon Peres of Israel met with Pope Francis at the Vatican on Sept. 4 to discuss a number of proposals for forming a united front against terrorism, including one to create a “**United Religions**” organization to combat religious extremism.



researchers point out. “Today, only those who were unable to flee when I.S. fighters seized the area remain trapped there, under threat of death if they do not convert to Islam.”

Albania Harmony

Pope Francis’ choice of Albania as the destination of his first international trip in Europe reflects his trademark pastoral approach: head to the peripheries; bring healing to the suffering. But his Sept. 21 visit to the poor, Muslim-majority nation also will highlight, to a world increasingly torn apart by sectarian strife, a hopeful example of Muslims and Christians living in harmony. “The presence of the pope will

say to the people, ‘See you can work together,’” Pope Francis told reporters last month, praising the Albanian government’s efforts to promote interreligious cooperation. “The pope values this, wants to show Albania as an example and encourage it,” said the Rev. Gjergj Meta, media coordinator for the Archdiocese of Tirana-Durres. Catholics make up only about 16 percent of Albania’s three million inhabitants; about 65 percent are Muslim and 20 percent Orthodox. Yet Muslims, Orthodox Christians and even people of no faith “see the pope as a charismatic person who defends the weak and the voiceless,” Father Meta said.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

Looking for the New Shepherd

Chicago Catholics are as feisty and independent as the wind that famously whips across this city from its lakeshore. In decades past, they enthusiastically embraced the labor and Catholic Worker movements. At some parishes today, lay people give sub-radar reflections at Sunday Mass.

“Catholics here have a strong sense of the vocation of the laity,” says Greg Pierce, a local publisher and community organizer. “They believe that it’s their church as much as it is the priest’s, the cardinal’s or the pope’s.”

When Cardinal Francis George proffered his pro-forma resignation two years ago after he turned 75, Pierce went into action. He invited a diverse group of parishioners to write essays—a series of open letters—to whoever becomes the next bishop of Chicago. Pierce asked them to describe the kind of leader they seek. He and Claire Bushey, an editor, compiled the essays into a book, whose title describes what resides in the hearts of many Chicago Catholics: *An Irrepressible Hope*. While the compilation represents the yearnings of people in a particular diocese, it also mirrors the hope that Catholics across the United States harbor in this Francis-enlightened era for a more inclusive, merciful and laity-empowered church.

The writers ranged in age from 14 to 83. They are black, white, Hispanic, Asian and Native American. They

include priests and religious sisters, fallen-away Catholics and parish activists, a high-school student, a union organizer, several business leaders and one woman who claims to be officially excommunicated. (Full disclosure: this writer also contributed an essay.)

The prioress of a Benedictine monastery uses an encounter with Cardinal George to describe the bishop she seeks. When her mother was dying, George came to visit. She asked

Many entries press sore points that have driven away many cradle Catholics.

her mother if she would like the prelate’s blessing. The ailing woman suggested that she give the cardinal her blessing instead. “This story holds for me the seeds of a possible future for the church,” the prioress writes. “One in which women are recognized for who they are as the bearers of blessings for all.”

Many other writers advocate greater inclusiveness and a larger role for the laity, but there are just as many pleas for a humbler clergy. One businesswoman cites the example of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, who asked anyone who had been hurt by the church to contact him. “He spent the rest of his life replying to those who wrote him, even on his deathbed. May our leaders understand that whenever our church primarily fears scandal, we sin.”

A retired pastor says he wants a bishop who “considers Chicago home, not Rome...who goes to our plays, movies and symphonies, likes hot

dogs and pizza and dislikes tired pieties.... And yes, he should walk the parish dog. It’s good for the heart.”

A journalist accompanying his elderly mother to Mass finds himself pondering the words of the Creed. “What does it say about the Catholic Church when the word ‘love’ fails to appear in either version of our creed?” he asks. “It says we need to refocus.”

Some of the stories are heart-wrenching. A newspaper reporter recounts how the archdiocese informed his friend dying of cancer—a woman he’d served with on the parish council—that she could not receive Catholic burial rites. The reason: the woman had sought ordination in the Roman Catholic Women Priests organization. “I am certain in my bones that someday...church leaders will come to a new understanding about what it means to be a priest,” the woman’s friend writes.

Many entries press sore points that have driven away many cradle Catholics, like the university administrator who describes her pain at leaving the church of which she had been a part for 60 years. The leadership “will not allow divorced Catholics to remarry, yet will grant annulments when a marriage has existed for years and with children,” she says. “It does not accept long-term committed relationships among homosexuals, yet affirms the sanctity of marriage.”

It is unclear if these appeals from the pews will have any effect on the kind of leader Chicagoans ultimately receive. Pierce, the publisher, sent a copy of *An Irrepressible Hope* to the papal nuncio in Washington. He even received a response. “It was a very nice letter,” Pierce says, “but very non-committal.”

JUDITH VALENTE

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



Continental Shift

The faith is Europe,” Hilaire Belloc claimed a century ago, “and Europe is the faith.” To say the same today might provoke laughter or confusion. When we think of Europe, is the first thing that comes to mind Christianity?

Now, quick—say the first word that pops into your head when you read the word after the colon: Africa.

Did you say Christianity, or did you say Ebola? Recent American news reports about Africa have been dominated by coverage of the latter. During 10 days I spent in Kenya in August, I saw far less reporting on the outbreak than I saw here in the United States. In providing background on Africa, our media tend toward the predictable, in which the entire continent is reduced to one place and culture, where disease, violence, corruption and tribalism reign supreme.

All of those plagues are real—just as they’re true more or less everywhere, and in some places more than others (ever taken a close look at New Jersey politics?). But they are hardly the whole story, or even the dominant narrative of most African societies.

My visit to Kenya was occasioned by the second of three annual conferences in Nairobi of the Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion and Society in Africa. I wear the hat of an editor, not a scholar, so I was there as an observer, witnessing firsthand an extraordinary level of intellectual ferment in African theological method and social analysis. The conference brought in scholars (including several Catholic bishops) from all over

the continent and was conducted in a “palaver” style, where group dialogue is given greater emphasis than the American presenter-responder academic model. To call it an eye-opener is perhaps a tourist cliché (yes, I also went on safari), but I left Nairobi challenged to consider in new ways another notion that sometimes becomes a cliché: the global church.

The concept of a third world is passé, we were reminded, as are other Cold War-era distinctions between the West and the rest. Scholars spoke instead of a global South, one that has emerged from the shadow of the North and now presents its own vision(s) for society and Christianity as well. Note: has emerged, not is emerging. The pope is from the Global South, as was the Kenyan father of the U.S. president, as are almost 60 percent of Jesuit priests and brothers worldwide. Many of the scholars at the conference also either work now or once studied at universities in the United States and Europe. The times, they have a’changed.

The flowering of African Christianity was also impossible to miss, with frequent references to the explosive growth of Pentecostalism alongside still-growing mainline congregations and African Initiated Churches. The Catholic Church in Africa has more than tripled in size since 1965, and religious practice is dramatically higher than in the old bastions of the church. Christian denominations exist (sometimes uneasily) alongside expressions of Islam and traditional African religion. Churches play a prominent role in providing so-

cial services (in part because national structures are under-resourced) and are far more engaged socially and politically than their counterparts in Europe or the Americas.

I also came away with a distinct sense that a major contribution of African theology (if such a monolithic term is useful) to global Christianity on the academic level is its focus on the practical, the pastoral and the local. Many of the U.S. church’s problems

are paralleled in Africa, including the familiar specters of clericalism, sexism and hidden sexual and financial scandals. I was struck, however, by the degree to which presenters made these and other societal ills (including environmental exploitation, compulsive consumerism and political corrup-

tion) the subject of academic theological reflection. We in the United States are often behind the curve in this type of theological analysis.

The temptation, of course, is to dismiss this theological ferment as the logical product of a young church not yet bedeviled by the materialism, secularization or malaise that often seem to mark much of contemporary Euro-American Christianity. But globalization is already a reality in Africa—Kenya’s impressive new highways, after all, are being built by Chinese companies using Chinese labor, and everyone has a smartphone—and religion does not seem to be beating a retreat. Might some future pundit turn Belloc’s now-quaint parochialism on its head, and note that “The faith is Africa, and Africa is the faith”?

In Africa,
religion
does not
seem to be
beating a
retreat.

