POETRY ROUNDUP

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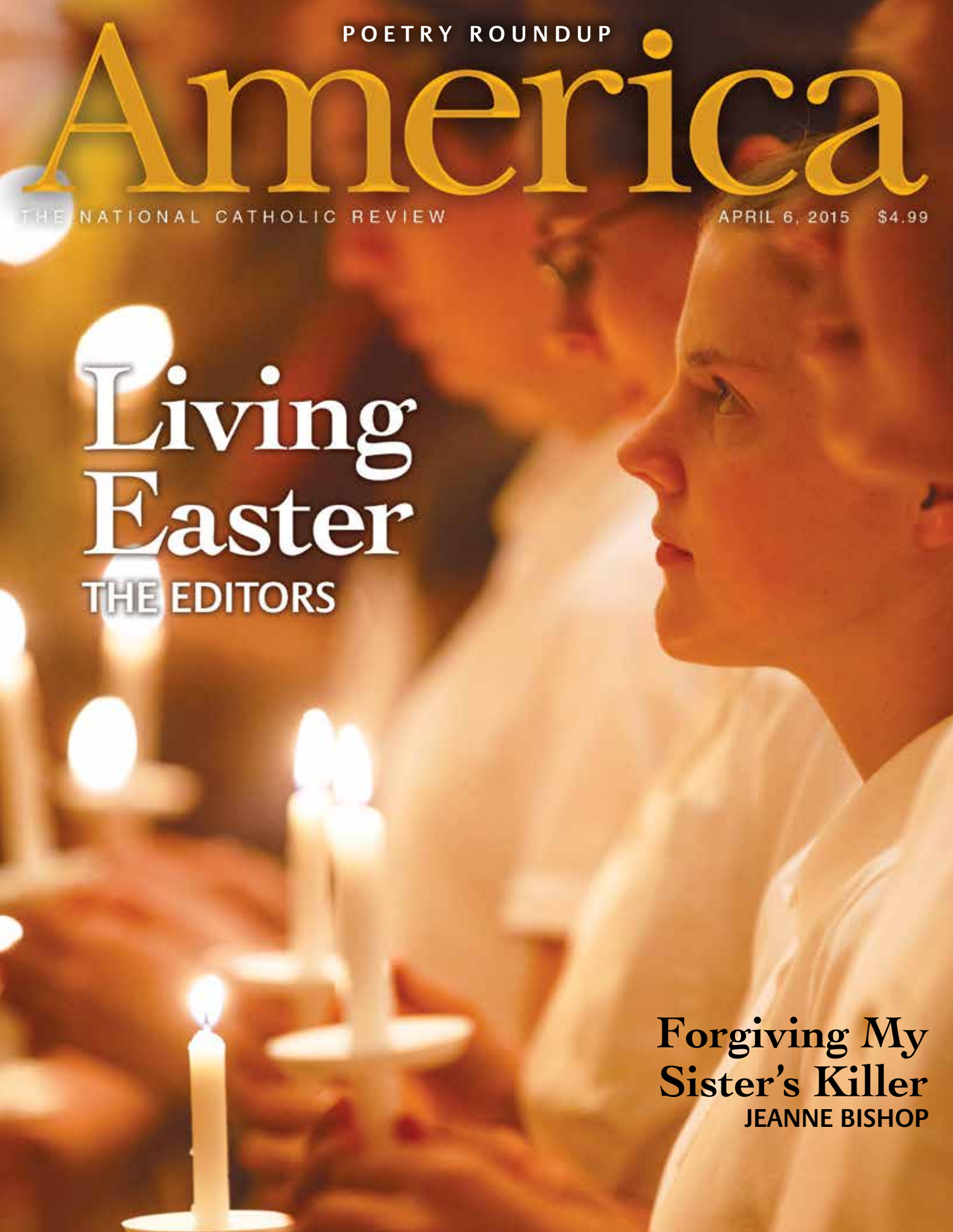

Living Easter

THE EDITORS

Forgiving My Sister's Killer

JEANNE BISHOP

OF MANY THINGS

One of the greatest Christian writers who ever lived is the unknown author of this ancient homily from the second century, a meditation on Holy Saturday. Happy Easter from the editors and staff of **America**.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

What is happening? Today there is a great silence over the earth, a great silence, and stillness, a great silence because the King sleeps; the earth was in terror and was still, because God slept in the flesh and raised up those who were sleeping from the ages. God has died in the flesh, and the underworld has trembled.

Truly he goes to seek out our first parent like a lost sheep; he wishes to visit those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. He goes to free the prisoner Adam and his fellow-prisoner Eve from their pains, he who is God, and Adam's son.

The Lord goes in to them holding his victorious weapon, his cross. When Adam, the first created man, sees him, he strikes his breast in terror and calls out to all: "My Lord be with you all." And Christ in reply says to Adam: "And with your spirit." And grasping his hand he raises him up, saying: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.

"I am your God, who for your sake became your son, who for you and your descendants now speak and command with authority those in prison: Come forth, and those in darkness: Have light, and those who sleep: Rise.

"I command you: Awake, sleeper, I have not made you to be held a prisoner in the underworld. Arise from the dead; I am the life of the dead. Arise, O man, work of my hands, arise, you who were fashioned in my image. Rise, let us go hence; for you in me and I in you, together we are one undivided person.

"For you, I your God became your son; for you, I the Master took on your form; that of slave; for you, I who am above the heavens came on earth and under the earth; for you, man, I became as a man without help, free among the dead; for you, who left a garden, I was handed over to Jews from a garden and crucified in a garden.

"Look at the spittle on my face, which I received because of you, in order to restore you to that first divine inbreathing at creation. See the blows on my cheeks, which I accepted in order to refashion your distorted form to my own image.

"See the scourging of my back, which I accepted in order to disperse the load of your sins which was laid upon your back. See my hands nailed to the tree for a good purpose, for you, who stretched out your hand to the tree for an evil one.

"I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my side, for you, who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side healed the pain of your side; my sleep will release you from your sleep in Hades; my sword has checked the sword which was turned against you.

"But arise, let us go hence. The enemy brought you out of the land of paradise; I will reinstate you, no longer in paradise, but on the throne of heaven. I denied you the tree of life, which was a figure, but now I myself am united to you, I who am life. I posted the cherubim to guard you as they would slaves; now I make the cherubim worship you as they would God.

"The cherubim throne has been prepared, the bearers are ready and waiting, the bridal chamber is in order, the food is provided, the everlasting houses and rooms are in readiness; the treasures of good things have been opened; the kingdom of heaven has been prepared before the ages."

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Cover: Easter Vigil at St. Mary's Cathedral in Miami, 2014. CNS photo/Tom Tracy

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Called to Account. Finally

The battles of a civil war do not end when the fighting stops. Twenty-four years after a peace accord halted the bloody civil war in El Salvador, the individuals responsible for some of the war's most violent episodes remain at large and beyond the reach of justice—but perhaps not for long.

On March 11, a U.S. immigration appeals court ruled that a former defense minister from El Salvador living in the United States could be deported because of his actions during the civil war. More significantly, the court also ruled that he should be held responsible for the actions of the soldiers under his command. Gen. Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova now faces the prospect of returning home to answer for his role in the violent murder of four U.S. churchwomen in December 1980, among other crimes.

The decision is a significant breakthrough for all those who have been fighting for justice for the slain churchwomen. Robert E. White, the former ambassador to El Salvador who spent over 30 years lobbying for the cause, died on Jan. 13, but not before he was able to give testimony against General Vides. The court's ruling could also lay the foundation for pursuing other human rights abusers living in the United States and other Western countries. The Center for Justice and Accountability has several cases pending against individuals from Guatemala, Haiti, Chile and other countries. They are also tracking efforts to prosecute those responsible for the killing of six Jesuits in El Salvador in 1989. The judgment against General Vides is a welcome sign that high-level officials will no longer be able to distance themselves from the torture and killings perpetrated by others under their watch.

In Israel, Fear Wins

Here are a few lessons from the recent elections in Israel: fear will always trump hope; the two-state solution is a diplomatic dodo; and suggestions that Arab Israelis should not vote will be rewarded, not punished, by the state's general voting public.

After calling early elections that were supposed to be a walk-through, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu panicked as polls turned against him during the final days of the campaign. With Isaac Herzog's Zionist Union party enjoying a late surge inspired by Mr. Netanyahu's unprecedented affront to a sitting U.S. president, the prime minister threw all caution—and hope for a resolution of this 67-year conflict—to the wind. His scorched earth campaign pulled the veil back on his true intentions regarding the "peace process," burning constituents in Israel and Democratic friends of Israel in Washington alike.

Some have already predicted that the pragmatic Netanyahu will find a way to backpedal from his comments and commitments in order to ensure his "legacy" by the end of his fourth term of office. But stalemate—or worse—is now the prime minister's legacy, and he seems content to accept it. Israeli settlements will encroach deeper into the West Bank, where residents are already deeply embittered by the Israeli occupation. And a fractured West Bank may increasingly share in Gaza's fate as a vast open-air prison for a regional minority group.

The prime minister said what he said, and at least the charade has ended. Now the only question is how far the United States is prepared to travel alongside Israel as it accelerates to an inevitable demographic that is its de facto one-state solution.

Wisdom on Immigration

In a recent discussion hosted by the Illinois Business Immigration Coalition, Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago criticized Republican opposition to President Obama's proposed immigration reform, stating that it is not enough to simply deny any efforts toward reform. Archbishop Cupich said that the United States "benefits from the toil, the taxes, the purchasing power of a large number [of] undocumented workers," yet we are unable to give these workers "their God-given rights." He also scolded House Republicans for failing to pass a bipartisan bill originally approved by the Senate back in 2013.

The archbishop's comments arrive at a critical time. A recent study by the American Action Forum, a center-right research institute, has rejected the idea that deporting immigrants would benefit the U.S. economy. According to an analysis by The Atlantic, "removing all 11.2 million undocumented immigrants…would take about 20 years and cost the government between $400 billion and $600 billion." It would also have a severe impact on the economy, leading to an estimated $1.6 trillion drop in gross domestic product and slowing economic growth by 5.7 percent.

Whatever the economic contributions of immigrant workers, we should not forget the families that would be shattered if the United States does not act on reform. For this reason, if for no other, Democrats and Republicans should continue to work toward a compromise. The lives of immigrants must not be left hanging in the balance.

Living Easter

While Christians believe in the Easter story, it is sometimes difficult for us to connect with Easter in a personal way. The events that we hear recounted during the Easter Triduum may sometimes seem far removed from our daily lives. But is it true that the Passion narratives and the story of Christ's resurrection have no intersections with our present-day world? As St. Paul would say, "By no means!" Each moment of the triduum can offer important insights into our contemporary world and contemporary lives.

Holy Thursday. The story of the Last Supper is an invitation for Catholics to meditate on Jesus' institution of the Eucharist. But the Gospel of John, which Catholics will hear proclaimed this year on Holy Thursday, focuses on another event: the foot washing. There is some lively debate among New Testament scholars over whether or not the foot washing is better seen as an example of "humble service" (Raymond E. Brown, S.S.) or as the inauguration of a "community of equals" (Sandra M. Schneiders, I.H.M.). But perhaps both are accurate—and both models are crucial for the contemporary disciple. A community of equals demands humble service, both to our brothers and sisters in the church and to the world. And, as Jesus demonstrated when he washed the feet of the disciples, service to our brothers and sisters requires actual contact—that is, it requires physical touch as well. During Pope Francis' visit to Argentina in August 2013, he reminded us that it is not enough simply to give money to a poor person. "If you did not touch him," he said, "you did not meet him."

How can we make our church more a "community of equals?" How can we move from self-aggrandizement toward "humble service" in the Catholic Church? And when are we called to meet and touch the poor among us?

Good Friday. The sufferings of Jesus are unique: the carpenter from Nazareth was the only sinless human being to suffer. But the types of things that Jesus endured during his Passion are endured today by men, women and children across the globe: persecution, torture, imprisonment and execution by the state. Tragically, our own government was complicit in torture, in the dark cells of Abu Ghraib and other government-approved prisons. Jesus was imprisoned, as over 1.5 million men and women in the United States are incarcerated, in proportions that far outstrip other developed nations. And capital punishment, which a Vatican official in a speech before the United Nations recently declared to be against Catholic teaching, finds its most famous victim in Jesus Christ.

More generally, martyrdom and its attending horrors are not a thing of the past. One needs only to look to the Middle East to witness the terrible persecution of Christian communities, many of them ancient, at the hands of the Islamic State. In so many ways, Christ continues to suffer in his body today. How can we aid him?

Holy Saturday. This is the day of dashed expectations. The disciples cowered behind closed doors, terrified of being discovered and put to death. After all, their leader had just been executed in the most shameful manner imaginable. Hope seemed lost. So many situations in this world (like the threats from the Islamic State) seem without hope. On a more local level, our government seems stuck in permanent gridlock. Can our government take any serious steps to aid the poor, repair our crumbling infrastructure and improve our faltering public educational system? Within our church, there is the continuing problem of addressing the legacy of sexual abuse; also, many feel that laypeople are still largely shut out from positions of institutional leadership and authority. It can seem overwhelming even to consider all these challenges. Yet the disciples were called to hope in the midst of confusion and disappointment. Despair, as they discovered, is never the answer.

Easter Sunday. The Passion narratives make no sense without Easter. And it is here that the Scriptures intersect with our lives most powerfully. Yes, we suffer the pain of a broken world, of dashed expectations and seeming hopelessness. But the Resurrection tells us that suffering is never the last word, that God is always a God of surprises and that nothing is impossible with God.

One modest example of new life today is the papacy of Francis. Before his election, many believed that nothing would ever change in the church; even that nothing should change. But from the moment he took office, Pope Francis brought a new style, tone and clarity to the office of the papacy, opening up new ways of conversing and making decisions, speaking to people in new and direct ways and attracting many people who had long ago written off the church as irrelevant to their lives. His actions help direct us toward the Risen One, the source of all new life.

For Christ is risen, Christ is alive, and Christ is active in our world. Alleluia!