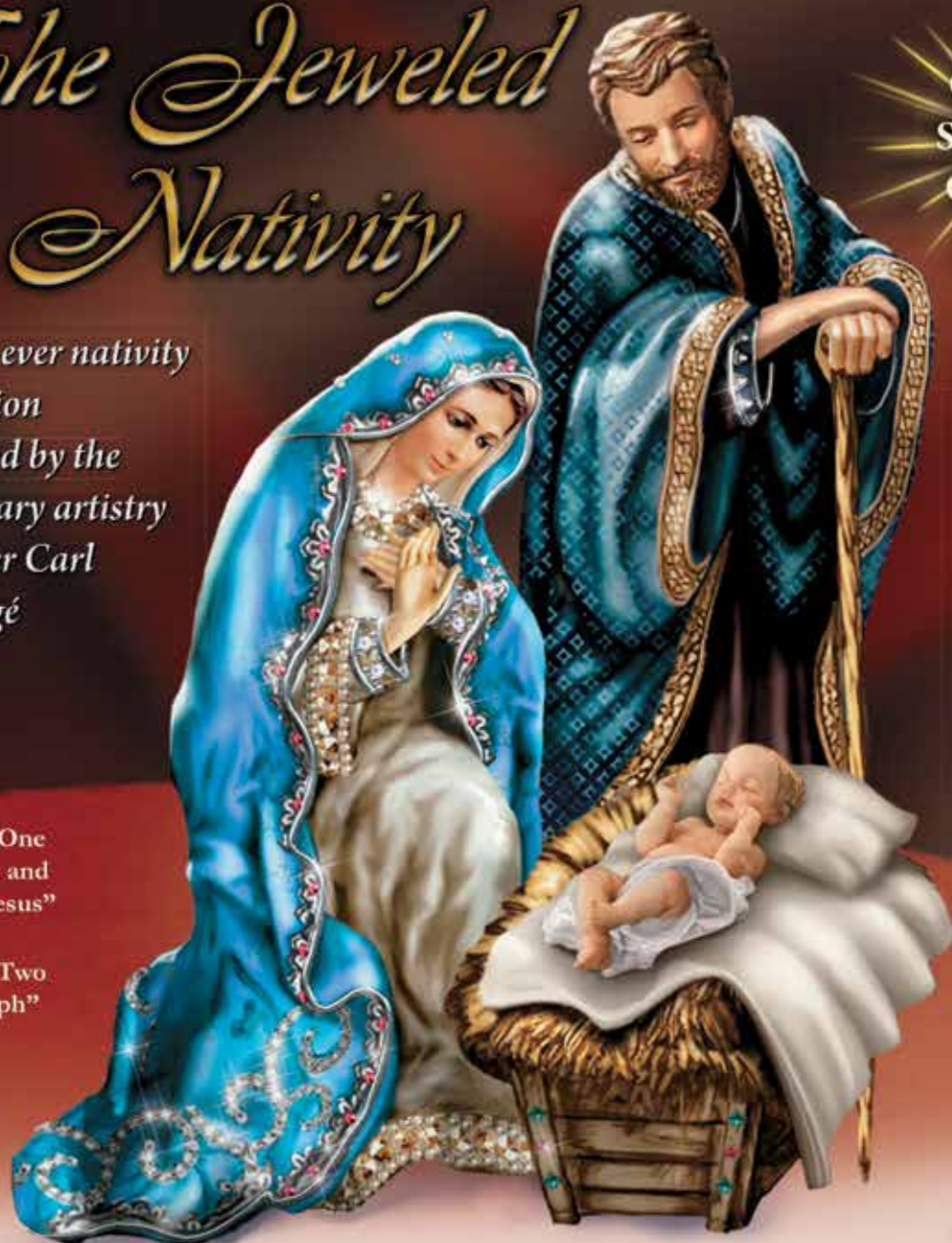
JAMES T. KEANE is an editor at Orbis Books in Ossining, N.Y., and a former associate editor of *America*. Twitter: @jamestkeane.

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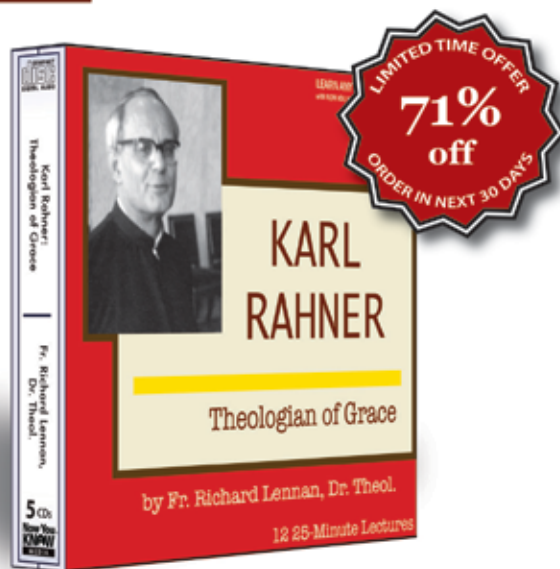
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Justified Reason

BY ADAM D. HINCKS

She would have to leave her intellect behind, my friend assumed, if she followed up on a profound experience of God that had led her to Mass. Eventually she decided to enroll in the catechumenate in order to become a member of the Catholic Church. Taking this step, she explained to me, would require her to check her brain at the classroom door, but she felt her newfound religion was so important to her that she was willing to sacrifice reason for faith.

Happily, my friend soon discovered that the Catholic faith in fact encourages the use of reason. But her story reminds us that we live in a culture that tends to segregate knowledge, faith and belief. On the one hand, knowledge is seen as scientific, objective and part of a common fund. On the other, faith and belief (which are not usually distinguished) are considered unscientific, subjective and private. At best, the two categories are allowed to coexist

HEAVENLY GAZE.
Emmanuel Carreira, S.J.,
operates the telescope at
the Vatican Observatory.

ADAM D. HINCKS, S.J., is an astrophysicist at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. He blogs at ibosjca.com.

if kept at arms' length from each other; at worst, they are treated as mutually opposed, whether by strident atheists or religious fundamentalists.

Such attitudes toward knowledge and belief do not comport with the Catholic tradition. Nor do they accurately reflect the way our minds actually work. St. Augustine was correct when he wrote, "To believe is nothing other than to think with assent.... Believers are also thinkers: in believing, they think and in thinking, they believe." Perhaps surprisingly, the clearest evidence for this claim can be found in the world of scientific research.

Collaboration in Science

William Wordsworth, whose college bedroom window overlooked a statue of Sir Isaac Newton, characterized this great scientist as "a mind for ever/ Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone." The image of a solitary scientist arriving at pure knowledge through the unbridled powers of his own ratiocination remains in force today, but this is out of touch with how real science is accomplished. Science is in fact a deeply collaborative effort.

The story of the most recent Nobel Prize in physics exemplifies this. It was awarded to François Englert and Peter Higgs for predicting the existence of a new particle, the Higgs boson, in the 1960s. The actual discovery of the particle, though, did not occur until 2012 at the Large Hadron Collider near Geneva, Switzerland. The results were published in two scientific papers, only one of which lists all its authors. A quick glance reveals why: the list runs eight pages, naming 3,172 contributors from 178 institutions. It was a team effort on a huge scale, involving theorists, experimentalists, engineers and construction workers. The Nobel committee may have been forced by the limits of the award to honor only two people, but the science behind the award involved thousands.

My own research in astrophysics may involve many fewer people, but it is no less a collaborative endeavor. Take the Atacama Cosmology Telescope collaboration, of which I am a member. We are about 100 people at 20 institutions in Canada, Chile, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. We hold over seven hours of teleconferences every week to discuss various aspects of our instrumenta-

tion, field operations, future design, data analysis and scientific results. No one person knows everything about the project; that would be impossible. We need to believe in the results that our colleagues produce. Of course, we ask each other tough questions and try to have multiple checks of important results. But ultimately it is only by sharing information, dividing up tasks and trusting one another that we make scientific progress.

This and countless similar efforts demonstrate that belief is a crucial element in scientific research. Isaac Newton himself made famous the dictum, "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants." His theory of gravity rested on the painstaking astronomical observations of astronomers like Tycho Brahe and John Flamsteed. He did not feel the need to remake their results but was content to believe them. Many of the scientists who analyzed the data containing evidence for the Higgs boson did not personally assemble the equipment that provided it, but rather believed that the data on their computers came from a properly run experiment. And when I reflect on my experience, I realize that I did

not personally verify the vast majority of scientific theories that I learned while earning my degrees—not even Newton's foundational laws of motion. No one, moreover, sees such instances of scientific belief as fundamentally irrational. They are an everyday behavior, repeated countless times in universities and laboratories around the world.

Knowledge and Belief

"The whole of science," Albert Einstein once remarked, "is nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking." The roles of knowledge and belief in science mirror how these two faculties interact in other spheres of human inquiry. The historian has no way of verifying for himself that Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon, but must believe Suetonius's account. The geographer may never have done a survey of the coast of Brazil, but believes the maps in the atlas are accurate. Or, to take a very simple example, ask yourself how you know who your father is. Although today we have recourse to DNA tests, most still turn to their mothers rather than to a laboratory to answer this question. In all of these

**If we are to come
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We need a gift
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examples, we do not treat such belief as an arbitrary choice or a matter of personal taste, but as a point of access to something objective. Our own behavior demonstrates that we accept, at least implicitly, that belief is rational.

Belief and knowledge, then, are intimately interlocking rational processes and more similar than we often suppose. Consider how we come to know something. It begins with experience—the input of our senses, our memories and our affective states. We then look to understand the data and, if we are successful, have insights that show the possible intelligibility in what we have experienced. We test our insights against other data until we are satisfied that they are correct. And often, but not always, we recognize values in our knowledge that prompt a decision to act.

Belief is necessary when the processes that generate immanent knowledge are not possible. Often we lack the necessary data, or the ability to make relevant insights, or cannot quite be satisfied that our insights are right. In these moments, we have to turn to the knowledge attained by others who have the data, the understanding or the judgment we lack. But an act of belief is a decision, and if a decision, it is the response to perceived value; and if value has been perceived, it is in something concrete that we already know. When a child believes his parents, for example, it is because he has come to do so through experience, understanding and verification that their words are trustworthy and recognizes

the value in assenting to them.

“To believe is nothing other than to think with assent.” We base our decisions to believe on the same rational processes that give us knowledge. If we really want to be precise, many of the things we say we know, like scientific facts, historical events or the details of current affairs, we should say we believe—and we should not be less satisfied just because we rationally assented to someone else’s knowledge.

Knowledge and Belief in Religion

Belief is popularly considered to be constitutive of religion, but if, as I have argued, belief and knowledge go hand in hand, then authentic religion must also include knowledge. This is indeed the case. For instance, John the Evangelist writes, “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us” (1 Jn 1:3). He is speaking about someone he knew—someone he has “seen and heard”—not just believed in. Knowledge of a person is at the heart of the Gospel message. Today, though we cannot know the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth in the same way the apostles did, our belief in God is complemented by the immanent knowledge of God we acquire through prayer and spiritual experiences. Thus, in Ignatian spirituality, for example, we examine the data of our feelings and desires in order to understand and come to know how God is working in our lives.

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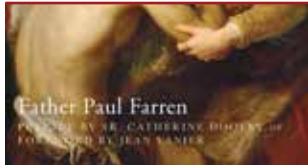
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Further, there is a long and venerable tradition in Christianity of using philosophy, or human reasoning, to know things about God. The First Vatican Council dogmatically affirmed this ancient tradition in “*Dei Filius*,” its document on revelation (No. 2):

The same Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the source and end of all things, can be known with certainty from the consideration of created things, by the natural power of human reason: ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.

Knowledge, therefore, takes its rightful place alongside belief in Catholic theology. But they alone are not enough, and the council hastens to add that many aspects of the Christian religion are beyond mere human knowledge and belief, and explains why divine revelation is necessary: “The reason is that God directed human beings to a supernatural end, that is a sharing in the good things of God that utterly surpasses the understanding of the human mind.”

This is a point worth dwelling upon, for it is a curious fact that although our rational capacity is limited, our desire for knowledge is unlimited. We want to know the ultimate truth and to love the ultimate good, but in our finitude we are incapable of doing so on our own. We yearn for the supernatural, but unaided knowledge and belief can only know the natural. It is not simply that knowledge of God is accessible only to those with the leisure and philosophical talent

to pursue him. There is the added fact that philosophy can go only so far. If we are to come into the full communion with God that our unlimited desire longs for, we need to reach somehow beyond what we are capable of knowing and believing through the sciences. We need a gift from God: faith.

Transcending Human Limits

“Faith,” according to the Book of Hebrews, “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). It is not an assurance of a good that we possess, but of “things hoped for”; it is a conviction not of what we see and can understand through our own reason, but of “things not seen.” In his magnificent encyclical “*Fides et Ratio*,” St. John Paul II explained: “Moving beyond the stage of simple believing, Christian faith immerses human beings in the order of grace, which enables them to share in the mystery of Christ, which in turn offers them a true and coherent knowledge of the Triune God” (No. 33).

Faith is thus primarily a grace that draws us beyond the sort of believing and knowing that we can achieve through human reason. “True and coherent knowledge of the Triune God” is not accessible to our unaided intellects, but our intellects were never made to work unaided. Faith is grace perfecting our natural rational capacity so that we can contemplate what reason ultimately desires: unconditional goodness and unconditional truth—that is, God.

At this point, it is important to come full circle. If faith perfects reason, then it certainly does not destroy reason. Rather, authentic faith is the guarantor of the validity of human reason, which, on its own, has no way of proving its own trustworthiness. One cannot, for instance, justify the scientific method using the scientific method, but must appeal to something more fundamental. And since our reason is limited, it will never find within itself its own justification. The only way we can be assured that the human sciences tell us true information about the world is if we accept that they are part of a larger, rational order. “It is the one and the same God,” Pope John Paul II continues, “who establishes and guarantees the intelligibility and reasonableness of the natural order of things upon which scientists confidently depend, and who reveals himself as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The contemporary urge to separate knowledge from belief not only fails to grasp their interdependence; it overlooks the essentially collaborative nature of human inquiry. By cordoning reason off from faith, it also threatens to strike at the very root of rationality itself. For human inquiry was never meant to be a purely human collaboration, but a collaboration with the mind of God. If we expel God from the intellectual life, we may find that reason itself soon withers.



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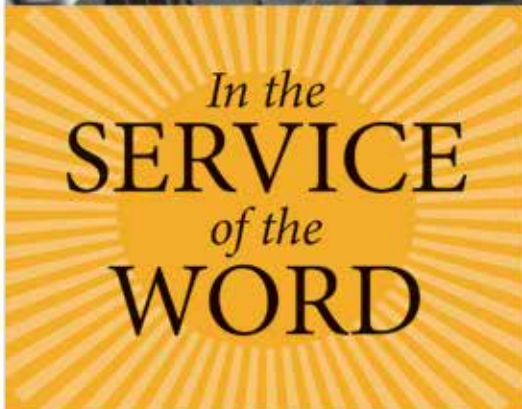
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The Real Francis

How one saint's ancient insights are transforming today's church

BY JON M. SWEENEY

Eight hundred years ago a man from Assisi, Italy, was saving the church from its corruption, clericalism, irrelevance and insincerity by waking people up to a renewed focus on the Gospel. His name was Francesco di Bernardone, but we know him as St. Francis of Assisi. Today, Francis is the world's most popular saint and an inspiration to our pope. But he also is misunderstood.

To meet the real Francis, we have to wipe clean the slate of our cultural and religious imagination and forget some half-formed legends. G. K. Chesterton once wrote, "Truth... must of necessity be stranger than fiction, for we have made fiction to suit ourselves." Case in point: The unreal Francis is one of the most famous fictional characters in history, too often a mix of saccharine pictures and stories—a figure who sits amid birds or speaks to wolves—that keep us from seeing the real man.

Further hindering us is the fact that we often prefer those almost fairytale images. Who would not feel more serene sitting in a quiet garden among the flowers, the birds in song, with a St. Francis statue nearby? Our ideas of saints are always easier to handle than the reality; they do what we expect of them. The Francis we picture is a man we can easily imagine inviting to tea. The saint might tuck a napkin in his lap and mention the lovely songs the birds were singing outside. Perhaps he would even interpret them for us, since he seems to understand their language. But if you invited the real Francis to tea, he might prefer to work in the kitchen or maybe even beg his bread from passers-by before joining you inside. His clothes might be ragged and dirty, since he had little concern for presentation. The neighbors would stare.

Reality Matters

In 1911 Franz Kafka traveled from Prague to Paris in order to visit the Louvre. He queued up to visit not Leonardo's "Mona Lisa," but the blank space on the wall where it usually hung, for it had been stolen a week earlier! Kafka (like thousands of people that year) went to the Louvre to see the legacy of the painting rather than the real thing. Let us not line up to see the legacy of Francis. The real Francis is

far more compelling and important than the imaginary one.

The very word *saint* contributes to misunderstanding. Although I have great appreciation for the saints (and have written books devoted to them), it is almost a shame we use the word so often. Too many people hear *saint* and think *piety*. And in many imaginations, piety is equal to a sort of otherworldly irrelevance.

Also, some saints in history, particularly those that came after Francis' time, set out deliberately to become saints, almost the way a child today might grow up intent on becoming a "star." I can imagine St. Thérèse of Lisieux studying paintings of previous saints (primarily Francis) and imitating the looks on the faces, the gestures of the hands.

Becoming a saint is a worthy goal, of course, but a spiritual self-consciousness was not characteristic of the real Francis. Where he modeled his actions after the Jesus he met in the Gospels, some later saints read accounts of people like Francis in order to chart paths according to what the blessed are supposed to do. Francis' life actually marks a turning point in the "saints industry." He became an icon of sanctity; but it is important to realize that for him it was just a path of conversion.

Francis often was uncertain; he frequently questioned his own motives; those are reasons why we like him so much. And those quixotic, "saintly" things he did were simply, in his time, experiments in Gospel living. Francis' life demonstrates that Christianity is much more than institutions, catechisms and sacraments—it is also techniques and practices. He was always saying to his brother friars: "Come along, I'll show you how."

Six Ways to Practice

Francis transformed the church by refocusing Christians on the Gospel, resurrecting Christian practice in six distinct ways. Some of these reveal a man who was ahead of his time. One reveals a man ahead of our own time. In each of them we can see a similarity between Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis.

What Francis did and said 800 years ago was not only for the church, or people of faith, but for all people, and this begins to explain why he was so popular even back then. The same is true of Pope Francis today. You probably have noticed that unlikely groups of people—atheists, Buddhists and certainly disaffected Catholics—are among those lis-

JON M. SWEENEY is the author of *When Saint Francis Saved the Church: How a Converted Medieval Troubadour Created a Spiritual Vision for the Ages* (Ave Maria Press).



BLESSED ARE THE POOR. Pope Innocent III blessing St. Francis and his followers in Rome, 1209-1210.

tening attentively to the pope, who is speaking in ways they understand, practicing a Catholicism that they recognize as meaningful and important for the world. We recognize, when we see it, how being Catholic can also be beautifully catholic.

There isn't space here to go into detail about each of these six aspects of Francis' spiritual vision, so I will only summarize them. But one builds upon the next, and they all reveal a revolutionary, life-changing approach to life and faith.

Friendship. A strange place to start, perhaps, but friendship had a primacy for Francis. If you think of the traditional qualities of a saint, they are usually courage, intellect and compassion. Francis had these virtues, some of them to an extraordinary degree, but for him the list simply started elsewhere. His journey began and ended with—and his charisma comprised almost entirely—a true and unique gift for friendship, for true solidarity. There were clear and distinct lines of gender, religion and status in his culture and time, and Francis crossed them all. Had he not also been of unimpeachable motives and character, he probably would have been burned at the stake for this radical solidarity.

Embracing the "other." Francis saw a different world from

the one perceived by most religious people of his time. He saw the sacred in everyone and everything and so was able to pay profound respect to invisible, discarded and demonized people, creatures and other unknowns. He had nothing to gain by doing so, but he included them as equals in his life. This inclusiveness was the essence of how he changed monasticism and how he believed every person should act in the world.

Poverty. The popularity of Francis' spiritual movement in the two decades between his conversion and death is almost without precedent in the history of Christianity. Other reforms within monasticism had shown quick growth, but not like the early Franciscan movement. In one of the most pregnant phrases of Chesterton's little book about Francis, he wrote: "What St. Benedict had stored St. Francis scattered." This scattering was deliberate on Francis' part, as he made the values and spirituality of traditional monasticism available to everyday people everywhere. He took on poverty personally and voluntarily, within and for himself, rather than simply as a subject of concern in the lives of others. He did not make poverty a virtue in and of itself, but he focused

attention on how being poor was a sure way to understand the message of Jesus. And for him, personal poverty was not only about living without means; it also was about renouncing power, success, influence and even respect. "Being poor" became something people wanted to do when they saw it lived out by Francis.

Spirituality. Francis lived at a time when the church often felt threatened by individual expressions of faith. One was only "spiritual" in church. Yet Francis created ways for ordinary people to mark their lives as holy no matter where they were. Valued higher by Francis than theological understanding, his personal spiritual life set him apart from nearly every other leader in the church of his day.


Care. This word perhaps best summarizes Francis' gentle attention to, not just people and creatures, but things. This extended beyond humankind, to animals, fish, even rocks. Why? He was learning to be a lover of the Beatitudes. It was his care-full-ness in little things that made him the environmental saint we know today. In no other area do we see so clearly how Francis was a man ahead of his time.