REPLY ALL

Listening Well

Re "On Dying Well," by Jessica Keating, and "Ars Moriendi" (Editorial, 3/16): People are often surprised when I tell them that in my 17 years as a hospice chaplain, I have had relatively few people discuss assisted suicide. Granted, it is illegal here and therefore not an option within hospice, and perhaps those seeking a chaplain are less inclined toward this option. Yet it is still somewhat surprising, given the acute physical, emotional and relational suffering from the wide range of diseases and illnesses that I have witnessed. This may be due to religious convictions or desperate hope for some satisfaction that outweighs this terminal suffering.

I believe, however, the argument from "human solidarity in suffering" that seems implicit in these articles cruises into a vague communal stoicism or toward a challenging or nearly punitive God that I would not represent. I do not favor changing the current prohibition, since I think assisted suicide could become a convenient social control; but like the case against artificial contraception, the church's current argument is being lost in the public square. It is those who are suffering whose voices carry weight. Those who believe in the paschal mystery of suffering, death and resurrection had best listen more and theologize less.

DAVID E. PASINSKI
Fayetteville, N.Y.

'Not Even Close'

Re "Notre Dame's Hesburgh Recalled As a Leader of Courage and Vision" (Signs of the Times, 3/16): Perhaps the Rev. John Tracy Ellis, the prominent Catholic historian, said it best when comparing Father Hesburgh to the rest of Catholic leaders in this country: "It was not even close." He was a champion of the environment before it became fashionable. He was so present for God in so many areas that one is in awe how he let God do so much through him. It must have saddened him to see all the rancor in the world today. He was able to break down barriers, not just bloviate without building. In Father Hesburgh the words of Paul the Apostle resound. "Where grace superabounds." We were blessed to have him in our midst. May the Lord bless and keep him.

BILL MAZZELLA
Online Comment

Recovery and Resurrection

Re "The Lives of David Carr," by John Carr (3/16): Many years ago, after John Carr had given a presentation for our diocese, I drove him to the airport in Bismarck. I remember our deep discussion about family, addiction and the impact of addiction on loved ones. Our talk also included the joy of resurrection in recovery. We talked about A.A. and Al-Anon. I never forgot that visit and reflected upon it when I heard of David's death. David was one of the lucky ones. He knew the cross of suffering through addiction and the joy of recovery through the 12 steps and a loving family that became frustrated yet never gave up. Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Thank you, both Carrs, for giving and living the example.

ANNETTA SANOW SUTTON
Online Comment

Hard Truths

I write to commend the March 9 issue, which features two contributors—Bishop Edward K. Braxton, the African-American bishop of Belleville, Ill., and J. Augustine Wetta, O.S.B., a Benedictine monk of St. Louis Priory. Both add pulse to the environs of St. Louis, Mo., which has been called the Rome of the West.

In writing about what it's like for an African-American to observe without interruption our pristine Caucasian Catholic culture, Bishop Braxton said many things many of us whites have probably never considered. And Father Wetta, in a brilliant piece, told the truth about Ferguson from all points of view. I live 20 minutes from Ferguson and have read nothing bet-

STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to "Rediscovering Jesus," by Timothy P. Schilling (3/16).

One of Pope Francis' suggestions for having a closer encounter with Jesus is to receive spiritual direction. For three years in the '50s I had a spiritual director at the seminary I went to. I have since then tried to have a spiritual director—to no avail. The priests I asked either said that they are not qualified or didn't have the time. I know that there are professional spiritual directors, but they are few and far between.

DON KNIPPEL

I have a Protestant friend who calls me a "born-again Catholic." I returned to the church 17 years ago after being estranged for 30 years. My faith formation upon my return was an intense and emotional experience nurtured by mostly Christian influences like Kathleen Norris, Barbara Ward ("Joan of Arcadia"), Jan Karon (the Mitford series) and Diane Schoemperlen, as well as a daily personal Bible immersion. Everywhere I looked, I found God looking for me and rejoicing in my return. In the early days, it was as intense as any new relationship. Each day I grow closer and I will not grow apart from someone I walk with and spend time with daily. My only regret is that I know this is not the relationship with God that many of my fellow Catholics experience. I pray the church will be born again to a personal relationship with Christ.

ELLEN HARGUS

ter anywhere about the atmosphere in which this sad debacle occurred.

DONAL MAHONEY
St. Louis, Mo.

Sort Of Sorry

Re: "Of Many Things," by Matt Malone, S.J. (3/9): Father Malone makes the case for forgiving Brian Williams, Bill O'Reilly and the soon-to-be canonized Blessed Junípero Serra. No one can disagree that at the heart of our Christian faith is forgiveness and mercy, so gloating that the powerful have fallen is wrong.

What I find lacking in his analysis is any mention that Mr. Williams and Mr. O'Reilly must first take responsibility for deceiving, misrepresenting and/or lying about their personal involvement in some news stories. Mr. Williams made a "sort of apology," and bombastic Bill refuses to acknowledge any wrongdoing.

This is the same modus operandi that our bishops have taken in the sex abuse scandal. They "sort-of apologize" for making "mistakes" but deny that they and their predecessors' actions were sinful and criminal.

As far as I know, no bishop has ever publically apologized or shown any shame and sorrow for enabling predator priests to abuse innocent children, and it is the exception that a predator priest has apologized or expressed any remorse to those whom he abused.

Forgiving those who claim innocence makes no sense, and justice demands that forgiveness be withheld until the guilty acknowledge their guilt and ask for forgiveness.

PATRICK T. DARCY
Columbia, Mo.

Annulment Correction

This is in response to the letter regarding the annulment process that was submitted by Thomas Severin (Reply All, 3/9). He wrote that the church no longer requires "archdiocesan and Roman tribunals to review and confirm findings of local diocesan marriage tribunals." Actually, the church has not dispensed with the requirement that an affirmative decision rendered by the First Instance Court be ratified in Second Instance. Eliminating this requirement would speed up the process. At this time, however, ratification by Second Instance is still required.

TERRI SHAWHAN
Cleveland, Ohio

The writer is a tribunal auditor in the Diocese of Cleveland.

Service Opportunities

I read "A Rite of Passage," by William J. Byron, S.J. (3/2), with heightened interest. For many years, I've been a proponent of required national service for our young people, but I had never heard or read of any movement afoot until learning of the Franklin Project. While I'm a veteran, I know that military service is not for everyone. However, I share the belief of the expert planners who want to make national service "a new rite of passage for young Americans." Following my tour of military service, I attended graduate school and earned a master's degree through the G. I. Bill. In the late 1960s, as a married man with a young family, I would not have been able to afford school without that financial support.

I would be thrilled to see similar opportunities become available for all our young people who give a year or more of national service. As Father Byron points out, a program of national service will not only be a plus for our young people but "will mean progress toward a better America."

My thanks to Father Byron for this informative article and for his enthusiastic efforts on behalf of this movement. I look forward to hearing more.

RICHARD P. KLUS
Cincinnati, Ohio

No Alternatives?

I would like to reply to "Abortion Alternatives," by John C. Moore (Reply All, 3/2). The letter seemed to imply that protestors at Planned Parenthood provide no alternatives for women seeking abortion. I am not aware of any town with a Planned Parenthood that is without a crisis pregnancy center that responds to pregnant women's needs. Some of these centers are run by the protestors themselves, some by other groups. These services are offered to women seeking abortion. I have heard them advertise on radio stations that teenagers listen to. Often they are even listed in the yellow pages under "abortion alternatives."

MARY BOGNICH
Overland Park, Kan

"Really?!"

CARTOON WRITTEN BY JAKE MARTIN. ART BY BOB ECKSTEIN

ISRAEL

Netanyahu Victory May Doom Two-State Solution for Middle East

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel snatched victory out of what pollsters had predicted would be a shock defeat by ending his campaign with a rejection of a two-state solution for the 67-year-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, by raising an alarm over Arab-Israeli voters that many condemned as racist and by promising to continue building settlements in annexed East Jerusalem in defiance of international law.

The Israeli electorate gave the country's political strongman, Benjamin Netanyahu, a measured victory on March 17, ensuring his Likud Party 30 of the 120 seats in the Knesset and opening up the possibility for him to become prime minister for a fourth term.

Netanyahu defeated a challenge from the center-left Zionist Union, headed by Isaac Herzog, who pledged to relaunch peace negotiations with the Palestinians and mend relations with the Obama administration. The Zionist Union gained 24 seats. Herzog ruled out participation in a national-unity government with Netanyahu and will join the Knesset in opposition.

David Neuhaus, S.J., an Israeli who is an astute observer of the political and social situation in Israel, called the outcome "less a vote of support for Netanyahu than an expression of despair." He explained, "Many Israelis voted for Netanyahu, not because they trust him, but because they felt that there was no choice. Mr. Herzog is perceived as without experience and without charisma."

Father Neuhaus pointed out that 21 seats, a large percentage of the vote, "went to two parties that are largely without a political vision regarding the central issues that face the country," and that the Zionist Union's campaign "focused not on the real issues [West Bank occupation and relations with the Palestinians, the economy] but on petty attacks on Mr. Netanyahu, his wife and the Likud party. The election results express the sense of frustration that many feel."

Father Neuhaus did, however, perceive some positive outcomes of the election. "The road ahead is not facilitated by the elections," he said, "but they do help clarify where we stand right now, and at least this clarity should help those interested in promoting justice and peace move ahead. At least some of the illusions and false hopes have been dissolved in the aftermath of the election results."

Israelis had a hard look at the prime minister's "anti-democratic" tendencies and his disinterest in pursuing a two-state solution that could lead to peace, according to Father Neuhaus. He expects that the opposition efforts within the Knesset against Likud coalition policies will therefore probably be strong.

Father Neuhaus added, "For those who believe that the only way to change the reality in Israel/Palestine is through international pressure, the election results are certainly a clear indication that the time has come to exert this pressure."

Father Neuhaus suggested that with the curtain pulled back on Likud's intentions, "the opposition within [Israel] can now unite with those in the Jewish Diaspora who are concerned about the rise of extremism and racism in Israel, and more importantly with the international community, to show the Israeli government the consequences of possible disastrous choices."

The prime minister's scorched earth strategy toward the end of the campaign has probably further damaged his already testy relationship with the Obama administration. Father Neuhaus wonders if the Americans—and European Union peace negotiation partners—are likely to push back more strongly against Netanyahu's policies in the election's aftermath. "Up until now, Israel has been able to oppose the two-state solution, build settlements and restrict the Palestinians on every level without any real consequences," he said. "Israel must not be allowed to hurtle along this road to suicide with the international community remaining silent."

GERARD O'CONNELL

AT WHAT COST? Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu burned a few bridges in the final days of his successful campaign.

U.S. BUDGET

Bishops Say, Protect the Poor

Catholic advocates are pressing Congress to make the needs of poor and vulnerable people a priority as legislators hammer out a federal spending plan for 2016. They want to prevent trillions of dollars in social services spending from disappearing over the next decade as Congress seeks to balance the federal budget and reduce the nation's growing debt.

"There are millions of people at stake in these decisions," said Brian Corbin, senior vice president for social policy at Catholic Charities USA, which has joined with Catholic Relief Services and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in meetings on Capitol Hill. "They all have a name and a face and based on our principle of human dignity, that name and that face and that family, those really are important to making issues of poverty real."

The legislative push began in February as advocates learned of Republican plans to remake the way social services like Medicaid and food stamps are funded. In meetings with individual members of Congress, Catholic advocates have stressed that the needs of hungry, homeless and unemployed people must be the country's highest priority.

In a letter to Congress on Feb. 27, the chairmen of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development and the Committee on International Justice and Peace reiterated that a budget is a moral document and that the needs of poor people are utmost despite the economic pressures posed by "future unsustainable deficits."

The federal budget "cannot rely on disproportionate cuts in essential services to poor persons," wrote Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami and Bishop Oscar Cantú of Las Cruces, N.M. "It requires shared sacrifice by all, including raising adequate revenues, eliminating unnecessary military and other spending, and addressing the long-term costs of health insurance and retirement programs fairly."

As the bishops' letter was circulating, Representative Tom Price, of Georgia, and Senator Mike Enzi, of Wyoming, both Republican chairpersons of Congress's respective budget committees, were crafting spending plans that called for balancing the federal budget within a decade, with the goal of tackling the country's $18 trillion debt.

The House budget, called "A Balanced Budget for a Stronger America," cuts nearly $5.5 trillion in spending from current projections over the next decade. Specific spending reductions include Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program ($913 billion); Medicare ($148 billion); food stamps ($140 billion); housing, nutrition, job training, elderly services and other discretionary programs ($759 billion); and the repeal of the Affordable Care Act ($2.1 trillion). The Senate plan was less specific, but identified only nonmilitary programs for reductions.

Both budgets call for increases in military spending over the decade, while immediately adding tens of billions of dollars for overseas contingency operations for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Sister Marge Clark, a domestic issues lobbyist at Network, said the needs of poor and vulnerable people were being pushed aside in the budget plans.

"We're really frustrated because the House leadership is talking about doing good things for the middle class, and yet everything we see them doing is bad for the middle class and partic-

UNKINDEST CUTS. Budget proposals out of Congress have proposed reductions in spending on social services like this Baltimore Catholic Charities Head Start program in Edgewood, Md.

ularly bad for those struggling at the margins," said Sister Clark, a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Outcry in India

Students at a Hindu-run school for the blind joined a nationwide outcry over the gang rape of a nun in her 70s. The 50 students at the Helen Keller School near the convent where the nun lived chanted "Mother we cannot see, but we can feel your pain," on March 17, after news of the incident three days earlier reached them, Bishop Joseph Gomes of Krishnagar, India, reported. Demonstrations throughout India called on authorities to hasten their investigation of the 10 suspects detained in connection with the incident. "This is shocking. The people are disgusted," Bishop Gomes said of the overnight attack in which a group of masked men broke into the Jesus and Mary Congregation convent in Ranaghat, about 45 miles from Kolkata. Bishop Gomes said he visited with the hospitalized nun for a second time on March 16 and that she had forgiven her attackers. "She told me that justice should be done. This should be never be repeated or happen to anyone else,'" Bishop Gomes said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed "deep concern" over the attack and promised a crackdown on religious-based violence.