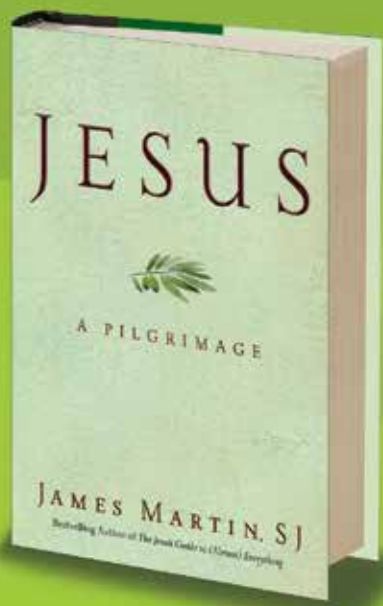
Death. Francis embraced death not fatalistically as a gift, as did the majority of medieval people who talked in macabre ways about life as a "dance with death," but as an important part of living. His welcoming of death was almost without precedent in Christian teaching and is more important than ever for people of all backgrounds to grapple

with. Death was his sister. In this area I believe the Poverello reveals himself to be a man even ahead of our time.

In all six ways, Francis forged a new path. Not accidentally, these same areas of Christian life have been revived in the pontificate of Pope Francis.

Francis of Assisi gained tens of thousands of followers quickly, when he was doing these things 800 years ago, but historians also report that Francis died an unhappy man. Why? After the initial inspiration, his closest friends began to abandon the original ideals. The values of the people were slowly compromised. It all seemed too difficult. Being Christian in these six ways no longer seemed "realistic." So, even before Francis' death in October 1226, it was in many ways back to "business as usual" in what was already, by then, called Franciscanism.

Today Pope Francis is reviving the spirit of St. Francis among us. "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of the Gospel!" the pope wrote in "The Joy of the Gospel." Our answer must be "Amen," and then, "How?" We must look to the past, not simply to learn what happened, but to understand ourselves in the present. Let us continue to look to St. Francis of Assisi. And let us see that, with the help of Pope Francis and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, perhaps the transformation that happened 800 years ago is still happening today. 




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China: Yes and No to Francis

Most of the international media reported that China allowed Pope Francis to fly through its airspace to and from Korea in August. They also informed their global audiences that Francis expressed his wish for good relations with Beijing and his ardent desire to visit there “tomorrow.”

The same media, however, gave little visibility to other aspects of the somewhat complex Sino-Vatican relation in regard to Francis’ visit to Korea for Asian Youth Day and the beatification of 124 martyrs.

In this week’s dispatch, I want to look at some of these lesser known aspects, beginning with how China’s official media treated the visit.

Hong Kong’s bishop, Cardinal John Tong Hon, told me recently that ever since Francis’ election, China’s official media have given him a neutral, even positive press, and never published negative reports on him. “That’s quite remarkable,” he stated.

When it came to Francis’ first visit to Asia, however, China’s international English language media—China Daily and Xinhua News Agency—reported on his flight through its airspace and the telegrams he sent to President Xi Jinping, but its national media did not provide any report on this. In fact, China’s national press, radio and TV did not report on his visit, nor did they mention that Francis beatified a Chinese priest martyr. Chinese Catholics learned about all this through other channels.

Commenting on this treatment by

the Chinese media, the Rev. Gianni Criviller, an Italian missionary and Sinologist, said, “It’s very important to distinguish between what China’s authorities do for international P.R. and what they do inside China; these are two completely different stories.”

Take the case of allowing the papal flight to travel through China’s airspace. China watchers recalled that Beijing refused this passage to John Paul II but observed that since Francis is the most popular leader on planet Earth today, it would have looked bad if it refused him transit. Cardinal Tong, on the other hand, interpreted the Chinese decision in a more positive light. “This is a good sign. We look forward to further developments,” he said.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the decision regarding the airspace came after official Chinese and Holy See delegations met in Rome last June, reopening a dialogue that had been closed for some years.

On the other hand, there is the negative side of Beijing’s reaction to the papal visit to Korea and, in particular, to Asian Youth Day. This must be reported because it reflects the hard reality of Catholic life in China today.

One hundred fifteen young Chinese Catholics from most dioceses in the mainland had registered to participate in the youth day, but in the end only 60 managed to attend. The other 55 were prevented from doing so by various forms of “persuasion” or were blocked at the airport. They suffered for their faith.

This hard fact shows that the situation of Chinese Catholics has worsened

somewhat since 1995, when Beijing allowed an official delegation of Catholic young people from mainland China to attend World Youth Day in Manila.

In Korea, a Chinese source at the event, who requested anonymity for fear of consequences, told me: “Some Chinese youths risked their security to see the pope and to attend the Asian Youth Day. They showed to the world their love for their faith and for their country by proudly wearing a T-shirt

Some Chinese youths risked their security to see the pope.

that carried the word ‘China’ emblazoned on it. All these Chinese felt strengthened and encouraged in their Catholic faith by meeting the pope and experienced themselves as members of the universal church.”

These young mainlanders, who risked careers, peace and security to be with the pope, shared their faith with 240 fellow Chinese from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan and with young Catholics from other Asian countries. “They prayed together, learned from the faith experiences of the Korean martyrs and reflected on how they should respond to the Lord’s call to be evangelizers in their own country, and perhaps even martyrs,” my source concluded.

Pope Francis knew all this when he spoke about China on the flight back from Korea. His words should be read in this context, especially when he says: “The church asks only for liberty for its mission and its work. There’s no other condition” and reminds everyone that Benedict XVI’s letter to China’s Catholics is still “current.”

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: @genryorome.

A Complicated Grief

Persevering in faith in the midst of suffering

BY KERRY WEBER

When my cell phone rings early one sunny fall morning, I reach for it groggily, see that the call is from my mother and know that whatever she is about to say will be heartbreaking. I am still in bed in my pajamas, and my mom tells me that Marian Elizabeth has been born. Everything else my mother says is drowned out by the roar in my brain that tells me that I must see my new niece. “Call me back on FaceTime,” I say interrupting her. A moment later, the video call comes through.

Marian Elizabeth, named for two women with difficult and miraculous pregnancies, is wearing a hat that is way too big for her tiny body, two months premature. My sister, Elizabeth, is holding her daughter both gingerly and with such strong love. And I just keep saying over and over again, “She’s so beautiful, I love you both so much. You are both so beautiful. I love you. I love you. She is beautiful,” even though I know my niece can’t fully comprehend it, while at the same time trying to understand it all myself. And then a few minutes later, somehow, I tear myself away from the phone, and I head off to work and I wait.

KERRY WEBER, *managing editor at America*, is author of *Mercy in the City*.

I am waiting for the next, inevitable call. The joy of seeing my niece alive is accompanied by the heaviness of knowing that what we had expected had, in fact, come to pass. Marian, facing a host of health problems, will



only live for a few hours. This first time seeing my niece will also be my last. During those hours of her life, Marian is baptized in a tiny white garment that swims around her, while I pore over manuscripts at my desk until I get a message telling me that my niece has died.

We first learn about the complications with my sister’s pregnancy on Mother’s Day weekend. My sister is rushed to the doctor, and the doctors think she may be having a miscarriage. She is put on bed rest until she can go back to the doctor on Monday to find out if the baby still has a heart-

beat. “All we can do is pray,” my family keeps saying, though I am not always sure if saying such things means that we’re resigned to our seeming helplessness or attempting one last-ditch effort for control. I know that prayer can change the way we look at a situation, but I don’t care about that at the moment; I just want my prayer to change the outcome.

I pray that her suffering, her child’s suffering, be transferred, in some material way, to me. I want this all to work like it does when I go hiking and my boyfriend offers to carry more of our supplies because then we can walk farther together.

Monday morning comes and we learn that the baby’s heartbeat has been found. And then we learn the rest. We learn, gradually, of the numerous, potentially lethal developmental and health problems that the baby faces or will face if she makes it into this world. The doctors still are not even sure the baby will reach full term. And if she does, the doctors are increasingly certain she will not live beyond a few hours. The situation seems like a cruel response to my prayer, a kind of bait and switch. My sister and her husband decide that they will love this kid for whatever time they’ve got. And again, we wait.

In early September, my sister is

“DEPOSITION OF THE CROSS,” BY JOSEF JANSSENS (1806-1910), IN THE CATHEDRAL OF OUR LADY IN ANTWERP, BELGIUM. PHOTO: RENATA SEDMAKOVA

hugely pregnant, due to complications, even though the baby is still so small. Every time I look at her, I am reminded anew of what is and what likely will be soon. And life and death seem so close, and her whole house seems pregnant with both terrifying ambiguity and unlikely hope.

In the Letter of James we read (1:2):

Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. And let perseverance be perfect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

This phrase—the testing of your faith—can be an odd one to parse, implying, it seems, that God sits on some gilded throne in a heavenly science lab taking notes on how we react to certain stimuli. I can't believe that. Yet there is no doubt that suffering does test us. It forces us to figure out why we keep going, what we should rely on. And I have to believe that while God is not making clinical notes, God is taking note. Even when it feels as though we are alone, God sees us being changed by suffering. And even more than that, God accompanies us. God accompanies us through that pain, through the numbness, through the disbelief and the unbelief.

The natural question when we encounter suffering is: Why? But sometimes the more helpful one is: Where? Where am I being called by this suffering? Where can I find a supportive community? Where is God in all of this? Because, as James suggests, we have to persevere.

So often we tell ourselves that we should not complain about the minor inconveniences or even significant trials in our own lives when so much "real" suffering is going on in the world. It only seems right to persevere in our lives grateful for what we have, even if

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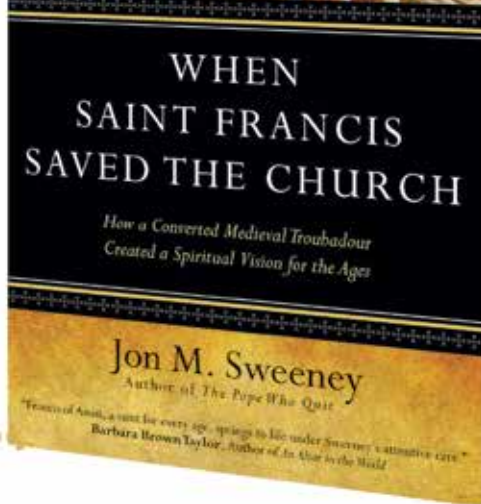
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that means being grateful for calm and beautiful deaths. As a wise priest once said to me: "All suffering is real." Every life is precious. The grief caused by the death of one child is not immediately alleviated because we know that elsewhere, in places of war or poverty, thousands of others have also died. And the suffering of those children has weight far beyond its use in putting our own seemingly more fortunate lives in perspective.

Yet when we hear or tell of others' suffering we experience a little bit of it. We *suffer with*, as Christ did for us, entering into our imperfect world. St. Ignatius calls us, in the third week of the Spiritual Exercises, to consider Christ's suffering from the Last Supper through the Garden of Gethsemane. And in doing so, he says that we should want, even ask "for grief with Christ in grief, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and interior pain at such great pain which Christ suffered for me." This isn't easy.

Marian's funeral is one of the most horrible and beautiful experiences of my life, at once tragic and grace-filled. I arrive at the small, familiar chapel with my parents, and Elizabeth and her husband arrive separately, a reminder that as much as my parents and siblings and I are still family, my sister now is a part of her own little family. She looks so somber and so strong and still young but wears a more weathered expression, like

someone who has been at sea for a long time and is still getting used to land again. The casket is tiny, maybe 2 feet long, and white, and it has a heart embossed in the top, and it sits in the front of the chapel covered by the tiny baptismal garment that once enveloped Marian's body. And as heartbreaking as it is to see the casket carried in by the man from the funeral parlor, it is more heartbreaking to see it as my sister and her husband carry it out together after the liturgy, walking while swaying with grief, and singing and crying. The casket looks so light, not like the heaviness we expect on that final journey out. But by far the most heartbreaking moment comes early in the Mass, as I watch my mother looking at my sister looking at that casket, both faces stricken with grief on behalf of their daughters.

Perhaps God does not bargain with our lives the way I had tried to. Perhaps my prayer should not have been to suffer instead of my sister but to suffer with, to truly exist compassionately, to have asked for "grief with her grief and anguish with her anguish." We cannot always take away someone's suffering, but we can walk beside them, help them carry their burdens and in that way be able to walk farther together.

And, if I cannot always, as James asks, see all of it as joy, perhaps I can at least find a way to see the moments of joy in the pain, the grace and kindness of the doctors who treated my sister,


the priest who slept in the hospital waiting room in order to baptize the baby at a moment's notice.

Painful suffering, monumental moments, can divide life into a before and an after. Yet we must persevere; we continue on, if differently. It takes time to process suffering. Hope and joy look different. In Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians we read:

We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair...always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body.

How miraculous, how perfect, that in each of us we harbor both the living and dying Christ. In each of us, at all times, a million Good Fridays and Resurrections. And maybe those days in between, as well. We forget about those days sometimes, days during which the apostles must have been afraid and alone and the world seemed dark and no one knew what would happen next.

During times of suffering, no matter how many times we are told that a resurrection is coming, it is tough to believe that we will emerge from the darkness, that we will eventually find that tomb empty and hear our equivalent of "He is no longer here!" How hard it can be to believe that eventually we will find a new moment when hope and joy look different, *yet again*.

And so, instead of wondering why, we simply persevere, we try to find that joy, to let it transform us and to simply love our way through it all. Because even in our worst moments, this is what God does for us. God loves us back from the edge. God looks at us and says, "You are so beautiful, I love you so much. You are so beautiful. I love you. I love you. You are beautiful." Even though God knows we cannot fully comprehend. 



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Awake, Sleeper!

The spirituality of the snooze button

BY PAULA D. BINSOL

It happened on the first Sunday I ever spent in my college dormitory, my first residence of my own, away from my family. I was asleep when my alarm went off at exactly 7 a.m. Instead of getting up, I hit the snooze button. This may not seem particularly momentous, but it was a first for me—for the first time in a multitude of Sundays (938, to be exact), I was not being awakened by my mother or called by my father urging me to get ready for the 9 a.m. Mass at our parish.

I was enamored with this newfound freedom; when the alarm rang a second time at 7:10 a.m., I hit the snooze button again. There I was, a cradle Catholic, baptized and confirmed, lying in my extra-long, super-springy-yet-oddly-hard dormitory bed, feeling empowered by my small rebellion and wondering whether or not I actually would go to Mass.

In the end, I went. I chose my faith. But it was not easy. And this decision did not come as the result of a grand conversion or one glorious moment of realization. It was a choice I had to make over and over again. There were many, many, *many* prayers to St. Anthony and St. Jude and quite a bit of time spent in the various chapels on campus praying for, well, anything. And at times I doubted God was present. And even though I knew that I was not the only person to feel this way, for a very long time I was ashamed of this feeling. I was ashamed that I—

even for a second—thought that God had forsaken me because of the intense struggles I encountered during nursing school.

My classes were challenging, demanding, time-intensive, mentally exhausting and, at times, caused such emotional turbulence that to say the experience was a roller-coaster ride would be an understatement. The amount of tension and anxiety that surrounds examination periods is inexplicable and can only be understood truly by fellow nursing students. College has been hard for me, but it was even harder when I was praying and felt like absolutely no one was hearing me. But I believed in God, or so I told myself, and kept praying.

During my junior year of nursing school, I hit rock bottom. I failed a class for the first time. I lost a few wonderful friends, the friends that I thought would be *those* friends, the ones you meet in college and who stay for good. I was in constant internal conflict. I felt like I was watching all my friends pair off into cute little couples while I was left alone, the eternal fifth wheel. I saw engagement photo after engagement photo, wedding after wedding and at one point looked in the mirror and wondered what was wrong with me, what was so undesirable about me. And then I became disgusted with myself for this small, recurring moment of insecurity, vulnerability and desperation. I was always waiting; I was always wanting more and asking

for more and praying for more. I was always looking toward the other side, the greener grass, where I thought everything was better. And once a week, my alarm would go off at 7:00 a.m., and I would hit the snooze button and then, eventually, get out of bed and



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/MARSEL82

force myself—and I mean truly force myself—to keep praying.

Some days I honestly thought I no longer believed. Some days I felt so alone that the world seemed dark and despondent wherever I was, whether in my room, in my classrooms or in a pew at Mass. Some days I looked up at the crucifix and felt nothing except tears messily sliding down my cheeks and my fingernails digging into my hands.

Still, the pews became my hiding place. I was there for every exam, every moment of terror, of panic, of anxiety. I went to the chapel before work and would wander in on a “bathroom break” during class. Any time my heart felt heavy and I had no words to speak, I could be found there, sitting in silence and begging God to speak to me.


PAULA D. BINSOL is a 2014 graduate of Felician College in Lodi, N.J.

But God was silent too, so I would take a deep breath and whisper another prayer. And then I would turn my back and leave.

Now, as my senior year concludes, I can say that my alarm has sounded at 7 a.m. every Sunday that I have

made it through nursing school without my faith. I, like countless others, have suffered through heartbreak and insecurity, have had to make decisions that at times seemed pathetic. I have understood the fear that accompanies peer pressure and the pain that follows

me joy. I know that as I accept my diploma and carry with me my family, my friends and my dreams, God will be carrying me, just as he has (without complaint) these last four years.

If someone had told me, four years ago, that the decision to get out of bed after hitting the snooze button would be among the greatest challenges to my faith, I would have laughed. There are so many other things that people warn you about when you are growing up. They tell you to beware of peer pressure, of getting mixed up with the “wrong crowd.” They tell you to be careful about how you consume television, movies and the media. They prepare you for big decisions. But what they do not tell you is that our faith is made up of those small yet significant moments: the months spent in class, the hours spent studying, the 10 minutes following the time you hit snooze, the 10 seconds it takes to make that decision to get up, every day, and keep going. 

FROM IN ALL THINGS

Do we owe it to ourselves, if not to the dead, to try to understand how it happened? Doing so won't change the past; it may change us.

“The Humbling History of World War I,” Margot Patterson

americamagazine.org/things

been in college. And every Sunday I hit the snooze button. And then, after each 10-minute snooze, I get up, get ready and go to Mass. I am thankful that I have done this. I would not have

both refusing to succumb to it and succumbing to it. I have made many, many mistakes and yet through every trial and every rock-studded, mountain-filled path, my faith has brought



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Erasing Conscience

Controversies over the conscience rights of health care workers are not limited to state and federal governments. Professional medical associations have recently constructed codes of ethical conduct concerning the right of health care workers to refuse to participate in certain medical procedures. One of the most influential is "The Limits of Conscientious Refusal in Reproductive Medicine," a statement by the Ethics Committee of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. While it claims to respect the value of conscientious objection, the statement places such severe limits on the exercise of this objection that little of conscience finally survives.

The A.C.O.G. declaration begins with praise of personal conscience as having "a critical and useful place in the practice of medicine. In many cases, it can foster thoughtful, effective, and human care." However, as the declaration attempts to "balance" the claims of conscience against other considerations, the scope for the exercise of conscience is progressively reduced.

One limitation on the right of conscience is the danger of imposition. The A.C.O.G. statement underlines the value of patient autonomy. "To respect a patient's autonomy is to respect her capacities and perspectives, including her right to hold certain views, make certain choices, and take certain actions based on personal values and beliefs." The committee fears that conscientious medical objection can constitute an "imposition of religious or moral beliefs on a patient who may not share these

beliefs," thus assaulting patient autonomy. The refusal to prescribe contraceptives is cited as an example of such an assault. In this exaltation of patient autonomy, the health care professional becomes a simple servant of patient desire, as long as the desired treatment is legal. The traditional duty of the doctor to promote the actual good rather than the subjective wishes of the patient crumbles in such a consumerist indenture to the other's will.