Death Penalty 'Unacceptable'

Pope Francis came out squarely against the death penalty on March 20, calling it "unacceptable" regardless of the seriousness of the crime of the condemned. Pope Francis met with a three-person delegation of the International Commission Against the Death Penalty and issued a letter on the occasion urging worldwide abolition of the penalty. The pope called capital punishment "cruel, inhumane and degrading" and said it "does not bring justice to the victims, but only foments revenge." Furthermore, in a modern "state of law, the death penalty represents a failure" because it obliges the state to kill in the name of justice, the pope said. Rather, it is a method frequently used by "totalitarian regimes and fanatical groups" to do away with "political dissidents, minorities" and any other person deemed a threat to their power and to their goals. Just a few days earlier, on March 17, the bishops of Nebraska had called for repeal of their state's death penalty and reform of the criminal justice system.

Extracting Justice

U.S. and Canadian bishops joined their Latin American counterparts who came to Washington to testify about the environmental and social ills wrought by extractive industries like mining and logging. The bishops testified on March 19 before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in a bid to heighten awareness of the degradation of land, water—and people's lives—brought about by companies, most of them foreign-owned, that take resources from the earth. Bishop Roque Paloschi of Roraima, a member of the Brazilian bishops' Amazon commission, said before the hearing that "large financial companies" must bear some of the responsibility, as they finance the operations of transnational mining and logging firms. It is not only the land that is being exploited, Bishop Roque said through an interpreter, but also "the indigenous and nonindigenous people who are being exploited."

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS


A survivor in Vanuatu

Catholic Relief Services was coordinating closely with Caritas Oceania agencies in an **emergency response in Vanuatu**, a remote island nation in the South Pacific devastated by Cyclone Pam on March 15. ✦ As Kuwaiti legislators debated a law banning any new church construction, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, said on March 17 that it was actually "necessary to **destroy all the churches**" of the Arabian Peninsula because of an edict that only Islam could be practiced in the region. ✦ The Presbyterian Church (USA) joined most other American mainline Protestant churches, **approving same-sex marriage** on March 17. ✦ On March 20, Pope Francis accepted the decision of **Cardinal Keith O'Brien of Scotland,** who resigned in 2013 after admitting to sexual misconduct, to renounce all "duties and privileges" associated with being a cardinal. ✦ Melkite Patriarch Grégoire III Laham, speaking in Damascus on March 16, rejected calls for an international **military intervention in Syria** as "reckless" and urged Pope Francis and Christians to "promote a concrete and realistic road map" to peace for the beleaguered nation.

DISPATCH | CHICAGO

Straight Talk on Domestic Violence

At a parish on Chicago's North Side, Charles Dahm, O.P., finishes reading the Sunday Gospel, the familiar story of a woman accused of adultery who is threatened with public stoning until Jesus intervenes. Father Dahm then launches into a homily that surprises many.

"Today I would like to speak about women who are abused in their own homes, who suffer in silence and secret," he says. "How many of you have ever heard a sermon about domestic violence? Raise your hand. See, no one."

Father Dahm is a priest on a mission—to bring domestic violence out of the shadows and into the consciousness of parishioners throughout Chicago. He hopes to prompt pastors to make domestic violence prevention as important a ministry as Christian initiation of adults, Bible study or marriage preparation.

A Dominican priest for 50 years, Father Dahm says he thought little about domestic abuse until he became the pastor of St. Pius V Church in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood. One day, the pastoral counselor told him, "Father, almost all my clients from the parish are women, and most of them are victims of domestic violence."

Father Dahm says, "I had no idea, and I knew many of these women."

With only a small budget and mostly volunteers, Father Dahm quickly found counselors trained to deal with domestic abuse. They helped form support groups for the women, their children and husbands who recognized they had a problem. Father Dahm placed information in the church bulletin on where to find help. Most important, he preached about the problem.

Father Dahm is now spreading his message to other Chicago parishes. Sometimes it's an uphill battle. One pastor told him a homily on domestic violence might upset the congregation's children. "One of the worst things you can do with your children is let them grow up in a home where there's violence," he says. "Your daughters are learning how to be submissive to this abuse and your sons are learning how to be abusive."

> One in four U.S. women reports having been hit or sexually assaulted by a partner.

One in four U.S. women reports having been hit or sexually assaulted by a partner, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Others suffer emotional, psychological or financial abuse. Wordwide, 35 percent of women report physical or sexual violence, according to the United Nations, but the rate is as high as 70 percent in some countries.

Church teaching on domestic violence is clear. "No person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage," the bishops wrote in their pastoral letter, "When I Call For Help." "Violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified."

Churches can serve as significant partners in the fight against domestic violence, but they are sometimes part of the problem, says Jan Burdulis, who helps Father Dahm establish support groups. "So many women I've worked with over the years are practicing Catholics, and they cannot comprehend the idea that it would be acceptable if they were to leave and get divorced."

After Father Dahm preaches, he invites parishioners interested in combatting domestic violence to meet with him. As many as 40 people have shown up at a single parish.

"I divorced my abuser, but was about to marry another abuser, so this is a cycle that continues unless you get help," one woman told Father Dahm.

His approach also stresses helping abusers. Being in an all-male group was important to Roman Carreon. He had for years rebuffed his wife's pleas to go into counseling with her.

Carreon says he didn't think he had a problem because he never hit his wife, though he often called her names or didn't speak to her for days if they argued. "To me, I was a nice man.… I thought I was doing better than most of my family," he says. But listening to other men talk about how they treated their wives, he says he realized that was how he too behaved. He vowed to change.

"I did a lot of things I regret. But now I can live the rest of my life with my wife without violence," he says.

"The good news about domestic violence is that it's learned behavior," Father Dahm says. "It's not something we inherit in our genes; we learn it from somebody, someplace. That means it can be unlearned." This is why Father Dahm will keep preaching and teaching about domestic violence—whether anyone is willing to listen or not.

JUDITH VALENTE

JUDITH VALENTE, ***America****'s Chicago correspondent, is a regular contributor to NPR and "Religion & Ethics Newsweekly." Twitter: @JudithValente.* *For resources on domestic violence, visit the Archdiocese of Chicago at bit.ly/1DCSmSd.*

JAMES MARTIN

The Furious Mysteries

Almost 15 years ago, St. John Paul II surprised the Catholic world by introducing a new set of mysteries to the Rosary. In case you're unfamiliar with the tradition, there are certain events from the lives of Mary and Jesus that you can meditate on as you recite the Rosary. First are the joyful mysteries, like the Annunciation and the Visitation; then the sorrowful mysteries, like the Crucifixion; and finally, the glorious mysteries, like the Assumption of Mary. In 2002 Pope John Paul added a set called the luminous mysteries, or mysteries of light, which focus mainly on Jesus' public ministry, like the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan and the Wedding Feast at Cana.

Lately, though, I've been thinking that we could add some other events from Jesus' life: all the times he gets angry.

The number of times Jesus gets angry in the Gospels is considerable. At one point, he says to the people around him, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you?" (Mt 17:17; Lk 9:41) When Peter says Jesus shouldn't have to suffer, Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mt 16:23; Mk 8:33). At another point in the Gospels, Jesus is hungry and approaches a fig tree. When he finds no fruit, he curses the poor tree, which promptly withers and dies. (Mk 11:12-14, 20-25; Mt 21:18-22). And in perhaps the most vivid depiction of Jesus' anger, included in all four Gospels, he tosses the money changers out of the Temple in Jerusalem, going so far as to make a "whip of cords" for the purpose (Mk 11:15–19; Mt 21:12–17, 23-27; Lk 19:45–48 and 20:1–8; Jn 2:13–22), though one way to read the Greek text of the story known as the "Cleansing of the Temple" is that he used the whip simply to drive out the sheep and the oxen from the Temple precincts.

There are so many times Jesus shows anger that we could legitimately add another series of mysteries to the Rosary, in addition to the joyful, the sorrowful, the glorious and the luminous. We could call them the "furious mysteries."

The number of times Jesus gets angry in the Gospels is considerable.

Some Christians have a hard time with Jesus' anger. It's a mystery to them. The cleansing of the Temple can be particularly disturbing, given its physical depiction of anger. Others find this a wonderfully bracing passage. It shows that Jesus is human—passionate. No matter what you think about this passage, you have to agree: this is not a bland, unthreatening, boring Jesus.

Unfortunately, some Christians use that particular incident as an excuse for violence, for judging other people, for being rude or simply acting like a jerk. When confronted with opposition, they'll strike back and say, "Well, I'm angry just like Jesus was in the Temple, and I'm overturning the tables!" But when people oppose you, it may not mean you're a prophet like Jesus. It may just mean that you're wrong.

These passages, then, can be mysterious. So let's examine Jesus' anger.

First, there's nothing sinful about being angry. Yes, anger is one of the seven deadly sins, but I think that has to do more with unbridled anger, free-floating anger, violent anger. Anger is a natural human emotion. If you don't get angry once in a while, you're not human.

The questions are, Why are you angry? and What do you do with it? In the Gospels Jesus is never angry on behalf of himself. At the Crucifixion, for example, he does not get angry at those who are executing him. He forgives them. Earlier in the Passion narratives, he utters not a word when he is mocked and spat upon by the soldiers. He says nothing in his defense. If there was ever a time for him to get angry, it would be then. Rather, Jesus' anger is always on behalf of others.

Jesus' anger is a righteous anger. Ours is more frequently of the selfish type, the result of an offense to ourselves. Of course we need a healthy love of self and a care for the self. So sometimes a strong response to injustice is justified. On the other hand, if someone cuts in line at the drug store, that does not mean you need to punch the person in the face. So the questions are: Where is the anger coming from? What is the most Christian response?

In the end, the furious mysteries may not be so mysterious. Jesus' anger is not so hard to understand. Jesus is human. Anger is a natural part of life. And his anger is a righteous anger. It's good for us to remember all those things so that even if we feel like it, we may decide that those tables do not need to be turned over after all.

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., *is editor at large of* ***America*** *and author of Jesus: A Pilgrimage. Twitter: @jamesmartinsj.*

Praise Him

Celebrating the life and work of Gerard Manley Hopkins

BY JOSEPH J. FEENEY

"I am so happy, I am so happy," said Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., as he was dying in Dublin on June 8, 1889. As rich and resonant as any words in his poems, these words offer a multilayered commentary on his life and reputation. In 1889 he was happy to go to God as an unknown poet; in 2015 he enjoys worldwide fame as a major poet in the company of Donne, Milton, Keats and Eliot. How did this happen?

Gerard Hopkins was born on July 28, 1844, in the London suburb of Stratford, Essex, the oldest child of nine in a comfortable Church of England family. His father, Manley Hopkins, owned a London firm that insured ships against shipwreck. But Stratford was soon industrialized, and when Gerard was 8, the family moved to Hampstead, a quiet, leafy London suburb. Young Gerard was a happy boy who loved to climb trees, joined in family prayers and wrote schoolboy poems. He went up to Oxford University in 1863, made many new friends, was a brilliant student of the classics and wrote more poems, including his first sonnets. Like all Oxford students, he went to Church of England services, but he gradually grew uncertain about his religion. He read, thought and prayed, talked with the famed convert John Henry Newman (later a cardinal) and became a Roman Catholic in 1866. In 1867 he won a "first"—Oxford's highest degree—in Greek and Latin classics, then went off to begin his life.

At Oxford Hopkins wanted to be both a painter and a poet, and after his conversion he also considered the Catholic priesthood. For eight months he taught at Newman's school in Birmingham—the Oratory School—then, deciding to be a priest, he became a Jesuit in 1868. As a novice in London he learned Jesuit life and prayer, then studied philosophy in Lancashire and theology at St. Beuno's College in North Wales. The first flashes of his poetic genius shone out at St. Beuno's in 1875, when he wrote his great shipwreck ode, "The Wreck of the Deutschland," and later 11 brilliant sonnets about nature and God. In 1877 he was ordained a priest at St. Beuno's and at the age of 33 became Father Hopkins.

The Starlight Night

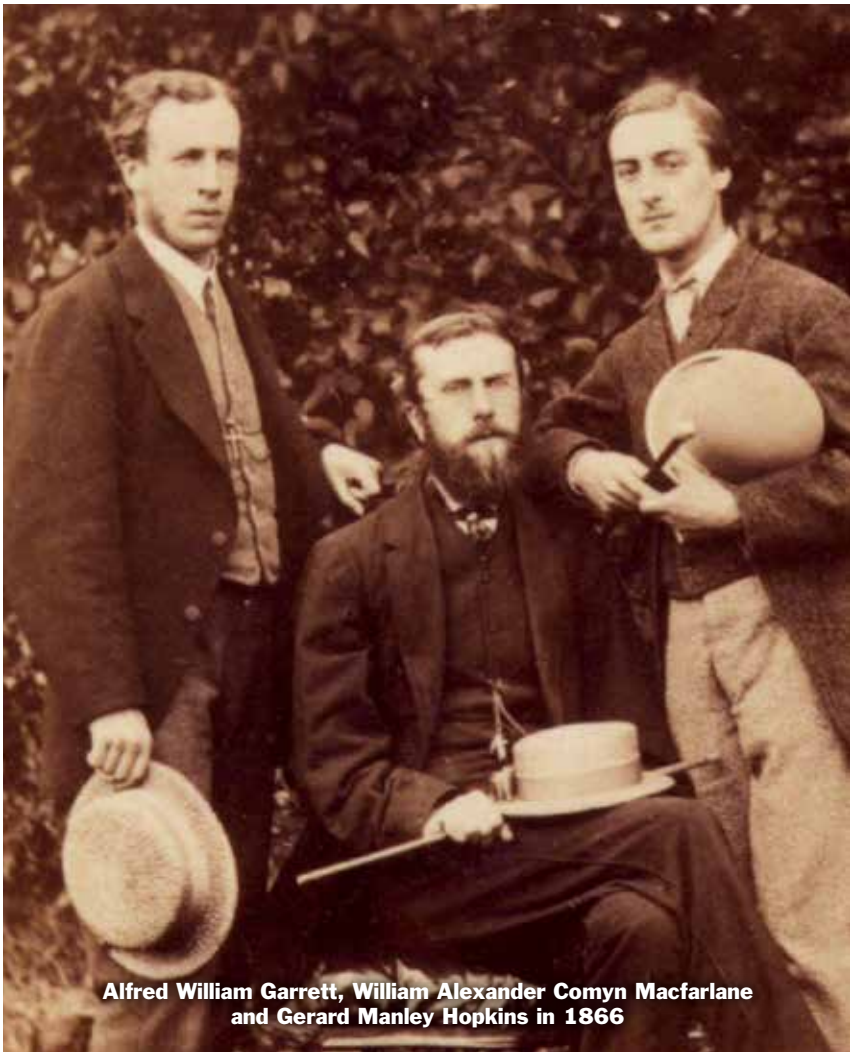
LOOK at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!
Down in dim woods the diamond delves! the elves'-eyes!
The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold lies!
Wind-beat whitebeam! airy abeles set on a flare!
Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare!—
Ah well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize.
Buy then! bid then!—What?—Prayer, patience, aims, vows.
Look, look: a May-mess, like on orchard boughs!

Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow sallows!
These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.

JOSEPH J. FEENEY, S.J., *is professor emeritus of English at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia and co-editor of The Hopkins Quarterly.*

For seven years he worked in Jesuit schools and parishes in England and Scotland, writing poems about the environment, about his students and parishioners (like the Liverpool blacksmith "Felix Randal") and about the Blessed Virgin Mary. He wrote lively sermons too. Once in Liverpool he compared the Holy Spirit to a cricket player urging a teammate, "Come on, come on!" As Paraclete, he told the congregation, the Holy Spirit "cheers the spirit of man...calling him on...: This way to do God's will, this way to save your soul, come on, come on!" The Holy Ghost as a cricket player? Hopkins had a most lively sense of humor!

In 1884 he was sent to Dublin as a professor of Greek in the new University College on St. Stephen's Green and as an examiner in the Royal University. He made many good friends in Ireland and enjoyed his teaching and his students but twice a year grew exhausted from grading hundreds of examination papers from all over the country. For months in 1885 he suffered from deep depression, even failing to contact God in prayer and wondering if he was losing his mind. He screamed out his pain in anguished—and brilliant—sonnets like "I wake and feel the fell of dark" and "No worst, there is none." After a few months he recovered from his depression, but in 1889 he contracted typhoid fever and died at the age of 44, seven weeks before his 45th birthday. People remembered him as a warm friend and fine priest, but he was unknown as a poet.



Alfred William Garrett, William Alexander Comyn Macfarlane and Gerard Manley Hopkins in 1866

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/ NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY/THOMAS C. BAYFIELD

Who was this man they remembered? Who was Gerard Hopkins as a person? Hopkins stood about 5'3" tall, had a high-pitched voice, a lively sense of fun and was nicknamed "Hop." As a boy he joined in school games and loved to sketch trees and their shapes. As a Jesuit he prayed, hiked, swam, climbed mountains, wrote poems and once hurt his wrist arm-wrestling. He was always close to his family and made warm, lifelong friends at Oxford, with fellow Jesuits and with Irish families; at St. Beuno's, a Jesuit later wrote, he was "the most popular man in the house." For recreation he visited art exhibitions and old churches, enjoyed concerts and took vacations with his family, with Oxford friends and with fellow Jesuits, in Switzerland, Holland, England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. He also composed small pieces of music but was not very good at it.

Hopkins's major passions were beauty, nature and the environment, language and poetry, art and music, family and friends, England, the saints and God. He was mostly a happy Jesuit, though he suffered from a lifelong "melancholy" (his word) that helped bring on that depression in Dublin. As a young man he worried excessively about sin but later learned the more positive Jesuit way of finding God in all things, and in the poem "God's Grandeur" he wrote, "The world is charged with the grándeur of God"—God is in the world like an electric charge ready to spark out—"pfft, pfft"—to show God's presence. He loved Christ deeply, especially as really present in the Eucharist, and in a sermon he delivered in Liverpool he celebrated Christ as a "Hero" for all humans. His intellectual hero was a medieval philosopher, Duns Scotus, who celebrated individuality and selfhood. Hopkins even saw a unique selfhood in every tree and every bird! He had a strong sense of his own self, too, and though recognizing the dangers of fame, he was highly self-confident as a poet, even writing in his last poem that though he was losing his inspiration, his technique remained perfect: my "hand at work [is] now never wrong." Today, 179 of his poems survive, most in English and a few in Greek, Latin

and Welsh, but very few were published during his lifetime. Hopkins died in 1889 as an unknown poet.

Who Is Hopkins Now?

Today Gerard Manley Hopkins is a poet of worldwide fame, and the story is fascinating. His poems were not published until 1918, 29 years after his death, when his Oxford friend Robert Bridges edited *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* for Oxford University Press. Only 750 copies of the book were printed, though, and just 180 were sold in the first year. Hopkins remained unknown.

But in the 1920s and '30s, a new way of reading poetry—called the New Criticism—was being developed in England and the United States. Its practitioners rejected the old ways of literary critics—studying a writer's life, sources, intentions and effect on readers—and studied the poem itself through a "close reading" of the text: its words, images, sounds and form. The New Critics admired Hopkins's vivid language and rich sound—his "texture"—and showed his brilliance to readers, poets and fellow critics. Gradually, Hopkins became famous and over the decades influenced such poets as W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, John Berryman, Robert Lowell, Denise Levertov, Sylvia Plath and the Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney. He also inspired some 500 musical works by Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, Benjamin Britten, Ned Rorem, Sir Michael Tippett and others. Many books study him—commentaries, critical studies, biographies—and countless articles. There are three journals devoted to him: The Hopkins Quarterly, an international journal (of which I am co-editor), published in Philadelphia, and Hopkins Research and Nondum, both published in Japan.

Hopkins is also memorialized in art. A grand but little-known tribute is a huge bas-relief in the United Nations' Palais des Nations in Geneva, which the United Kingdom presented to the League of Nations in 1938 as the Lord Cecil Memorial. The bas-relief is called "The Creation of Adam"; around Adam's reclining figure the great English sculptor Eric Gill carved five lines from the opening stanza of "The Wreck of the Deutschland." In 1975 Hopkins was honored in Westminster Abbey's famed Poets' Corner with a large floor stone of black marble bearing the tribute "Priest & poet/ 'Immortal diamond'" carved below his name. In 2004 the Scottish Parliament building in Edinburgh was formally opened, and on its "Canongate Wall" 24 quotations were carved in stone, one bearing the last four lines of Hopkins's environmental poem "Inversnaid" about a waterfall at Loch Lomond. Two monuments honor him at Regis University in Denver and in Monasterevin, Co. Kildare, Ireland. Smaller memorials also celebrate him: in London a "Blue Plaque" decorates the wall of Manresa House, Roehampton, where he lived and studied; and in Dublin, a plaque at the door of No. 86 St. Stephen's Green, the original building

of University College Dublin, records three famous figures who worked there: "John Henry Newman, Rector; Gerard Manley Hopkins, Professor of Greek; James Augustine Joyce, Student." Notable company for a once-unknown poet!

The 1989 centennial of Hopkins's death brought him new international fame. The centennial day itself, June 8, was celebrated in London, Oxford, Dublin, Washington, D.C., and at Loch Lomond. Major exhibitions were mounted by Oxford University, by University College Dublin and by the University of Texas at Austin, with smaller exhibitions at St. Beuno's, at Hopkins's birthplace in Stratford, Essex, at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash, and in a travelling exhibition in North Wales. Academic events honored him in England, Wales, Ireland, Italy and the United States; and lectures celebrated him in France, England, Wales, Canada, the United States, Paraguay, the Philippines and Japan.

Today, 25 years after his centennial, Hopkins's poems still inspire music, new books still proliferate, and scholars of many religions—or none—teach, translate and write about him in countries as diverse as Israel, Sweden, Poland, Italy, France, England, the United States, Mexico, Korea and Japan. Book-length translations of his poems are published in Japanese, Korean, Dutch, French, German, Polish, Spanish, Italian and Hebrew, and a Russian translation is now underway. He has had novels written about him, notably Ron Hansen's *Exiles* (2008); three one-man plays portray his life; and actors like Richard Burton and Richard Austin have recorded his poems. Every year, Regis University in Denver holds an international Hopkins Conference, and the Hopkins Society of Ireland sponsors a Hopkins Festival in Co. Kildare. Oxford University Press currently is publishing a new scholarly edition of everything Hopkins wrote, in eight large volumes.

A few final signs of Hopkins's current fame complete the picture. Just before Christmas 2009, a theater company in Santa Fe, N.M., performed 30 Hopkins poems spoken, sung and danced by 35 people; the two performances drew audiences of several hundred. In 2011, at the funeral of the actress Elizabeth Taylor and following her wish, an actor read Hopkins's poem "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo." In 2013, just after his election, Pope Francis told an interviewer (**Am.,** 09/30/2013) that he "liked Gerard Manley Hopkins very much." And with a touch of whimsy, I add that two pubs memorialize Hopkins. In England, his birthplace of Stratford has a pub named the "Goldengrove" (a rich word from his poem "Spring and Fall") with Hopkins displays inside, and in Ireland, Monasterevin has a pub called "The Manley Hopkins." Not every poet—or every Jesuit priest—has two pubs named for him!

All these details tell a larger story: the man unknown at his death in 1889 is alive and famed today throughout the world.

Francis' Prophecy

Pope Francis' revelation that he has "the feeling" that his papacy will be a short one has caused deep concern among many people worldwide, especially among the overwhelming majority of Catholics who worry what might happen to the radical reform and renewal of the church that he has started.

The concern first emerged in August 2014 after the pope's press conference on the flight back from Korea, when he said he thinks his pontificate "isn't going to last long."

It surfaced on a more global scale on the second anniversary of his election, when he told Mexico's Televisa network that he felt his pontificate would last four or five years, or less.

His repeated affirmation that his papacy will be short has raised many questions. The three main ones are: Has he some serious illness? Is he engaged in a political calculus to push through the reform he wants in the church? Does he plan to resign at 80, as some whisper in Rome?

To answer such questions, it's necessary to understand the context in which Francis spoke and what he actually said.

Let's begin with the airborne press conference on Aug. 18, 2014. A reporter for Radio France, Anaïs Fuga, recalling the ovations the pope received in Rio, asked, "How do you handle this immense popularity? How do you deal with it?" After confessing he didn't know what to say, Francis went on to thank God that "His people are happy" and said he felt "the people's generosity." But, he added, "interiorly...I try to think about my sins and my mistakes, lest I have any illusions, since I realize that this is not going to last long...two or three years, and then...off to the house of the Father."

When Elisabetta Piqué (my wife) interviewed him for La Nación last December, she told him that after his airborne revelation "many people were worried about your health; they thought you might not be well." She asked: "How are you?" He responded: "I do have some aches and pains, and at my age ailments don't go unnoticed. But I am in God's hands. Up to now I have been able to maintain a rhythm of work that is more or less good."

> 'I feel that the Lord has placed me here for a short time.'

Then in March, Televisa's Valentina Alazraki returned to his "short papacy" remark and asked, "Why do we have the sensation that you look like someone in a hurry by your way of acting?" and "Why does it seem that you envisage a short pontificate? Why do you repeatedly say these things?"

His answer: "I have the feeling that my pontificate will be brief: four or five years; I don't know, even two or three. Two have already passed! It's a somewhat vague sensation. Maybe it's like the psychology of a gambler who convinces himself he'll lose so he won't be disappointed, and if he wins he's happy. But I feel that the Lord has placed me here for a short time... It's a feeling. For this reason, I always leave the possibility open."

On all three occasions, his answers were spontaneous, not part of a political calculus. He's like that. He speaks from the heart. He confirmed that his health is reasonably good given his age, but said he has this inner feeling about a brief pontificate.

He told Televisa that he's not in favor of setting a statutory age (80) for popes to resign because "the papacy is something of a final instance. It's a special grace." Setting a retirement age "creates the sensation of the end of a pontificate. That wouldn't do good, it would be predictable." He said he shares "Benedict's idea," but avoided committing himself to follow suit. "Benedict has opened the door to emeritus popes. One cannot consider Benedict as an exception, but as an institution.... Maybe he will be the only one for some time, or maybe he will not be the only one."

In actual fact, Francis is a realist. He read the history of the popes in 1991, before becoming a bishop. He knows that 48 of his 265 predecessors were popes for less than one year, 73 others for less than five years and 64 more for less than 10 years.

In this context it is worth recalling that when Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected pope at the age of 78 in the 2005 conclave, he said he took the name Benedict because the last pope with that same name had "a short pontificate." And yet he was pope for almost eight years until he resigned just before his 86th birthday.

Francis was elected pope at 76. He is now 78; and, as he stated in a recent interview with young people from a Buenos Aires shanty town, "My life is in the hands of God."