A second limitation stresses the health of the patient, an indisputable medical good. But the A.C.O.G. code places health into a consequentialist framework. The refusal, based on religious convictions, to perform a sterilization could impinge on the patient's own conception of maximal health. "Religiously based refusals to perform tubal sterilization at the time of caesarean delivery can place a woman in harm's way." There is no consideration of the grave assault on physical integrity represented by such an act of mutilation, regardless of hypothetical future health benefits.

Despite the statement's insistence that health care professionals consider the broader social context of their actions, it nowhere recognizes the grim history of coercion accompanying such post-delivery tubal ligations, especially when performed upon poor women dependent on state welfare.

Another limitation arises from the question of social discrimination represented by acts of conscientious objection. "The impact of conscientious refusals on the oppression of certain

groups of people should guide limits for claims of conscience." Two examples cited by the committee are the refusal to provide fertility treatments to same-sex couples and the refusal to provide certain "reproductive services to women." The declaration condemns such refusals on the ground that they constitute discrimination against homosexuals and women as a class.

But the A.C.O.G.'s censure rests on a dangerous confusion between the refusal to perform a certain act and the refusal to serve a certain group. The refusal of a doctor to provide the surgery and hormonal treatments to change the gender appearance of a patient is not the same as refusing to provide cancer treatment to a transgender patient. Many institutions refusing to

perform abortions, notably Catholic hospitals, have a distinguished record of serving a disproportionately female group of clients.

If the A.C.O.G. code reduces conscience to a minor concern, other contemporary voices would simply abolish conscience altogether. The Oxford philosopher Julian Savulescu argues that "a doctor's conscience has little place in the delivery of modern medical care.... If people are not prepared to offer legally permitted, efficient, and beneficial care to a patient because it conflicts with their values, they should not be doctors." Benighted health care workers still clinging to the Hippocratic Oath's prohibition of abortion and euthanasia need not apply.

JOHN J. CONLEY

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TELEVISION | JAKE MARTIN

FRIENDS ARE THE NEW FAMILY

A pioneering sitcom turns 20

This month *Friends* turns 20. When I was that age, 20 years ago, I lay on the hardwood floor of my first apartment on Chicago's North Side with my own group of friends and cynically watched NBC's newest collection of beautiful people trying to be funny. As we made sarcastic comments to one another about how improbable it was that the characters were able to pay rent on such a large apartment while working as a line cook and a waitress in New York City, we caught ourselves genuinely laughing

more than we expected. A lot more.

"*Friends*" became first our guilty, and then our not-so-guilty pleasure, as we realized that however beautiful the actors may be, however contrived their circumstances and however artificial their version of New York, it was, in fact, a really funny show.

As I watched with my friends, it was refreshing to see a show that presented the lives of a group of single 20-somethings living in the big city, who did not have the faintest clue about what was going to happen next. There were no

five-year plans, no high-school sweethearts, no white picket fences; just fear and uncertainty, interspersed with a lot of comfort, understanding and, of course, humor. What I learned from "*Friends*" was that it was O.K. to not have a clue because at the end of the day, it was more important that there was someone there to listen at the end of the day.

Until the advent of "*Friends*," the domestic and work spheres were two separate entities in the television universe. Television shows, sitcoms in particular, were about either the workplace and the relationships that occurred within that sphere—think "*Cheers*," "*The Mary Tyler Moore Show*" or "*Taxi*"—or the domestic world of spouses and children—"The *Cosby Show*," "*All in the Family*," "*Roseanne*." Sometimes,



THERE FOR YOU. Emmy-winning "*Friends*"

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/PAUL SMITH/FEATUREFLASH

but infrequently, they were about both, as in “The Dick Van Dyke Show”; yet even in the rare instances when both milieus were featured, there was still a clear demarkation between the world of work and friendship and the world of home and family.

It could be argued that “Seinfeld” was the first to muddy the sitcom waters in relation to relationships; but “Seinfeld” is an exception in many ways. Though it may have been the first notable TV show to leave the realms of both work and family behind to focus solely on the relationships among young, urban professionals at sea, the fact that all the primary characters would rather have been with other, different people if their circumstances allowed it puts it outside the realm of the motif that “Friends” initiated.

“Friends” was born out of a very real shift occurring in the world at the start of the 1990s: the advent of Generation X—the post-Baby Boomer generation that had rejected the materialism and “family values” that came out of the 1980s and the Reagan era. Add to this a severe economic decline, and suddenly careerism took a back seat to financial insecurity. Marriage and kids were put on hold indefinitely in the face of unemployment and existential angst. Films like as “Reality Bites” and “Singles” placed this shift in the foreground with narratives focused on an unfocused cohort of 20-somethings, all trying to find their bearings in the swell of adulthood.

It could be argued that the whole Gen-X movement was a rejection of adulthood and responsibility and was the harbinger of the perma-adolescents—those 20- and 30-somethings still subsisting on their parents’ dime—so pervasive in today’s culture. Whatever it was, it opened the way for a renewed emphasis within our culture on what the Greeks called *philia*—love between two friends—and the depths and breadth to which friendships could go. “Friends” brought to the forefront

the idea of the “chosen family.” Friends were no longer those people you left at the office or whose phone calls you answered in between kids’ soccer practices and ballet recitals. Friends were now people you spent time with after work, people with whom you spent your holidays and who may even walk you down the aisle at your wedding. Friends were the new family.

“Friends” became a cultural phe-

nomenon: it inspired a hairdo, created a hit song, spawned myriad catchphrases and made all six of its cast members very, very wealthy. Though not nearly as influential as “Seinfeld,” its impact clearly can be seen in the stream of chosen-family shows that followed, like “How I Met Your Mother” (perhaps the most explicit “Friends” copycat), “New Girl” and “The Big Bang Theory.” The emphasis

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in all these shows is on an insular domestic world of urban 20-somethings who come together to support and care for one another in the absence of traditional familial structures.

The variances among these shows are slight. There are never any characters over 40 (even 30 is pushing it); they almost always reside in a large city; and invariably two or more of the characters pair up and marry. By the end of the run of "Friends," all but one of the six main characters were married or soon to be married. And that one was the perennial ladies' man, Joey, who happened to be the only character spinning off into his own show and as such needed to remain single in order to keep a fundamental aspect of his Joey-ness.

These neat endings send the message that it is fine to choose your family when you are young and attractive, but the traditional family model is still presented as the goal and something that should be achieved by your early

to mid-30s. But perhaps that message might have more to do with the values Hollywood perpetuates than the chosen-family shows in and of themselves.

What the shows have done is reinforce the depth and relevance friendships can have by re-emphasizing *philia*, an understanding of love that C. S. Lewis called "the least natural" because it is unnecessary for survival, and yet paradoxically the most sacred exactly because it is not imperative. By de-emphasizing the professional world as well as the traditional familial construct, these shows have made it O.K. to feel not O.K. They have made it O.K. not to have it all figured out, so long as we have figured out one thing: the importance of showing care and concern for those around us.

JAKE MARTIN, S.J., is a theology student at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, Berkeley, Calif., and the author of *What's So Funny About Faith?: A Memoir From the Intersection of Hilarious and Holy* (Loyola Press).

issued on Sept. 8, 1907, in which Pope Saint Pius X condemned a series of errors labeled Modernism. The encyclical unleashed what has become known as the Modernist crisis. *Divided Friends* is a study of the effects of this crisis in the United States. William L. Portier, a professor of theology at the University of Dayton, examines the impact of the crisis by focusing on the lives of four prominent Catholic individuals and how it divided friend from friend.

After a brief discussion of American Catholic intellectual life both before and after the condemnation of Modernism, the author turns his attention to the intellectual journeys of two gifted priests, John R. Slattery and Denis J. O'Connell. With a detective's zeal and the trained eye of a theologian, Portier examines their correspondence, which was widely scattered throughout European and American archives. He even unearthed Slattery's autobiography hidden in a Paris archive. Throughout the decade prior to "Pascendi," O'Connell and Slattery continually discussed the incompatibility of medieval Catholicism with modern science and the intellectual implications of the development of doctrine on Catholic dogma. In 1904 Slattery, a Josephite missionary and a priest for 27 years, decided to abandon his priesthood and eventually his Catholic faith. For him Catholicism would soon become, as Portier put it, "nothing more than a human philosophy."

O'Connell's intellectual journey took a very different course. Like Slattery, he was a liberal, modern thinker. But along the way, according to Slattery, he succumbed to the disease of clerical careerism, preferring the bishop's miter to intellectual integrity. His career path took him from rector of the North American College in Rome in 1885 to rector of Catholic University in 1903. In his 50s, by this time he had distanced himself from

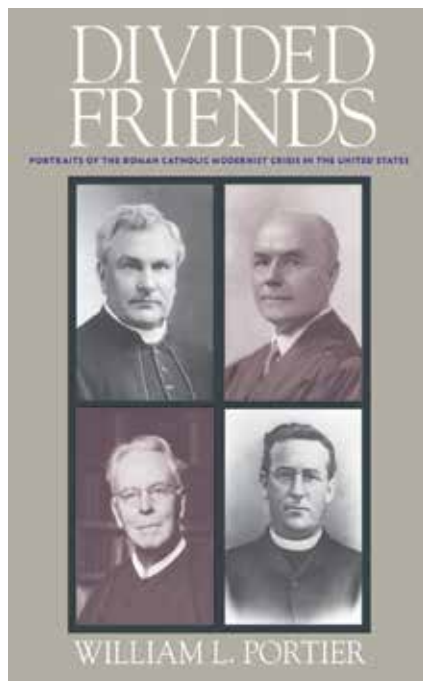
BOOKS | JAY P. DOLAN

ALMOST FORGOTTEN HEROES

DIVIDED FRIENDS Portraits of the Roman Catholic Modernist Crisis in the United States

By William L. Portier
The Catholic University of America Press.
403p \$39.95

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries Catholic intellectuals sought to reconcile their faith with questions posed by modernity that challenged the church's understanding of the Bible, its history and its relationship with society. These efforts did not sit well with authorities in Rome, who viewed these intellectual endeavors as threatening the foundations of the Catholic faith. Their answer was the encyclical "Pascendi Dominici Gregis,"



Slattery, his intellectual soulmate, and had become a severe critic of Modernist thinking. In 1912 he was appointed bishop of Richmond, Va., where he remained a staunch defender of “Pascendi.” Of Portier’s four main personalities, O’Connell emerges as the most tragic figure.