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: @gerryorome.*

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Presenter: Jack Rathschmidt, OFM. Cap. and Gaynell Cronin
Sunday, June 14 – Friday, June 19
Fee: $425 - $450 (as you are able)

Who Do You Say I Am for You and Your World Today?
Presenter: Mary Schneiders, OP
Sunday, June 21 – Thursday, June 25
Fee: $350 - $375 (as you are able)

Overcoming Our Resistance to Joy
Presenter: Don Bisson, FMS
Thursday, June 25 – Sunday, June 28
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Directed Retreat
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Prayer Facilitator: Nancy Erts, OP
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Monday: Sue Monk Kidd
Tuesday: Elizabeth Johnson
Wednesday: Judy Cannato
Thursday: Jan Phillips
Friday: Illia Delio
Saturday: Closing Celebration
Presenter: Nancy Erts, OP
Sunday, July 12 – Saturday, July 18
Fee: $450 - $475 (as you are able) Commuter: $50 per day; $85 includes overnight

Be a Beholder of Grace
Presenter: Beverly Musgrave, Ph.D
Sunday, July 12 – Friday, July 17
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Dominican Guided/Preached Retreat: In the Beginning Was the Word
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Fee: $550 - $575 (as you are able)

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Presenter: Michael Laratonda, FMS
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Fee: $500 - $525 (as you are able)

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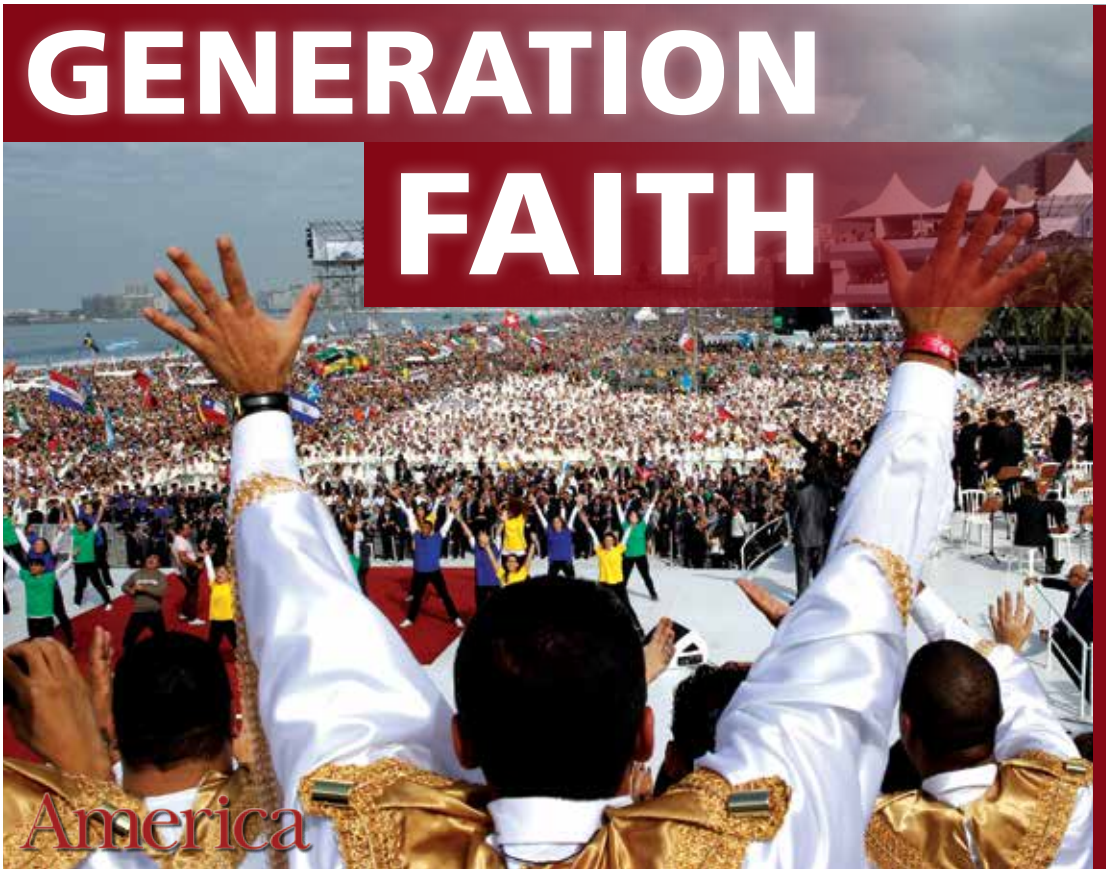

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Meeting the Risen Lord

BY GERALD O'COLLINS

Even nowadays—or should I say especially nowadays?—the sight of two people very much in love still delights us. The world continues to love and make excuses for lovers. A truly great love story will fill the cinemas and top the list of best-sellers. Yet the modern world has come to believe that love is blind. In their delirious joy lovers are supposed to be incapable of seeing how things really are.

Not everyone, however, has accepted our modern prejudice. "Give me a lover," St. Augustine exclaimed, "and he will understand." Augustine realized that it may take deep love to open our eyes and let us see the truth. The heart does have its reasons. Love helps us to know and share in reality.

In two episodes (Jn. 20:2-10; 21:1-14) the beloved disciple is mysteriously led by love to encounter Jesus truly risen from the dead. He enters the empty tomb, sees the grave cloths and believes (20:8). Love makes the beloved disciple jump at once to the right conclusion: Jesus has risen and is alive.

In the second scene the beloved disciple is one of seven disciples who have spent a night out fishing in Lake Tiberias. At dawn they all look across the waters towards the stranger who calls to them from the beach. But love allows the beloved disciple to identify who it is that has come to meet them at daybreak. "It is the Lord" (21:7). Once again love brings him to know the truth and recognize the risen Jesus.

The beloved disciple sees an empty tomb and reaches out in faith to the risen Lord. He hears a voice at dawn across the waters of a lake and knows himself to be in Jesus' presence. Our lives are full of sights and sounds. Love can turn those sights and sounds into moments when we cry out: "It is the Lord."

"Jesus, give us a heart to love you with. Then we shall truly see you, encounter you constantly, and recklessly believe in you."

Likewise, Mary Magdalene meets the living Jesus because she has come back to the tomb looking for His dead body. The tears flood down her face (20:11,13,15). She now finds two angels sitting in the tomb like a guard of honor. She does not ask them for any help or information, but simply explains why she is weeping and turns her back on them. In her grief and love she is anxious only to locate the

"NOLI ME TANGERE," BY FRA ANGELICO. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

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corpse of Jesus which "they" have taken away and laid somewhere.

Then Mary sees the "gardener" standing there in the garden outside the new tomb where Jesus had been buried (19:41). It is the risen Jesus, the new Adam who is inaugurating His new creation. Artists like Fra Angélico and Rembrandt have sensed something about the encounter that theologians have missed: its joyful playfulness. They depict Jesus as wearing a gardener's hat or with a tool slung over his shoulder. His disguise delays briefly the moment of recognition.

Mary imagines that the "gardener" might have carried off the body, but expects that all the same he would be ready to help her: "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Then with one word Jesus changes her life. He calls her by name, "Mary."

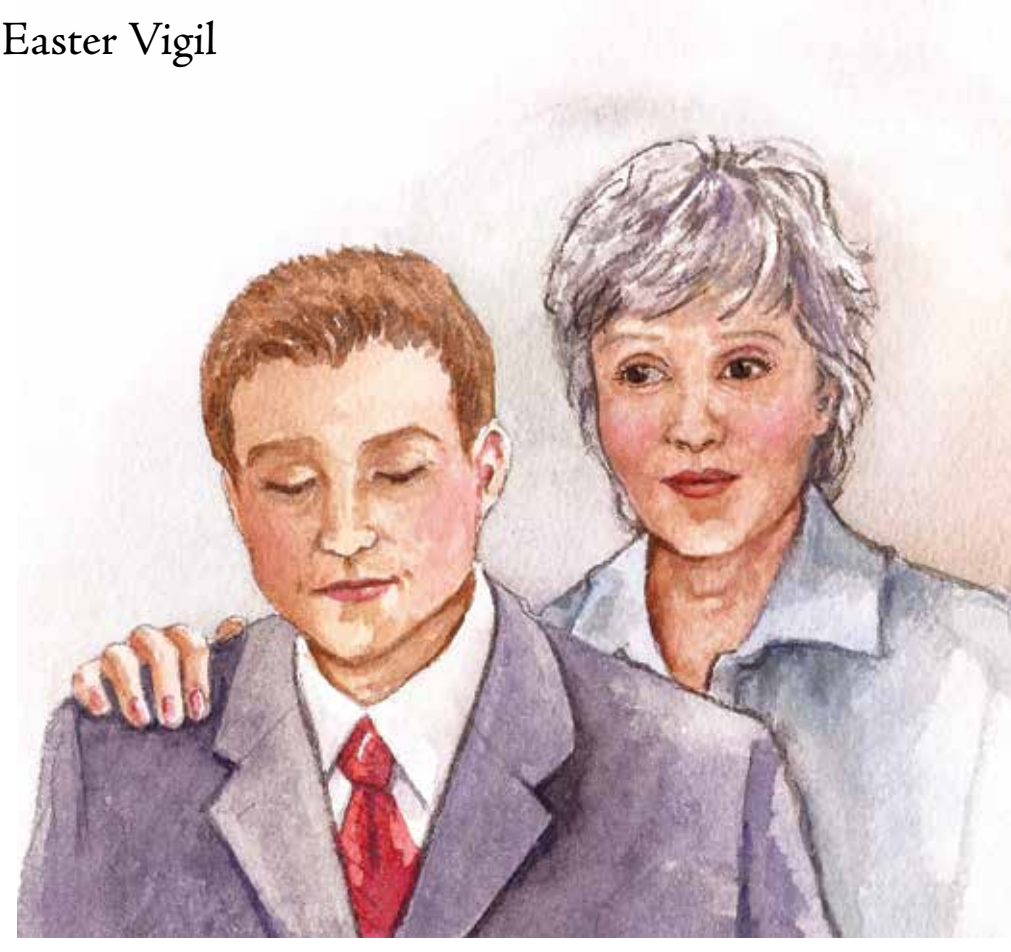
John's Gospel has made much of Mary's grief over the disappearance of Jesus' corpse. She has been weeping outside the tomb; she has been weeping as she stooped to look into the tomb. The two angels and then the risen Jesus Himself have asked the reason for her tears. Now she knows Him to be gloriously alive. But apart from telling us that she clings to Jesus, the Gospel makes no attempt to capture her joy in a net of words. It is the same with the raising of Lazarus. John notes the tears and grief of Martha, Mary and Jesus Himself over the death of Lazarus (11:19,31), but discreetly declines to portray their happiness over his return to life.

In the Fourth Gospel no other encounter with Jesus matches the contrast between Mary Magdalene's expectations and the outcome. She expects at most to be helped to find a missing corpse. Instead she learns that death has no final power over Jesus, and that she is to bring to the disciples the ultimate good news: "I have seen the Lord."

Do Not Miss This

Moments of grace at the Easter Vigil

BY BRIAN DOYLE



I watch for it every Easter vigil, and every Easter vigil it happens—this Easter vigil right in front of me where I sat in the second row of the chapel expressly to see it; and once again I nearly burst into tears, because it is so beautiful and subtle and gentle and heartrending and amazing, and you would totally miss it if you were not watching closely for it.

So here, sit with me and watch as the candidates for adult initiation come up the aisle shyly, smiling and nervous and beaming, and their sponsors come up behind them, and the 12 men and women arrange themselves on the steps of the altar, the sponsors one step higher than the candidates, and Father John says something joyous which I don't quite catch, because there it is!—the sponsors ever so gently, so affectionately, so proudly, putting their right hands on the right shoulders of the candidates! And four of the six candidates reaching their left hands up and putting their hands on their sponsors' hands! And the fifth candidate from the right laughing and weeping at once, a lovely sight. You can see the sheen of tears sliding down her face and you never saw tears that were so absolutely not sad as those tears.

Father John then talks passionately from his huge honest genuine heart about how this is not only an extraordinary moment for the candidates and their families and their sponsors, but also for us as a community, because we have six new members, and they have worked hard and long to be here in this thrilling holy moment, and when he has finished anointing them with oil, and praying for them, and confirming them as full members of the Catholic Church, with all the rights and privileges and responsibilities belonging thereunto, he hopes that we will stand and extend an uproarious welcome, and applaud these brave souls, who have chosen to step into the grace which resides in the church, the church being no mere structure or corporate entity, but all of us gathered around the world at sweet holy shivering moments like this one.

Father John then booms out prayers and makes his way down the line of the candidates, anointing them and confirming them and blessing them and hugging them and their sponsors, and we all sit in our pews smiling and laughing at the relaxed burble of it all, and then when Father John is done he turns and presents the six new members of our Catholic community with a wave of his hand just like a stage manager presents the terrific cast of the wonderful play, and we all stand and applaud uproariously, with the sort of whistles and cheering you would hear after a delicious victory, which this is, when you think about it.

But all through Father John's

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ART: ANN KISSANE ENGELHARDT

passionate speech and prayers and anointing I watched the sponsors and their right hands. All six of the sponsors kept their right hands on the right shoulders of their candidates for the longest time, as long as they possibly could, I think, lifting them off only to hug Father John and applaud their candidates at the end, and there's something about the way those hands rested so proudly, so gently, so lovingly on the shoulders of the candidates that gives me the shivering happy willies when I think about it. Such tiny things mean so very much, don't they? The little things that are not little at all. All that love and pride and trust and delight and hope, all caught by a hand shyly reaching out and coming to rest on the shoulder of another person, at an extraordinary moment for both people, for all 12 of those people, for everyone in the chapel that evening, for everyone in the world who believes that there is such a thing as grace overwhelming you when you need it most, as hope defiant against the fleeing darkness, as love rising ever higher like an irresistible tide, as hands reaching tenderly for you when you thought all was dark and dim and always would be. But that is not so; that is not at all so.

Lord, Have Mercy

Forgiving the man who murdered my sister

BY JEANNE BISHOP

For a long time, my experience as a public defender supported my belief that some people deserved life sentences. One client chilled me to the core. As a juvenile, he had graduated from burglary and auto theft to armed robbery, holding up three separate victims in the course of two days. The first victim was a young mother playing with her kids in a park; the second was an 11-year-old on a bike. My client preyed on the vulnerable. When he took their property at gunpoint, he said the same thing: "I want that." It was the object he cared about; the people meant nothing to him.

I recognized something of David Biro in him. David is the man who murdered my sister, Nancy, her husband, Richard, and their unborn child. After a long struggle, I had forgiven David, said his name, even prayed for him. But I still wasn't certain I wanted him to serve less than his full life sentence. David was serving a mandatory life sentence for killing Nancy and Richard. He was serving a discretionary life sentence for intentionally killing their unborn child. But changes to sentencing procedures for juveniles by a Supreme Court ruling meant that David was likely to seek a resentencing hearing to reduce at least part of his sentence to less than life. I had no idea whether I could support the release of David at such a hearing. "He's still remorseless," I told a friend.

"How do you know that?" he responded, leaning across the table. "You don't know that. You've never even spoken to him." I was stunned. He was right.

I had spoken about the murders and forgiveness all over the world: France, Ireland, Mongolia, Japan and all across the United States. I had written articles about forgiving David Biro, given speeches at churches and schools and conferences. But one person I had not told: *him*. Never once had I communicated my forgiveness to David Biro. I had waited all these years for him to apologize to me. I saw it now with startling clarity: I had to apologize to him, for never telling him that I had forgiven him. I had to go first.

All God's Children

That wasn't all. The Holy Spirit, the spirit of God that moves like wind, blowing things open, scattering debris, wasn't done with me yet. On a Sunday morning months later, I went to a "church on the beach" service held by Christ Church, a charming, ivy-covered stone church set on a hill near Lake Michigan in the town where I live. It's a pleasant change from the Gothic formality of my Presbyterian church in downtown Chicago.

I arrived late, just in time to hear the priest, a man in a black shirt and white collar, cargo shorts and Birkenstocks, begin his homily. He was talking about how the Sunday after the Episcopal Church's national convention is a kind of liturgical season of its own: the season of complaints. Every year, he said, on the Sunday after the convention he feels like a human dartboard. Members of his congregation call or email him, demanding to know: Why did the church vote in favor of that? How could the church decide this? The priest's response: When you get a thousand Episcopalians in a room, you get a thousand different opinions. "It's a mess!" the priest observed, half-ruefully, half-cheerfully. He threw up his hands. "A mess!"

He went on, tying the messiness of the human condition to stories from Scripture. One was about King David,

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taking a woman who was the wife of another man, then arranging that man's death in battle. Another was the awful story of the beheading of John the Baptist because of Herod's moment of misbegotten pride.

"We are a mess, all of us. And how does God respond to that messiness? Mercy. Mercy. *Mercy*," the priest concluded, pausing after each word, his voice dropping to a whisper with the last. That word hung in the still, sunlit air. We sat silent, no sound but the distant crash of waves on the beach, the song of birds overhead. The word lodged in my heart. *Mercy*.

We, the congregation, said that word a short time later, just before we lined up under the shade of a spreading tree to take the bread and wine. "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy upon us."

You take away the sins of the world, I pondered. What does that mean? Whatever it meant, I knew that it couldn't mean saying to any human being: We are taking the sin you committed and freezing it in time forever. No matter what you do, how much you repent and show remorse, you are forever only one thing—a killer—and we will punish you endlessly for it. I knew this in my heart: I could no longer support this merciless sentence of life without parole for juveniles.

And in the very next moment, like daylight breaking into darkness, I knew something else. I'd always thought that the only thing big enough to pay for the life of my sister was a life sentence for her killer. Now I understood: The only thing big enough to equal the loss of her life was for him to be found.

The Letter

Late at night on the last day of September 2012, I put my two sons to bed and crept downstairs in the darkened house. I sat at the computer, turned on a small desk light and typed a letter to David, which read, in part:

I have heard news of you: how prison has been hard at times because of your association with me and my sisters. I am sorry for that. Nancy

above all was about love; she never would have wanted her death to result in more brutality, even to the person who took her life.

You have heard news of me: how I have forgiven you for killing my family members. I never conveyed that forgiveness to you directly; I am sorry for that, too. It was wrong to tell other people and not the most important person of all: you....

[I read a book about forgiveness by Dr. Randall O'Brien. I called him to ask:] How do I reconcile with someone whose position is, I have not wronged you? *He responded with some stunning observations.*

First, that you and I are no different in the eyes of God. I am someone who has fallen short and hurt God's heart; I have sinned, to use that biblical word, just as you have. You are a child of God, created in God's image, just as I am. God loves you every bit as much as me; nothing you have done could ever stop God from loving you. The division I have made between us—you, guilty murderer, me, innocent victims' family member—was a false divide. I was wrong to do that.

Randall's second observation was this: How did Jesus respond to the people who were taking his life, in the very moment they were killing him? He prayed for them: Father, forgive them; they don't know what they are doing.

It struck me that I had never prayed for you. I had never even said your name. That was wrong of me, too. So I did pray for you, in the garden outside Kenilworth Union Church—you know the place—where Nancy and Richard and their baby are buried, alongside my father, who found their bodies the morning after they died.

Here is what I have come to believe: sentences like the death penalty and life without parole reflect our need to find a response to something as heinous as the murder of innocents equal in weight and gravity to the crime itself.

The only thing that could possibly pay for the loss of Nancy, her husband and their baby is this nearly impossible thing: that you would make your way home to God, the way the Prodigal Son in one of Jesus' parables finds his way home.

So I can no longer support the sentence of juvenile life without

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parole. It says to you, and to every other person serving that sentence: never. No matter what you do, how you may be transformed, or who you become, we will never even give you a chance to get out of prison....

How would he respond? Would he respond at all? I had visions of him reading my letter and laughing—showing it to a cell mate, maybe, scoffing at my earnest foolishness. All I knew was this: it was out of my hands now. It was in the hands of God.

Then one day I stopped at the mailbox in the public defender's office where I work and pulled a stack of mail from the slot: some returned subpoenas, some junk mail and a large manila envelope with a return address from a downstate prison. It was from David.

I called a friend and made an unusual request: would he open and read the letter first? He readily answered yes. Two days after I received the letter, he did that. After he read it, he looked up at my anxious face and smiled, a calm, quiet smile. "It's good," he said. David's letter went on for 15 pages, and my friend read it aloud to me. It read, in part:

I know that for a long time you and your family have been looking for me to confess to the murders I committed years ago. Of course, as you know in the past, I have always maintained my "innocence." Well, for a lot of reasons which I'll get into in a little bit, I think the time has come for me to drop the charade and finally be honest. You're right, I am guilty of killing your sister Nancy, and her husband Richard. I also want to take this opportunity to express my deepest condolences and apologize to you.

When I heard these words, a cry escaped my lips, a kind of sob buried so deep, I hadn't known it was there. I leaned forward, fingers pressed to my mouth. To hear those words: *You're right, I am guilty....* I never thought I would hear that, ever. It was more than I'd ever dreamed. My friend was right: it was good.

My mind filled with wonder. Who could have imagined this? Not in my wildest dreams did I suppose David Biro might do what he had resisted doing ever since the murders: confess and say he was sorry. It was beyond anything I could have asked for—and I knew, even as I heard his apology, that it would not have come if I had not gone first. The time I spent waiting for that apology! That was the price I paid for my coldness toward Biro, for holding myself aloof. I understood for the first time what Jesus was saying to us about apologies: You go first. Don't wait. A

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

ROADS TO PERDITION

Explorations of hell from Argentina and Ireland

POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE. Scenes from "Wild Tales." Above: Ricardo Darin and the director Damián Szifron. Below: Érica Rivas as Romina.

Hell. Not a location we care to dwell in, though dwelling on it has occupied no small amount of time, or words, or dreadful words, since poets started studying perdition. Dante, most famously and with an immortal amount of detail, described nine circles of calibrated agony, advising the hell-bound to abandon all hope. The Jesuit-educated James Joyce, via Father Arnall (in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*), described hell as a place where "the blood seethes and boils in the veins, the brains are boiling in the skull, the heart in the breast glowing and bursting, the bowels a red-hot mass of burning pulp, the tender eyes flaming like molten balls...." Jean-Paul Sartre simply said hell was other people.

All of the above—as well as Jesus' command that sinners, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire" (Mt 25:41)—might have inspired the makers of two recent feature films: **Wild Tales,** the Oscar-nominated Argentine entry for best foreign language film this year (it lost to "Ida," reviewed here last June), and **'71,** the dire but gripping drama from the United Kingdom amidst the Irish Troubles, in which a British soldier is lost in Belfast, without a Virgil and without a clue.

"Wild Tales," directed by Damián Szifron, is eager to outrage. Like the violent "'71," it is rated R, partly for a modest amount of extremely immodest behavior but also for its violence. And yet alongside the self-indulgence and intemperance that invariably get the characters into an enormous amount of trouble is an awareness that eternal suffering will come from separation—from a loss of communion with one's fellow man and God, and a loss not just of acceptable behavior but of simple morality. Solitary confinement may be immoral and promote madness, but it doesn't necessarily require a cell.

The opening and closing episodes of "Wild Tales" are probably the most deftly drawn of the film's six chapters, all of which concern themselves with characters who are offered the opportunity to comport themselves with good judgment and dignity and who, on impulse, choose another path entirely. The first story, which unfolds before the title of the film even appears, involves a plane full of passengers who, just accidentally, discover they share a troubling connection (and not the one to Honolulu, bada-boom). The last involves a bride at her wedding totally losing her cool when she suspects her new husband has been intimate with one of the guests. You will be praying that someone has hidden the cutlery.

To say more about those episodes would give too much away, but the others can be at least sketched out safely without blowing the payoff. In one (a nightmare scenario involving road rage and immolation) two drivers take their vehicular differences to an extreme that verges on the absurdly comic. In another, a young waitress recognizes her abusive customer as the man who ruined her father, drove him to suicide and then tried to seduce her mother. Should she, as her older female co-worker counsels, put rat poison in his food?

In a third, a demolition expert (the well-known Argentine actor Ricardo Darin), a man who blows up derelict buildings with such care that the dust barely stirs, goes to war with the Buenos Aires parking violations bureau, which he views as a totalitarian regime devoted to ruining his life and populated by agents of Satan. Unlike some of the other folk in Mr. Szifron's film, Mr. Darin's character is wholly ridiculous. But like the others, he indulges his worst instincts and in the process becomes a moral exile.

There are plot twists, to be sure, and some very polished filmmaking. What Mr. Szifron makes very evident is that his characters are inviting trouble by abandoning Christian principles, most obviously that of turning the other cheek. In every instance, their destiny—spiritual and otherwise—would have been infinitely improved had one character or another simply done what he or she ought, swallowed a small amount of pride, understood that members of a bureaucracy are just doing their jobs (we're talking about workers at the D.M.V., after all, not Nazis) and exercised a modicum of selflessness.

None of which would have helped young Private Gary Hook, played in "'71" by the up-and-comer Jack O'Connell, who was so enjoyably out of control in the U.K. prison drama "Starred Up" last year and suffered so endlessly in Hollywood's unending "Unbroken." Everyone has a least favorite bad dream, and Hook's may be yours: the nightmare of being hopelessly lost in a place where time has stopped and hope has vanished.

In "'71," that place is Belfast, in the year of the title, when the Troubles were at their most dire, something director Yann Demange portrays not just by a set design of blasted, treeless streets and ruined buildings but also by a palette bordering on the bilious, with overtones of khaki and a camera technique that is dizzying. Hook, who along with the rest of his platoon is expecting to go to Germany after boot camp, is sent instead to Northern Ireland, where they are to assist the Royal Ulster Constabulary (portrayed as particularly brutal by Mr. Demange) and where a disorienting strain of warfare confronts the young recruits. The nuances of the conflict are beyond their ken; the combatants all look alike.

There's a certain amount of confusion in store for the viewer, too, as Hook, left behind when a mob scatters his unit, is pursued by the Provisional I.R.A., the more moderate I.R.A., the Protestant Loyalists, his own unit and an ambiguous operative whose allegiances are more than suspect. Hook gets beaten, shot at, blown up, stabbed, throttled and shot at again, all in a night without end. There is very little choosing of sides in "'71," but what Mr. Demange gets exactly right, via young Gary Hook, is the feeling of being utterly alone, a sense that because of something unclear that you did, or are, you have been totally abandoned by both God and man. Hell indeed.

JOHN ANDERSON *is a film critic for Variety and The Wall Street Journal and a regular contributor to the Arts & Leisure section of The New York Times.*

RUNNING ON PLENTY

From the moment "McFarland, USA" begins, you know how it will end. So the scenes described here do not quite qualify as spoilers. You can guess that Jim White, the gruff yet big-hearted running coach (whose surname also matches his ethnicity) played by Kevin Costner, will have a hard time adjusting to his abrupt move to the largely Mexican-American town of McFarland. You suspect that his team of Mexican-American high school kids will treat him with some suspicion. And you know that by the end of the film, they will all come away changed by their encounters with one another,.

But what you might not guess before seeing the film is that director Niki Caro won't take any shortcuts to the eventual happy ending. You will be pleasantly surprised by the thoughtful attention to the back stories of the runners, who struggle to help support their families by working in the fields when not in school. You will be glad to see that the relationships among the team members and their families are in fact real and loving and solid, though not without struggle. You will be relieved to learn that the kids are not portrayed as helpless cases in need of a savior in White.

"McFarland, USA" is based on a true story; the events took place in 1987 in McFarland, a real town in California's Central Valley. In many ways, the movie is a welcome one for our time: an earnest, sincere film in an era when irony, snark or edginess can seem to dominate so many creative pursuits or conversations. It allows joy to exist alongside difficulties, and hope alongside discouragement. Even its predictability is a comfort; you can watch knowing that good will win out, that the hills will be overcome. It encourages us to acknowledge the reality of our struggles but to keep moving forward.

Although the terrain I have tread, both along the race course and in my home life, has been quite different from those depicted in the film, the racing scenes still brought me back to my own days as a high school runner in Massachusetts. Though the boys of McFarland joined their team largely to get into or out of trouble, my own decision to join my high school cross country team was largely inspired by Michael Johnson's speed on the track in the 1996 Olympics. His gold racing flats also motivated me to cover my mother's old New Balance sneakers with gold glittery puffy paint before trying them out on my first run around our neighborhood.

We will not always be as we are now. Better things are on the way.

On my first day of practice, I was nervous. But almost as soon as I arrived, we were told to start running. We were told to just move forward, just keep going, all at our own paces, all of us trying to better ourselves while also letting go of ourselves for just a little while.

This tension between the shared journey and individual identity exists in McFarland, too. The beauty of the relationships in the film is that as the team grows in skill, its members also grow into their own skins. They become more confident, not simply because of their victories, but because they acknowledge how much they have always been capable of.

This sort of transformation is perhaps particularly relevant during Easter, as we are reminded of our call to be transformed and to remain true. The risen Christ models this for us in Scripture by being both revolutionary and recognizable. He is someone totally new, and yet constant. Christ's resurrection tells us we will not always be as we are now. Better things are on the way.

In our daily lives, we sometimes feel this tension of being in transition, that pull of what was and what will be and what we wish for. But from that stretching there comes real growth.

True Christian community asks us to recognize those qualities in one another that we might not be willing to recognize in ourselves. We are called to support one another and challenge one another along our shared path, even as we sometimes desire to sprint off on our own diversions. Yet even those tangents are part of our journey; there can be continuity even in the wrong turns. Slowly we are strengthened, not just by our own will but by those who love us. And this transformation is not the fulfillment of our own desires but of God's desire for us.

The events of our own journeys in faith are anything but predictable, but the paschal mystery helps remind us to keep moving forward in faith. There are better days ahead.

KERRY WEBER *is managing editor of* ***America****.*

SPIRITUAL IMMOBILITY

I grew up in Omaha, the youngest in a large Catholic family. We belonged to the Jewish Community Center, where I took swimming lessons in its bleak and echoing indoor pool. I failed Beginners three times. I never made it to Minnows. I thought I would never properly learn to swim. It was a dark time.

This hasn't much at all to do with a poetry review.

Except to make the point, maybe, that any review is really about the reviewer himself. In every word he's talking about his childhood in sideways fashion. He's judging literature but really he's talking about swimming lessons. In one way or another, it's always about the swimming lessons.