After a brief discussion of Catholic theological culture in the early 20th century in the United States, Portier turns his attention to two Paulist priests, William L. Sullivan and Joseph McSorley. They both taught at the Paulist seminary in Washington, D.C., where they became friends. But their intellectual journeys changed radically after the publication of “Pascendi” in 1907. Within a year Sullivan had resigned from the Paulists and the Catholic Church. As he later put it, “I discovered that a reform of Catholicism was a hopeless cause.” Soon afterwards he joined the Unitarians, where he became an acclaimed preacher and writer.

Portier devotes a great deal of attention to McSorley. Of the four biographical studies, his is the most engaging and inspiring. Prior to the condemnation of Modernism, McSorley had become the literary agent for George Tyrell, an English Jesuit and prominent Catholic intellectual, whose writings on theology challenged traditional Catholic dogma. McSorley continually worked to get Tyrell’s writings published in American Catholic journals. But once “Pascendi” was issued, Tyrell was doomed, and his criticism of the papal edict led to his excommunication. After destroying all his correspondence with Tyrell, writes Portier, McSorley “devoted a good part of the rest of his life to teaching people to pray.” One of his more famous pupils was Dorothy Day, who considered him a saint.

McSorley is the principal figure who unifies the concluding sections of the book. In 1909 Paulist Press published McSorley’s book, *The Sacrament of Duty*. Praising it as “the most inspir-

ing piece of writing to come out of the modernist crisis in the United States,” Portier analyzes the significance of the book in great detail. Looming behind all of McSorley’s writings was the figure of Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulists, and according to Portier “one of America’s truly home-grown religious geniuses.” McSorley spent much of his life promoting “Hecker’s vision of the spiritual life, the Paulists and American Catholicism.”

Underlying the entire book is Portier’s strong belief that despite the condemnation of Americanism in 1899 and Modernism in 1907, American

Catholics never stopped thinking. As a result, a vibrant intellectual tradition that emerged in the 1880s continued to flourish throughout the 20th century. The sections of the book on Slattery and McSorley are the most original and rewarding chapters. Not only did Portier rescue McSorley from obscurity, but his splendid study has also rediscovered an important chapter in American Catholic intellectual life.

JAY P. DOLAN is emeritus professor of history at the University of Notre Dame and the author of *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present*.

J. GREG PHELAN

WAR STORIES

IN THE WOLF’S MOUTH A Novel

By Adam Foulds
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 336p \$26

In his masterful novel *In the Wolf’s Mouth*, set in the waning days of World War II, the British novelist and poet Adam Foulds shuns the tropes of historical fiction to pare his story to its essence. You will not learn the military details of the battles fought in North Africa or Sicily. There are no cameo walk-ons by famous military leaders. Instead, through his plain, precise language, Foulds creates a powerful sense of intimacy with his characters as they experience the physical and psychological devastation of war.

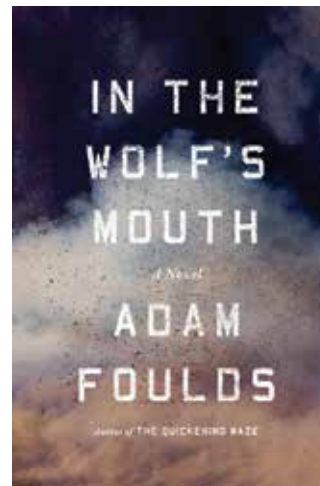
The prologue begins in 1926 at the advent of Fascism in Italy with Angilú, a Sicilian shepherd, tending a prince’s flock in the hills over the village of Sant’ Attilio. When bandits disturb his

idyll and steal the sheep, Angilú uses a gun to defend himself. “Then Angilú was alone with the man he’d shot and had to listen to him dying. Angilú was cursed, forgotten, all his luck gone. His saint was painted tin,” Foulds writes. The point of view shifts to Ciró

Albanese, who likely tipped off the bandits to Angilú’s whereabouts. After the appointment of a Fascist governor, Ciró, a Mafioso, flees his homeland by faking his own death.

Leaping forward to 1942, we meet Will, an English soldier who is spending his last day with his family in the countryside before being shipped off to his posting. Throughout the book, Foulds evokes the adage “character is destiny” as demonstrated in this pithy description of Will:

There was a look for the officer class and Will didn’t have it. Five feet nine inches tall, he had dark



hair and dark eyes, a handsomely grooved round head and a low centre of gravity. This was unfair. In his soul he was tall, a traveller, a keen, wind-honed figure.

With his poet's skill, Foulds distills each sentence to maximize its potency as in this description of Will considering his mother's response to his impending departure:

She would be here all the while imagining him blown to bits. This thought demanded that he imagine his own death also and that was deeply pointless and unhelpful. Typical: her determination never to make a scene often resulted in strange, cramped, unresolved scenes like this. Useless woman. A boy going away to war without a goodbye from his mother.

Next we are in a warship's bunk heading to battle with Ray, an Italian-American soldier, who escapes the boredom and terror of waiting by imagining ideas for movies.

With deft and admirable restraint and directness, Foulds describes how ill-suited the childlike Ray is for life as a soldier:

Usually Ray kept himself to himself, hiding in the dark, preferring invisibility. He liked to be quiet and think. The army, then, was not a natural place for him. He could be seen all the time. Powerful, watching people shouted at him, making him run and crawl and stand thrusting himself upwards at attention and repeat things after them. Just shouting, 'Yes, sir!' was difficult for Ray.

Through Ray, we experience the shock, confusion and irrationality of war from the moment he lands on a

beach in North Africa, through terrible battles and skirmishes, in which his fellow soldiers and friends are mutilated and killed. Hoping for a reprieve, Ray joins the peacekeeping forces heading to Sicily after the Nazi retreat, only to watch a companion get blown up by a landmine, which pushes Ray into a complete breakdown.

Meanwhile, chapters about other characters appear in a satisfyingly unpredictable pattern. We follow Will in his security regiment through assignments in North Africa and eventually into Sicily. We travel to the United States, where Ciró, who has successfully adapted his Mafioso methods, plots his revenge, joins the army and returns to Sant'Attilio, where the shepherd Angilú is now a trusted manager working for the prince and living in Ciró's old house.

We also spend time with Luisa, the prince's daughter, a bored and headstrong young woman, who longs for a change from her static life riding horses around the estate as she and her father await the arrival of the invading Allied forces:

At dinner that night the fighting was very close. They sat down

at the walnut table to the accompaniment of crackling guns. Luisa's father's fear was so great that he could not show any sign of it at all. If he once flinched or moaned, he would have crumpled to the floor and crawled away to the cellarage. As it was, he walked in like someone balancing a book on his head and sat with his eyes very wide and unseeing. Luisa found his face very funny.

Through his vivid, understated descriptions of the people, the landscapes and the chaos of war, Foulds patiently interweaves his characters' stories, slowly building the tension as all the principals converge in Sant' Attilio. What began as a ruminative, evocative account of war becomes a suspenseful thriller as we both want to know and dread the inexorable outcome of this conflagration of violence.

In the end, Foulds brilliantly delivers a story worthy of his epigraph from Wallace Stevens: *There may be a time of innocence. There is never a place.*

J. GREG PHELAN has written for *The New York Times*, *The Millions* and other publications.

DENIS J. M. BRADLEY

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

AQUINAS ON THE BEGINNING AND END OF HUMAN LIFE

By Fabrizio Amerini

Translated by Mark Henninger
Oxford University Press. 260p \$29.95

In this erudite, thoughtful, carefully translated but sometimes turgid book, Fabrizio Amerini reviews Thomas Aquinas's doctrine of the human fetus's successive ensoulments, in order to "dialogue with the contemporary bioethical

debate on abortion." When, if ever, is a fetus developed enough to be regarded as a "human being" or "human person" with moral dignity, integral and perhaps inviolable rights? Any plausible answer to this question should use the empirical facts of human biology as well as the conceptual distinctions of philosophy, if we follow Aquinas's example.

Aquinas rehashed, for the theological edification of his medieval Christian audience, Aristotle's then 1,600-year-old embryology. Amerini exposes the "tensions" and "vacillations" in Aquinas's

abstruse accounts of human embryogenesis. But their main point is clear: the inseminating male initiates a process that, while it leads to the conception of a pre-human uterine animal, does not actually generate another human being.

According to Aquinas, embryogenesis starts with the male's ejaculated sperm which, though not ensouled, is endowed with a "formative power" that mysteriously projects the psychic force of the inseminating male. The formative power moves the sperm's "vital spirit" which, in turn, thermodynamically shapes the fetus's primary organs. In the uterus, the sperm encounters living sanguineous matter animated by a vegetative soul, a form present in "first act." The seminal vital spirit prompts the quiescent vegetative soul into operation or "second act": the vegetative embryo takes in nourishment, grows and begins to manifest primitive organs. After it draws forth the sensitive soul from the organically developing vegetative matter, the sperm dissolves and the sensitive soul subsumes directing nutrition and growth, and completes the emergent organs.

Thus far, no fetal human being has yet appeared in the womb. Nor could one ever appear without supernatural or divine help. The specifically human or rational soul is an immaterial (spiritual) form that cannot be physically transmitted or causally educed from the maternal matter by the paternal sperm. To the philosophically naïve observer, it looks as though there is but a single same embryo that physically morphs during gestation into a recognizable human fetus. But rationally analyzed, the "process of becoming a human being" involves a series of substantial generations and corruptions, a temporal succession of vegetative, sensitive and rational souls. This succession of different souls metaphysically jeopardizes the numerical identity of the embryo/fetus passing from one living species to another.