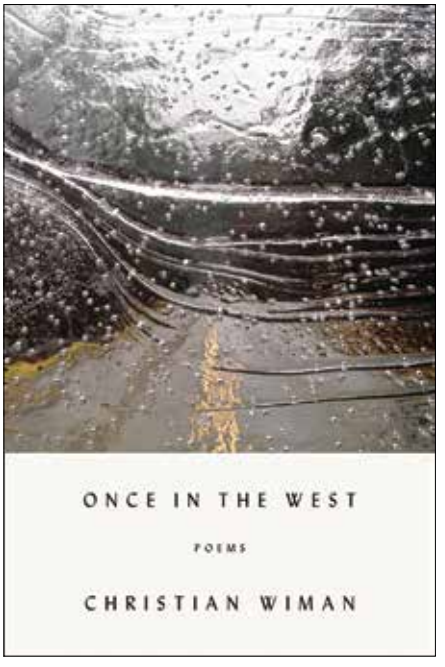
✦✦✦

Once in the West, by Christian Wiman (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2014). Christian Wiman's new collection of poems *Once in the West* is fantastic. Buy it. If you don't buy books of new poetry—and you don't—buy it anyway. It is approachable, violent, frightening, lovely, funny and somewhat mystical—but not in a way that makes you loathe things that seem mystical. The words move, they don't sit back on their heels. There is urgency here.

Many of the poems are about the days of Wiman's youth in Kansas. (I assume anyway they are about Wiman. Whenever poets say "I" or "me" they usually are talking about themselves. When gritty rock stars use the first person they may well be talking about someone else. John Cougar Mellencamp singing about "Forty-four empty acres/ that used to be my farm" refers not to himself but to a man who actually tills the earth and is forlorn and bankrupt and yet he tills, or did.)

Wiman's "Native" begins:

At sixteen...hellbent
on being not
this, not that
I drove
a steamroller
smack-dab over



a fat black snake
Up surged a cheer
from men
so cheerless
cheers
were grunts, squints,
whisker twitches
it would take
a lunatic acuity
to see.

And now the reviewer surgically, bracingly and with masters' degrees, analyzes these stanzas: these words feel really good to read and to say.

In "Keynote" Wiman beholds men at an Elks' lodge beholding him. He is suddenly taken back to his childhood in the town where both he and these Elks grew up.

I saw
like a huge claw time tear through
the iron
armory and the baseball fields
the slush-puppy stand
the little pier at Towle Park Pond....

Time's huge claw somehow reminds me of Mike Mulligan's steam shovel. The girl steam shovel with happy eyes and gaping smiley mouth is a thing I have not thought of for years. I think of it now, and it makes me glad. *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel.* Buy this book too.

The preacher in "The Preacher Addresses the Seminarians" is a man you want to give sermons to your congregation every Sunday, even though some of the spiritually immobile will be alarmed. Toward the end of a fantastic dressing-down on what the preacher's life is really about, he declares,

I tell you some Sundays even the
children's sermon
maybe especially this—sharks your
gut
like a bite of tin some beer-guzzling
goat
either drunkenly or mistakenly de-
cides to sample.

But, in the end, Christ will take care of all the struggles of the minister's life, won't he? Our preacher concludes: "the truth is, our only savior is failure."

Behold the double meaning. The new fad of Silicon Valley (entire conferences dedicated to Great Failures as fertile loam for Great Start-Ups) coupled with the Passion of Jesus Christ. Nicely done.

Wiman's last poem begins, "Love is the living heart of dread." He speaks about going to the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago with his wife and two little girls. Looking at the minnows, (small "m"), Wiman is struck not so much by these tiny fish, as by what they do to the water they swim in:

For me for a long time
not the minnows mattered
but the pattern after: miraculous
I didn't think
to think....

To forget thinking and just watch and just be. A fine and rare gift for addled and thought-besieged humans. Wiman reminds us of this truth without telling us what a truth it is, like the best literature does.

Motherland Fatherland Homelandsexuals, by Patricia Lockwood (Penguin, 2014). This is strong poetry, a great deal of which weaves in, around and through sex. It features strange or violent or startling renderings of sexuality and its malcontents. And the truth is, if there is well-crafted or vividly displayed (or a stark approbation of) sex in any work of art, it tends to overtake that work.

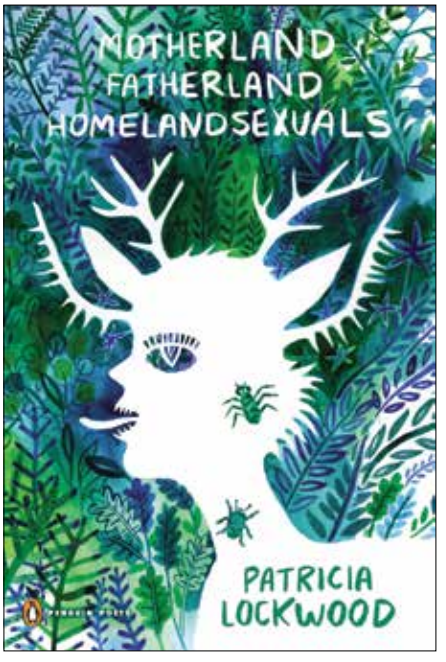
It becomes the sex book. The sex poetry. The sex movie. Think of "Basic Instinct." Think of Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying.* The indie film "Blue is the Warmest Color." The flower paintings of Georgia O'Keefe. The early albums of Liz Phair.

The first thought is the sex. It almost always is. That's just how it is with this unitive, generative and pleasurable force of nature. (Consider Pope Paul VI. When hearing his name, is the first thing that comes to your mind that he "fostered ecumenical relations with the Eastern Orthodox Church?" Or is it "birth control, birth control, birth control?")

Sometimes the artist desires this sexual notoriety, sometimes he or she doesn't. Whether Lockwood wants it or not, in one poem she addresses this phenomenon with heart-breaking self-awareness. In "Rape Joke" she writes, "The rape joke is that if you write a poem called Rape Joke, you're asking for it to be the only thing they remember about you."

The poems in *Motherland* give a living, human quality to things you would never think of as being alive or human. Waterfalls, countries, swans, a basketball dunk. The collection does not merely anthropomorphize these things. ("The dog smiled at me.") It brings fear, dignity, abandonment, rage and weirdness to every part of the known world. It seems unfair to consider this to be a book just about sexuality. It is so much more.

In the poem "Search 'Lizard Vagina' and You Shall Find," the country of Canada is a person that can look up the phrase "lizard vagina." (Okay, it is a



lot about sexuality.) The geography of Canada takes on a beating heart and a living mind. It becomes a person, or a person becomes the land. The thought is worth more thinking—how we are land and land is us. Land that can look up prurient phrases like any 12-year-old.

"The Whole World Gets Together and Gangbangs a Deer" alludes to the way deer, and subsequently women, become used, over-sexualized (perhaps? am I reading too much into it? It is not, after all, an after-school special of a poem.)

Every deer gets called Bambi
at least once in its life, every deer must answer to Bambi...
every deer hears LOOK OH LOOK it's Bambi...
When the deer all die they will die of genocide, of one
baby name for the million of them.

Maybe it takes a kind of shock, a poem title that has a deer undergoing sexual assault, for us to get at a new feeling about something we hear about so often—The Degradation of Women. Through deer and Disney we are startled into thinking about this other sad thing we'd maybe rather not think about.

Lockwood's M.O. in these poems is a kind of abandon—it feels as if she is just talking, the work a stream-of-consciousness. But it is a rigorous abandon. The poems are not mere words thrown onto a page. They do something, and deliberately.

There is one sin in this book. (Unless Lockwood is Catholic or a more strict Christian or an Orthodox Jew, for whom sex before marriage is a sin and by extension celebrating sex outside of marriage in lyric form is probably some kind of secondary sin, in which case she has sinned all over the place.)

Other than this, her chief sin is reverse pretentiousness: in the first words of her back-page bio Lockwood tells us that she was born in a trailer.

The most straightforward and devastating poem in the collection is "Rape Joke." The "you" in the poem is the author speaking about herself. The following are a few lines from the poem. They need no comment from me.

The rape joke is you went home like nothing happened, and laughed about it the next day, and the day after that....

The rape joke is it wore a goatee. A goatee.

The rape joke is that he was your father's high school student—your father taught world religions.

The rape joke is that when you told your father, he made the sign of the cross over you and said, "I absolve you of your sins,

in the name of the father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," which even in its total wrongheadedness, was so completely sweet.

In the last line of the poem Lockwood's rapist twines up fun-in-the-sun Beach Boys music with this horrific experience:

The rape joke is that the next day he gave you "Pet Sounds." No, really. "Pet Sounds." He said he was sorry and then he gave you "Pet Sounds."

Citizen: An American Lyric, by Claudia Rankine (Graywolf Press, 2014). This is a sad, alarming, philosophical, highly self-aware piece of writing. In the form of prose-poems, *Citizen* (a National Book Award finalist) primarily discusses black experience encountering white experience. Rankine unveils the black body in the space of the world, and what it does to those around it, and how it is perceived, and the disruption it makes for others.

My naïveté (I didn't know white people still said these things!) is illuminated by this collection. A man outside a conference room, unwittingly in earshot of Rankine, tells another man that "being around black people is like watching a foreign film without translation."

A woman tells Rankine (whom she has just met) that her son wasn't accepted at a college "because of affirmative action or minority something—she is not sure what they are calling it these days and weren't they supposed to get rid of it?"

A man refers to "boisterous teenagers in Starbucks as niggers." When Rankine protests this, and then goes on to say, "No need to get all KKK on them," the man says, "Now there you go."

Rankine's response to "There you go" reveals that this book is not a mere sociological tallying up of pathetic moments of racism. It is a window into the honest humanity of Rankine and how she responds to those moments. Rankine repeats the man's words, "There I go?" She feels "irritation begin to rain down." Nonetheless, she writes, "something about hearing yourself repeating this stranger's accusation in a voice usually reserved for your partner makes you smile."

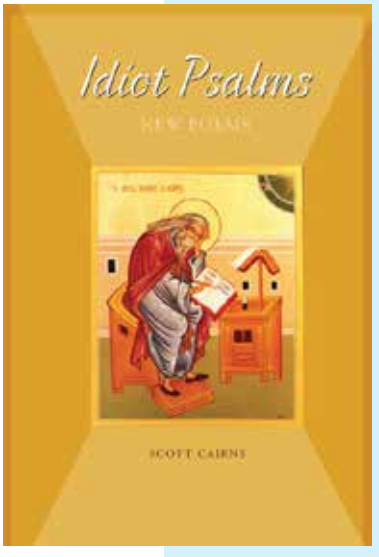
Rankine explores the racial implications of Serena Williams's professional tennis career. Serena's "three second celebratory dance" (a "crip walk") after she won a gold medal in the 2012 Olympics in Wimbledon Stadium was reported by various media as "an act at which you couldn't help but shake your head." "What Serena did was akin to cracking a tasteless, X-rated joke inside a church...." "What she did was immature and classless."

The implication is that by her dance Serena was endorsing and even celebrating the violent world of the thuggish street criminal. It is beyond ridiculous. The careers of Serena and her sister Venus, says Rankine, have been plagued by subtle and not-so-subtle racism since Day 1. Few could argue with this.

Rankine indicates that racism was involved in one of the most notorious events of Serena's career. At the same time, she fails to provide any hard supporting evidence that this is the case. At match point of the 2009 U.S. Open Finals, Serena was called for a foot-fault that led her to lose the

In Brief

Slant Six, by Erin Bellieu (Copper Canyon Press, 2014). I like this because I am from Nebraska and Bellieu is from Nebraska and at times she reveals my soul. I am annoyed by *Slant Six* because she is from Nebraska and I am from Nebraska and at times she reveals my soul. Why would I want someone revealing my soul? Several of the poems are funny, which I like. In "Ars Poetica for the Future": "The Rapture came/ and went without incident/ but I put off folding my laundry/ just in case."



Idiot Psalms, by Scott Cairns (Paraclete Press, 2014). These poems are skillfully rendered. But many of them feel elliptical, generalized. They use the word "obtain" more than seems advisable. Eventually you can deduce something, but the words often circle the runway and do not land. "One's waking of itself obtains/ a rising and—one might say—a dazed,/ surprising glee at having met/ within sleep's netherworld one's own/ dim shadowed psyche, and survived." Hmmmm. As with Lockwood, Cairns's great offense lies in the author description. On the lower left hand of the back cover there is a drawing of Cairns, an icon of Scott Cairns, with quill pen and a halo. I am not making this up.

The Poems of Jesus Christ, translated by Willis Barnstone (W. W. Norton, 2002). I feared this book would reduce Christ's life to aphorisms taken out of context. It would mask his status as the best person who ever lived who was also God. It does this, a little. But it also sets apart and lights up his words, like embers in gray ash. In "Walking on the Waters of the Sea," nearly the whole of the Gospel is summed up in three lines. "Take heart/ It is I/ Do not be afraid."

match. It is an atrocious call. Serena responds to the line judge viciously. "I swear to God I'm f***ing going to take this f***ing ball and shove it down your f***ing throat!"

"Serena's behavior," says Rankine, "suggests that all the injustice she has played through all the years of her illustrious career flashes before her and she decides finally to respond to all of it with a string of invectives."

This may well be true. But doesn't Serena deserve the respect of a simple bit of reporting by Rankine as to whether years of injustice actually did flash through her mind? Maybe she felt the outrage any tennis player might feel at a line-judge's ridiculous call. Where is the confirmation from Williams as to what she was thinking?

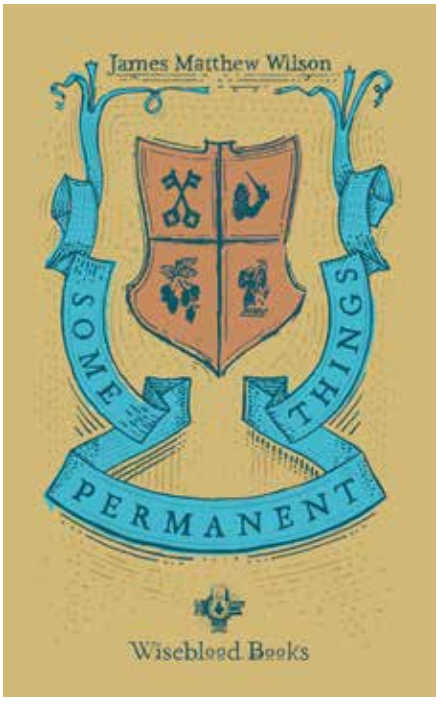
Rankine's reporting also suffers when she discusses the infamous head-butt delivered by the French star Zinedine Zidane in overtime of the 2006 World Cup final. The recipient of the headbutt, Marco Materazzi, was reported to have called Zidane, an Algerian by birth, a "terrorist," leading to Zidane's retaliation. Rankine places this incident in the catalogue of racist moments she has been detailing.

However, should it be there? Both Materazzi and Zidane later confirmed that Materazzi said something foul about Zidane's sister, not about his being a terrorist. The Sun, The Daily Star and The Daily Mail each had to pay damages to Materazzi and make a front-page apology for their insistence (based on the interpretations of lip-readers) that Materazzi had called Zidane a "dirty terrorist," or "son of a terrorist whore."

Why does Rankine hold on to the earlier, disproved account? I do not know. Am I missing something? Did I read the poem wrong? Detailing with certainty overt racist moments that may not be there diminishes this book.

But these failures do not swallow up the collection as a whole. It is a thoughtful, enraging and depth-sounding piece of work.

Some Permanent Things, by James Matthew Wilson (Wiseblood Books, 2014). I planned on reviewing this before I met James Matthew Wilson in person. He is very nice. Wilson told me, among other things, that he and his wife would love to save enough money to renovate his kitchen. After our encounter I worried I would not like the book. I feared I would break this man's



heart with a bad review. (The ego!)

People, let's get this man's kitchen renovated. Let's buy this book. My fears have been allayed.

Some Permanent Things is the work of a man who does not scold, preach or sit high above his subjects or the reader. He tells, reports, identifies from ground view.

Wilson talks about idolizing The New Yorker magazine. He writes about a mansion in South Bend whose attempts to look old and "classical" come off as sad and forced. He turns phrases marvelously, striking quick to a sharp image. In "The Gypsies": "My senses woke to madrigals tongued in the light of gypsies, their curious foreign sounds."

"Father Mac's Wake" talks about his parish priest and "The Church he built/ In the brute modern style of a time/ When everyone knew the face of Pius XII and Paul VI was newly vilified."

The young Wilson is at the priest's wake and does not want to be at the wake. His friends are playing outside. As a minor act of protest, he scratches with a key into a pew, which only serves to prefigure a later spiritual surrender. "And those key-stabs I made may still be scarred/ In the pew's aging wood/ a seeming accident/ that only I can read in memory/ Signs of a last attack before defeat."

Wilson is not even afraid to rhyme his poetry! It is utterly refreshing. "She offered him the heart-meat of two doves/ The smoke and tartness of wine marinade/ It seemed he tasted her at one remove/ And took with gratitude what she had made."

A complaint (Mr. Wilson, you are still very nice) is that, structurally, nearly all of the poems have about the same tenor, the same overall feel. The passion in the words is rarely mirrored by fault lines and eruptions in their rhythm and flow. Reading the poems one after the other lulled me into a feeling of...being lulled. I would love to have seen him break this pattern.

For my money the best poem in this work is "A Note for Ecclesiastes. In Memoriam Rae Lee Lester." In it Wilson fights off the resigned air that the Book of Ecclesiastes might cast over a woman's death: just another turning; another event in the sameness of all the world; women have come and women will go and more will take their place. There is nothing new under the sun.

Wilson protests everyone who thinks this way:

> *The flint-lipped quietists, the smug advisor*
> *Certain no treasonous plot, utopian scheme*
> *Or menu in an obscure restaurant*

Contains a newborn thought, a hope that hasn't
Been crushed before—in more auspicious times.

Wilson concludes:

Is wisdom wise enough never to dare
To try to take the measure of our loss
We do not need to know all things have been
But only to say, once more and in fitting
Voice, that she was.

Here is a prophetic cry for simply paying attention to what is. You might say this about the whole book.

✦✦✦

When I was 24 my housemate Lynn took me to a recreation center in Dorchester, where we lived, and taught me to swim. Old women in black bathing caps swam in the lanes next to mine. Over the weeks I got the rhythm. Kick and breathe, kick and breathe. Cup the water with your hands, push it back, easy now, easy. The day I really got it, the day I finally had it down, the grandmothers of outer Boston clapped for me. I looked over, startled. They had been watching. They were invested. They helped birth me into Minnow.

Beginning with a copy of *Tulips and Chimneys* lying around our house, this was about the same time I started reading poetry.

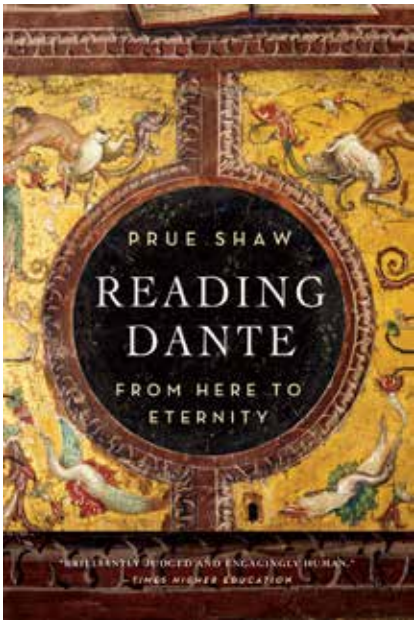
JOSEPH P. HOOVER, S.J., *is* ***America****'s poetry editor.*

BOOKS | DENIS J. M. BRADLEY

ABANDON HOPE?

READING DANTE
From Here to Eternity

By Prue Shaw
Liveright. 398p $28.95



A basic Dante bibliography would now run in excess of 50,000 items; something new appears on the list every day. So why would Prue Shaw add yet another introduction, albeit one with a droll cinematic subtitle, to the *Divine Comedy*?—because she holds that the "sacred poem," notwithstanding what she calls its antiquated theology and erroneous science, illumines the individual's role in society and the cosmos, even for readers who do not share Dante's medieval Catholicism or his "hierarchical and judgmental" view of good and evil actions.

Shaw considers seven themes in that moral universe: friendship, power, life, love, time, numbers and words, and devotes a chapter to each. These thematic chapters are capacious, each developed as a graceful if somewhat miscellaneous narrative. Five additional sections provide information about the dramatis personae, the poem's meter, a glossary, an outline of the principal events in Dante's life and suggested further readings. Academics can admire the competence with which Shaw popularizes received scholarship; novices can benefit from the pedagogical guidance provided by her very British classroom analogies. Both professional and amateur Dantisti can find in her numerous asides inexhaustible matters to ponder and feel when reading Il Summo Poeta.

Commencing on Good Friday Eve in the momentous year 1300, *La Commedia* is about a visionary three-day journey to the three realms of the afterlife, where the pilgrim poet speaks to and learns, primarily about the meaning of the journey itself, from the damned in the inferno, the repentant in purgatory and the blessed in paradise. The poem begins with Dante's famous description of himself as lost, at the biblical midpoint of life, age 35, in a fearfully dark place. What led him to abandon "the straight and true way?" It would seem, above all, frustrated ambition—civic but also poetic—played out in and against an intellectually and artistically vibrant, wealthy, turbulent Florence. In the *Commedia*, Florence is violently unstable morally as well as politically: pride, envy and greed inflame rivalries into bloody conflicts between the citizens. Of the 36 Florentines Dante meets in the afterlife, 30 are in hell, four in purgatory, and only two in paradise.

Dante's own catastrophic fall from the Florentine political summit came on Jan. 27, 1302, when, on trumped-up charges of financial corruption, he and other tepidly papalist White Guelfs were exiled. Dante never returned to Florence; he lived for almost 20 years as an "undeserved exile" under a twice-imposed death sentence. Moving about Italy from court to court, supported by patrons, Dante was, in his own self-pitying words, "a wanderer almost a beggar."

Written during those intermina-

ble years of exile (c. 1308–20), the *Commedia* is peopled with rival poets and self-serving, vicious political actors. The poets, those shown as obliquely confirming Dante's artistic pre-eminence, fare better than the politicians. Dante's ingeniously executed denunciations of avaricious, simoniacal popes, power-voracious kings and treacherous nobles are devastatingly direct, mouthed post-mortem by the suffering miscreants—bringing judgment, or expiation, or damnation on themselves, their descendants and their still living companions in crime. The underlying theme of the *Commedia* is that in this life politics seems to be all, but in the afterlife it is assuredly not. The overriding theological truth is that God transcends human politics, even the pope's putative power to bind in heaven as well as on earth.

Was Dante, "fiery and uncompromising," also a medieval bigot and a rigidly dogmatic moral scold? Shaw thinks that Dante's "moral certainties" do not blind him to the ambiguities of "real human behavior in a real human world." So we can continue to learn from the *Commedia* about the human condition in today's secularized world. But is it as easy as Shaw suggests to abstract contemporary metaphysical, moral and psychological universals from the particular "supernatural economy"—widely regarded as unbelievable or even unintelligible fantasy—of the *Commedia*?

My undergraduates would query who today can really believe that "history [is] a single, purposeful sequence of events," or that the natural and human world is evidently "Trinitarian"? But these are questions too grand to charge an introduction to raise much less answer carefully. Still, Shaw mentions T. S. Eliot, that Old Christian Possum, who slyly observed that even those who have never read Dante know his famous bottom line, "And in His will is our peace." Shaw knows the line but treats it *en passant*, content to nod at its "grandeur," reticent to defend or criticize its truth. That nod makes a theologically abstinent reading of Dante easier for Shaw than for many post-Christian, secularist readers. Dante's own culturally particular beliefs—which allow God's justice to dominate brutally above and over things human—separate him from current religiosity as well as from contemporary nonbelievers.

For those readers, Shaw identifies a different bottom line: "Political power is transient, but art endures; the poet trumps the pope." Calling it a "paradox," Shaw delicately allows or perhaps hopes that some similitude to divine transcendence remains experientially intelligible in a religiously disenchanted world: "To nonbelievers, it must be because aesthetic value transcends or defeats time." Everything rests on that *must*. In Dante's neo-Platonist chain of being, the poetry of human making must depend on the theology of divine creating: human art follows nature; nature follows the divine intellect. In an arresting metaphor, Virgil encapsulates Dante's understanding of art: human art is "almost God's grandchild." A this-worldly "religion of art," wherein the human experience of universal aesthetic value substitutes for the transcendence of an imperious moral divinity, contradicts what Dante affirms. Once, Shaw puts Dante's point more bluntly than Dante himself: "God is more important than poetry." Yet, in her celebration of Dante's poetic virtuosity, Shaw subtly asks, "Is He?"

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One Heart and Soul

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), APRIL 12, 2015

Readings: Acts 4:32–35; Ps 118: 2–24; 1 Jn 5:1–6; 1 Cor 5:6–8; Jn 20:19–31

"Blessed are those who have not seen yet have come to believe" (Jn 20:29)

Many Catholics today are rightfully dismayed by divisive arguments among fellow Christians over matters as diverse as liturgy, the pope, politics and morality. Only the strong of heart dare venture near online comboxes on certain Catholic websites. Such disagreements, oftentimes petty, sometimes significant, stand in sharp contrast to the second summary in the Acts of the Apostles on the state of the early church.

According to Acts, "Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.... There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need." It is a beautiful image of the early church, strengthened by the story of Barnabas, which immediately follows these verses and describes him giving to the church the money gained from selling a plot of land.

It is an ideal picture, which is soon shattered by the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who also decide to sell a plot of land but hold back some of the money for a rainy day fund. Their behavior indicates a fissure among the early disciples and undercuts the claim that "everything they owned was held in common."

JOHN W. MARTENS *is associate professor of Theology at the University of St. Thomas. Twitter: @BibleJunkies.*

Why does Luke include this story in Acts 5? It is a shocking story—both Ananias and Sapphira separately fall down dead immediately after their deceit is revealed—but it speaks to reality. Even in the heady days of the apostles, people were already seeking their own way and hedging their bets on the church.

The period of Easter brings into sharp contrast the stumbling ways of the believers, a feature found throughout the church's history, and the steadfast love of God, which the psalmist tells us "endures forever." As steadfast as God is, so we are fickle in the ways of God. And yet, as fickle and capricious as believers might be, there is persistence among the disciples of Jesus, who get up, brush the dirt from their clothes and move forward eager again to follow God in "one heart and soul."

The Apostle Thomas gives us another image of the wavering disciple, but in this case one who remains in the fold. Thomas did not witness the risen Lord and so hedged his bets on the reality of the resurrection even as the other apostles were telling him, "We have seen the Lord." Why would they lie to him in his grief? Still, he said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Thomas persisted in his unbelief, unconvinced by the other apostles, until a week later, when Jesus' disciples "were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.'" Only then did Thomas answer, "My Lord and my God!"

How did the other disciples treat Thomas during that week? It seems that they did not cast him out for doubting, marginalize him or call him a "cafeteria apostle" but allowed him to remain with them. For his part, Thomas stayed with them, even in the midst of his doubt.

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How do we help to build up a church of one heart and one soul?

We all need and rely on the steadfastness of God at all times to support us when we are uncertain, but the support of other believers is essential, not "even" when we disagree, but especially when we disagree. Thomas did not believe initially and only believed when he saw Jesus in the risen flesh. "Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'" Important in all of this, though, and often overlooked, is that in the midst of Thomas's profound disagreement with the other disciples regarding Jesus' resurrection, he remained within the fold of the brothers and sisters.

JOHN W. MARTENS

ART: TAD A. DUNNE

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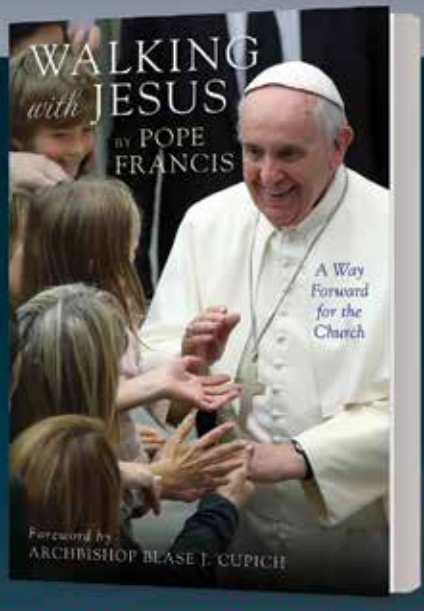

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