Aquinas's solution, says Amerini, is

merely a "simple stipulation" that the same single embryo "naturally and of itself becomes a human being"; the embryo is in potency what the human being is in act. This is a commonsensical but surprising stipulation. Logically, Aquinas's embryology leads to a different and more paradoxical conclusion: Whatever the lead-up, the actual conception of a human being is not a natural event. Because the pre-human fetus has no natural active potency to become a rational animal, God himself must create and supernaturally infuse the rational soul *ab extra*.

Of course, the continuous human identity of the developing fetus would be evident if God supernaturally infused a single, rational soul-form at conception. But the received or Aristotelian definition is that the "rational soul" is "the act of an organic body with potential life," which refers not to an inanimate body's potentiality for coming alive, but to a fetus's potentiality for rational life. That potentiality requires that the fetus be sufficiently "organ-ized" to receive an infused rational soul. When does fetal organization reach that point?

Aquinas follows Aristotle's embryological timetable, which is based on post-factum appearances. The fetus can be judged rationally ensouled when it is seen to have the requisite organs for intellectual activity—an incipient brain. That happens for the embryonic male by the 40th or, as Augustine thought, the 46th day, but for the defective female fetus only on the 90th day. Rational ensoulment occurs, Amerini explains, when the fetus's "organic body has in act the capacity to be able to exercise intellectual functions, even if in fact it does not exercise them nor is able yet to exercise them." Disambiguated, this means that the fetus must be "or-

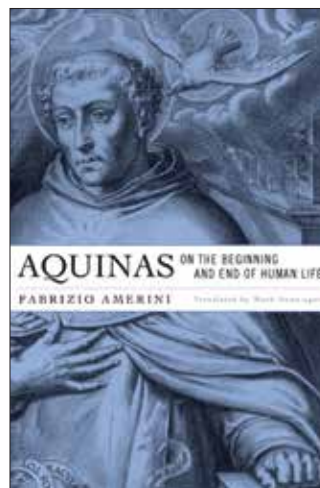
gan-ized" enough to sustain a soul in 'first act' whose proper accidents are its intellectual powers, but need not be organically so advanced as to enable immediately the soul's "second act," the actual exercise of its intellectual powers.

Now what do we relevantly know that Aquinas did not about the "organ-ized" fetal body? We know that hu-

man conception is the fusion of two haploid cells, the male sperm and the female ovum, each with 23 chromosomes. The resulting diploid cell, the genetically unique zygote with 46 chromosomes joined in 23 pairs, contains all the genetic material and instructions (genes each made up of two intertwined strands of DNA) necessary for the full development

of a complete organism. Aristotle and Aquinas could only look for and see a tiny brain, from which they inferred the rational humanity of the fetus. Decades of X-ray crystallography and, more recently, the far sharper images taken by electron microscopy have given us much better spectacles. In 2012, a team led by Enzo di Fabrizio directly imaged a six molecule cord of the DNA helix. Upon this kind of empirical data rests a strong if not dispositive Thomist philosophical argument that the rational soul informs the zygote or original diploid cell.

Aquinas reiterated the canonical teaching of his day: aborting a rationally "unformed fetus" is a grave sin but not morally equivalent to homicide. Amerini, however, argues that Aquinas cannot be pressed into the service of the contemporary Roman Catholic ecclesiastical magisterium: Prior to the infusion of the rational soul—when the fetus is only a potential human being—Aquinas's embryology, "is fully compatible both with a position in favor of and against abortion." No less provocatively, Amerini also claims that "any level and



type of scientific knowledge that one may have . . . [about] the moment of conception” is irrelevant to judging the soundness of Aquinas’s views on when the fetus in the womb can be considered to be a ‘human being.’

Yet the question remains: If a tiny, 40-day-old fetal brain is a sign of a fetal body adequately disposed for rational ensoulment, why is not the DNA of a zygote an even more obvious sign from “Day One”? The tiny brain seen by Aristotle is already present at the moment of conception, formally not materially, in the zygote; the form of the organs necessary for rational humanity is instantiated in the structured gene sequences found in the diploid cell’s DNA. Given the formal (DNA) structure of the zygote, the subsequent development of a brain organ small or

big is, from an Aristotelian standpoint, an accidental and not a substantial change. Admittedly, one should interpret Aquinas’s own texts *in sensu stricto*, but that hermeneutical requirement hardly precludes applying Aquinas’s philosophical principles to new empirical data.

Something other than Aquinas is holding sway over Amerini’s exegesis. It is his conviction that Aquinas’s attribution of rational humanity to the 40-day-old male fetus is a “philosophical decision,” a rationally justified “stipulation” “independent of biology,” a choice assigning significance to man’s essential properties.

Sed contra: Aquinas does not explain human conception in terms of the alleged split between the empirical data of a scientific embryology and the

universal Aristotelian philosophical principles (not, by the way, of metaphysics but physics) used to understand these data. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (II, c. 83; ed. Pera, 2: 243a, §1674b), Aquinas states that sensation and memory provide the experience [*experimentum*] that leads to “an understanding of the universal principles of the sciences and arts.” Whatever their empirical lacunae and aprioristic tendencies may be, Aristotelian natural sciences are normatively based “on reason and sensible experiments,” and it is the latter “that more makes for assurance [*fides*] in natural things” (III Sent., 3, q. 5, a. 1, resp.; ed. Moos, 142, §193). Would Aquinas have agreed with Amerini that empirical evidence is “totally nonessential for determining the criteria for what is meant by ‘human life’? To this contentious assertion Thomistic scholars can, should and likely will raise formidable textual and logical objections.

The church has good biblical and theological reasons for sacralizing sex and human conception. But she has not defined and perhaps never will define, as a dogma to be held on supernatural faith, that the human person begins at conception. Contemporary embryology presupposes what modern molecular biology has demonstrated—with a conceptual clarity and empirical detail that would have astonished Aristotle and Aquinas—about the human genome. Philosophy has to take up the task of showing that the zygote with a human genome is a developing “human person.” From the standpoint of a natural ethics, the church’s rejection of even the earliest post-conception abortion remains a prudential judgment based on reason, generous love and the deepest respect for everyone “human.” About what is human, prudential moral reasoning has much to learn from contemporary biology.

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Do It God's Way

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), SEPT. 28, 2014

Readings: Ez 18:25–28; Ps 25:4–14; Phil 2:1–11; Mt 21:28–32

“Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is unfair’” (Ez 18:25)

‘A’nd more, much more than this, I did it my way,” sang Frank Sinatra. There is something life-affirming about doing it “my way,” charting one’s own path, following one’s conscience and talents and not compromising one’s values along the way. But when it comes to the ways of God, it is best to do it God’s way, as Jesus did in following the path to the cross.

The prophet Ezekiel spoke to the people of Israel about God’s ways, in particular the ways of righteousness and wickedness, promising that God granted each person individual responsibility for sins committed. It might seem strange to us that people would protest about a move from corporate to individual responsibility, but Ezekiel records the complaint from the people that “the way of the Lord is unfair.” God responds with incredulity that the divine ways are questioned: “Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?”

The complaint of the people seems to have been grounded in a static notion of who counts as the righteous and the wicked. But what about when the righteous turn away from righteousness or those who are wicked turn away from wickedness? God offers judgment: “When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it.... Again, when

the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life.” Conversion and justice are at the heart of God’s verdict. God weighs our repentance and changes of heart; perseverance in the ways of righteousness is essential, not just a claim of past righteousness. So those who “considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die.”

God’s way is always the way of righteousness, though this way can be surprising and baffling, shocking us with the depths of God’s mercy. We might as a result stubbornly decide that God’s way is “unfair” or attempt to resist God’s paths, but the ways of God are the way of compassion. Since it is Jesus, the preeminent model for us, who followed God’s ways perfectly, Paul begins his beautiful hymn to Christ by encouraging the Philippians to have “the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” as did Jesus. He asks that the Philippians “with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” This way, says Paul, was the perfect path forged by Jesus, in which only obedience to the will of God was followed.

In having this attitude, which Paul encourages for all Christians, Christ

was willing to empty himself, “taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” It was a way that in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus asked to have taken from him, so that he could follow some other path; yet it was the path that God gave him that Jesus walked in humility, obedience and sacrifice to his death. We are, of course, more like the interlocutors of Ezekiel, who cry out, “The way of the Lord is unfair,” than like Jesus, who was ever obedient. This is not to say that to question God’s way, as Jesus did, or to ask for another path is improper. It is only when we reject the ways of God that we begin to wander away.

Yet, as Ezekiel demon-



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on Matthew’s parable: are you saying yes or no to God’s way?

strates, even if we have wandered away, God offers us chances to be converted and repent. This merciful offer is on display in Matthew’s parable of the two sons. In the parable, one son says no to the father’s request to work in the vineyard and the other son says yes. But the son who said no to the father later changed his mind and his ways, while the son who said yes decided not to work in the vineyard. If we are the son or daughter who is saying no to the father, we can still change our ways, just as the son or daughter who says yes and then rejects God can still turn back. You did it your way, but more, much more than this, why not try God’s way?

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Catholic Social Teaching and the Financial Crisis

- November 12, 2014 *Catholic Social Thought and the Financial Crisis*
The Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin
Archbishop of Dublin
Saint Thomas of Villanova Church - 7:30 p.m.
- November 18, 2014 *The Economy of Grace and the Church of the Poor:
Papal Responses to the Financial Crisis*
Drew Christiansen, S.J.
Georgetown University
St. Augustine Center - Room 300 - 4:30 p.m.
- January 27, 2015 *The Role of Finance in an Inclusive Economy:
From Wealth Capital to Real Wealth Creation*
Charles Clark
St. John's University
Connelly Center - Radnor Room - 4:30 p.m.
- February 13, 2015 *Financial Integrity and Inclusive Capitalism:
Civilizing Globalization*
Stefano Zamagni
The Johns Hopkins University SAIS Bologna Center
St. Rita Hall Community Room - 3:00 p.m.
- March 25, 2015 *What Makes a Financial Market "Good?"
Perspectives from Catholic Social Thought*
Christine Firer Hinze
Fordham University
Driscoll Hall Auditorium - 4:30 p.m.

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